

*Philology*

## Giorgi Tsereteli (1842-1900) and His Literary and Theoretical Views

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**ABSTRACT.** Giorgi Tsereteli (1842-1900) is one of the great Georgian writers of the 1860s. His theoretical views on literature and the reasons and circumstances which made Georgian writers and public figures of the 1860s called “Generation of the Sixties” gather around the periodical “Saqartvelos Moambe” (Georgian News) are being described in the paper. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is remarkable with the activities of great Georgian public figures and writers, such as Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Niko Nikoladze, Giorgi Tsereteli, Sergei Meskhi and others. Giorgi Tsereteli participated in solving of all the topical problems of that time concerning national-liberation movement of Georgia. The formation of the writer’s literary views is greatly indebted to the aesthetic teaching of European enlighteners, in particular, Lessing. Inspired by Georgian national and world literature he turned the truth implied in fiction, fantasy and lies into supreme values. © 2014 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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In the history of the world literature the most complicated processes and controversies took place right during the period of socio-political and economic conflicts. Great internal changes in the literature always coincided with the periods of historical revolutions and reforms. We consider the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be such a period. In those days Georgia was involved into direct participation in the social and historical changes taking place in the Russian Empire. However, Georgia had some other problems of national character, which were insignificant for Russia. Namely, Russia had never had the problem of statehood, while it was always the main question for Georgians to regain national independence

and statehood.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the discontent in the life of Georgian people was marked with great rebellions. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was remarkable with the activities of great Georgian public figures and writers, such as Ilia Chavchavadze, Niko Nikoladze, Giorgi Tsereteli and others. Georgian national identity was the priority for the representatives of the 1860s, the so-called “Generation of the Sixties”, who set a goal to show the importance of the idea of national freedom and its eternal values. They addressed all their physical and intellectual forces towards regaining the national independence and equality.

Representatives of “Generation of the Sixties”- Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Niko Nikoladze, Giorgi Tsereteli, Sergei Meskhi and others gathered around the “Sakartvelos Moambe” edited by Ilia Chavchavadze. They expressed their ideas on the pages of the “Sakartvelos Moambe”, published the program of their social and national views. Their conception about social and cultural life was mainly expressed in their polemics with the older generation. There were some controversial viewpoints of new generation, but cardinal national issues posed by Ilia Chavchavadze were basic for them. Mostly, the diversity in their positions was manifested in the assessment of individual events and their attitude to them.

In 1863 Giorgi Tsereteli published his first polemic article in “Saqartvelos Moambe” titled “What made the “Tsiskari” cackle?!” [1]. He demonstrated that he shared Ilia Chavchavadze’s ideas about the importance of art, language, translation, education, periodicals and literature. G. Tsereteli demanded from the editors of the periodicals “Tsiskari” to be more realistic about ongoing social and public problems and to realize new reality and the problems brought by time. Like Ilia Chavchavadze, he considered that a writer should describe the issues of the day creatively rather than with beautiful but empty and useless words. He considered it pointless to translate foreign works reflecting past events, which had nothing to do with the present problems.

After closure of the “Sakartvelos Moambe” mutual cooperation of “Generation of the Sixties” became somewhat less intensive. Job responsibility required much time detracting some of them from social work. In such circumstances Giorgi Tsereteli showed great ability and energy to establish and edit newspaper “Droeba”(Times, 1866) reviving public opinion with that. Soon it was followed by the periodicals “Sasophlo Gazeti” (1868) and “Krebuli” (1871). Apparently, in that period of establishing his new periodicals Giorgi Tsereteli developed some new concepts disagreeing with “Generation of the Six-

ties” and he found it necessary to create a group of “new youth” or the so-called “Second Troupe” expressing a new conception. The “Second Troupe” was established by Giorgi Tsereteli, S. Meskhi and N. Nikoladze in 1869. The representatives of the “Second Troupe” published their concepts in “Droeba” and “Krebuli”. However, they actively cooperated with other Georgian and Russian periodicals. The priority for the “new youth” was to express the class interests of the third estate in the radical, utopian, socialist way. It caused ideological confrontation within “Generation of the Sixties” in the 1870s mainly based on different understanding and interpretation of social and economic problems. The “Second Troupe” had a bourgeois program of activity. The objectives of the “First Troupe” were no longer sufficient for them. Under the leadership of G. Tsereteli, they followed the principle of positivism, materialism and plain realism.

G. Tsereteli and those who shared his position rejected the nobility to be the class leaders considering the workers, educated people and the associations of small proprietors to be the leaders of future society. In his literary works G. Tsereteli permanently describes nobility as an outmoded force from the economical, legal or moral point of view. Nevertheless, the representatives of the “Second Troupe” wittingly or unwittingly turned out to be within the area of fundamental, comprehensive programs of the National Liberation Movement of “Generation of the Sixties”. A tendentious and radical way of expressing the interests of the ascending bourgeoisie did not provide a special position for the “Second Troupe” neither in ideological nor literary thinking, and probably, that was the reason they began to differentiate their positions after 10 years of existence. Giorgi Tsereteli felt a kind of sympathy to the “Third Troupe” appearing in the 1890s.

Giorgi Tsereteli had an attempt to take a special place in the sphere of literary thinking too. He tried to differentiate publications of the “Second Troupe” from those of the “First Troupe”. Accordingly, Giorgi

Tsereteli and Niko Nikoladze developed their own principles of plain realism. Despite the common program of activity they often had quite different positions. The same can be said about their interpretation of the term “plain realism”. Both of them relied on the theoretical critical concepts of Russian democrat revolutionaries, though in different ways. Both of them had a deep knowledge of European and Russian literature and very often it was their great erudition providing their original and controversial opinions. Their original way of thinking drove them to different sides. Giorgi Tsereteli was delighted by European way of life and thinking, while Niko Nikoladze by Russian. Eventually, their different aspirations gave rise to the process of differentiation within the “Second Troupe”.

Since establishing the “Second Troupe” Giorgi Tsereteli changed his attitude to the “First Troupe” led by Ilia Chavchavadze. He considered “new youth” to have own goals with respect to their future economic life or literature criticism. According to Giorgi Tsereteli, the “Second Troupe” introduced new ideas in life and literature quite different from those of the “First Troupe”.

Giorgi Tsereteli introduced “straightforward, unvarnished, plain realism in fiction or belles-lettres” [2]. Talking about the peculiarity of plain realism he refers to the prominent theoretician of his troupe Niko Nikoladze [3]. It was Niko Nikoladze who introduced the concept of plain realism implying the necessity of accurate reflection of reality. It should be noted that Niko Nikoladze despite his friendship with Giorgi Tsereteli did not hesitate to denote number of flaws found in his story “Kikoliki, Chikoliki and Kudabzika” and with that he showed how different his understand-

ing of the plain realism was from that of Giorgi Tsereteli [4].

According to Giorgi Tsereteli, the cultural and literary movement of a new era in Georgian Literature (1861-1890) put forward two troupes: “One of them had humanitarian direction led by Ilia Chavchavadze, and the other progressive-democratic troupe of the “Droeba” and “Krebuli”. The writer firmly declares: “As the readers can see, although these two troupes simultaneously appeared in the 1860s, they were so different from each other with their principles in Literature, as water and fire.” [1] Giorgi Tsereteli refers to the “First Troupe” as humanitarian and considers it to be liberal describing reality in a changed, colored manner not responding the requirements of reality. On the other hand, he considers the radical-democratic aspirations of the “Second Troupe” accurately to describe reality as a laudable novelty. Giorgi Tsereteli was so carried away by the desire to show the positive value of plain realism that he filled his literary works with the extreme reality. Some critics considered it to be his drawback to overload the narration with the description of trifles. Also, he was said to have such publications among his belles-lettres which were unacceptable for fiction. Some critics considered him to be the representative of naturalism, though they were not convincing enough. Indeed, such criticism was exaggerated. Obviously, Giorgi Tsereteli was familiar with naturalism but his literary traditions and worldview did not prove him to be naturalist himself. He belonged to the “Generation of the Sixties” and he followed the realistic way and methods introduced by “Sakartvelos Moambe”, though he did not recognize it. However, in his fiction [4] he tried to express the reality in the same way as Ilia Chavchavadze.

ფილოლოგია

## გიორგი წერეთლის (1842-1900) ლიტერატურულ-თეორიული თვალსაზრისისათვის

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიკოს გ.კვარაცხელიას მიერ)

ნაშრომში განხილულია გიორგი წერეთლის ლიტერატურულ-თეორიული ნააზრევი, წარმოჩენილია მიზეზები და აუცილებლობა იმისა, რამაც 60-იანელები “საქართველოს მოამბის” ირგვლივ გააერთიანა. გიორგი წერეთელი უშუალოდ მონაწილეობდა იმდროინდელი საქართველოს ეროვნულ-განმათავისუფლებელ მოძრაობასთან დაკავშირებული ყველა მნიშვნელოვანი და აქტუალური პრობლემის გადაჭრის საქმეში. მწერლის ლიტერატურულ მსოფლმხედველობაზე დიდი გავლენა მოახდინა ევროპელმა განმანათლებლებმა და მათმა ესთეტიკურმა შეხედულებებმა, განსაკუთრებით ლესინგმა. მან ჩვენი ეროვნული და მსოფლიო მწერლობის მსგავსი სახეების შთაგონებით გამოწარმოა, ფანტაზია, სიცრუის სიბრძნით ცხადყოფილი ჭეშმარიტება უმაღლეს ღირებულებად აქცია.

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