

STUDIES: GEORGIAN LITERATURE

***Stormy Weather* by Galaktion Tabidze
and *William Tell* by Friedrich Schiller**

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Abstract: A poem by Galaktion Tabidze, *Stormy Weather*, is analysed in this article. The poem was inspired by one passage from *William Tell*, the drama by Friedrich Schiller. Understanding the main message of *William Tell* as a primary source helps us to analyse and appreciate the deeper layers of the Georgian poet's work. With reference to Schiller's work, *Stormy Weather* can be interpreted as an allegory. It also becomes obvious that Galaktion Tabidze points to tyranny and cruelty of people and divine retribution from Mother Nature. It can be said that *Stormy Weather* is the poet's evaluation of the 30s of the 20th Century.

Key words: *Galaktion Tabidze, Friedrich Schiller, "Stormy Weather", "William Tell".*

Part of Galaktion Tabidze's poetic work was composed through the impressions and inspirations which the poet received while reading a certain author. "Galaktion himself was the source of inspiration for many poets. However, not infrequently, he too welcomed the creative sparks from other writers," argues Teimuraz Doiashvili, a literary critic [1, p. 148].

Sometimes the poet explicitly points to the source he got the inspiration from and in most cases such

references are preserved in his manuscripts. Certainly not all the notes made on the original manuscript are equally significant but each reference of this kind that has survived in a manuscript deserves special attention.

The collection of Galaktion Tabidze's works, consisting of twelve volumes, fails to depict a complete picture of his marginal notes and thus makes it difficult to perceive clearly what was happening in the creative laboratory of the poet.

A recent study of Galaktion Tabidze's manuscripts yielded several interesting facts. There were cases when we found out about the sources of the poet's inspiration in his marginal notes.

Our article deals with one such case.

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The poem by the title *Stormy Weather* is included in the first volume of the above mentioned collection of Galaktion Tabidze's works. The poem in question was first published in 1940 although the author himself dates it back to 1916. The editors shared his approach and this poem, together with other pre-1917 poetic works by Tabidze, became part of the first volume of the above-mentioned edition.

Two author manuscripts of the poem have survived to the present day. One of them (kept in the Galaktion Tabidze fund, N 1572) reveals some alterations while the other one is presented without any changes from the author.

According to the scholarly edition the poem title in the first version of the manuscript is entitled *William Tell* and is followed by the subtitle *The Fourth Praise* [2, p. 489].

Having studied Galaktion Tabidze's manuscript I found out that the information provided by the editors' commentary of the scholarly edition was not accurate since the words *William Tell. Act Four* written instead of the title at the top of the manuscript were crossed out by the author himself.

However, this is not the main issue. The problem is that there is no reference to the connection indicated between *Stormy Weather* by Tabidze and Friedrich Schiller's *William Tell* in the commentary accompanying the poem.

After studying the poem it became obvious that Tabidze's manuscript contains the reference to the

inspirational source of the Georgian poet; namely, to the very first scene of *William Tell, Act Four*, by Friedrich Schiller where a severe thunderstorm is described. It depicts the stormy weather with the lake growing tempestuous, the thunder roaring together with the lightning flashes and a heavy hail.

Galaktion Tabidze's poem also portrays stormy weather with frighteningly rising waves and a gale, the darkly overcast sky, tall pines as they moan while being broken by the hurricane, the moon's reflection caught in the leaden muddy water..

While comparing the Georgian poem with the specific episode from *William Tell*, one circumstance attracted my attention: Schiller does not describe the stormy weather from the author's perspective but the reader learns about it from the characters. It is not possible that the stormy weather thus represented in the dialogue could have inspired Galaktion Tabidze.

While exploring, however, it became obvious that there may have been a deeper bond between the two texts than suggested by the first reading...To define the type of relationship between the two pieces of writing it was necessary to analyse the whole content of Schiller's drama and determine the significance that the stormy weather, depicted at the beginning of *Act Four*, bore.

The alternation of sunny and stormy weather bears a great significance in the plot development of *William Tell*. The main protagonist makes his first appearance against the background of the raging stormy weather. William Tell braves the tempestuous waves, the storm and safely steers the boat to the other side of the lake and thus rescues the man who flees his adversaries while defending the honor of his family. This episode clearly demonstrates William Tell's remarkable physical strength and courage against the stormy weather.

As for the scene of the stormy weather in *Act Four* it is not merely a depiction of the stormy weather.

According to the plot, Gessler, the Governor of the Swiss cantons, forces William to shoot an apple from Tell's own son's head or both father and son are to die. William shoots the apple with his arrow without harming his son. However, at Gessler's command William Tell is still captured and taken aboard a boat in order to be moved to prison. At this very time the storm breaks out.

Another character of the play, a fisherman gets greatly upset when hearing this story. He thinks that even nature has revolted against such injustice to force the father to risk his son's life. The fisherman considers the stormy weather as a divine retribution and he wishes the storm would get worse and fiercer. This is how he addresses the storm:

“Rage on, ye winds! Ye lightnings, flash your fires!
Burst, ye swollen clouds! Ye cataracts of Heaven
descend, and drown the country! In the germ
destroy the generations yet unborn!
Ye savage elements, be lords of all!
To level at the head of his own child!
...Never had father such command before.
And shall not Nature, rising in wild wrath,
revolt against the deed?” [3, p. 120].¹

Careful exploration of the poem by Galaktion Tabidze proves that it does not depict only bad weather but the poem also begins with the phrases full of apprehension:

“WPA horrible waves,

What a horrible gale...” [2, p. 355].

Both the portrayal of the stormy weather – the overcast sky wrapped in black, two pines creaking at being broken by the storm, a desolate house lit by the mournful moon and the wording that the poet employs – a captive, mournful, black attire, squalor, decayed, desolate, leaden (used twice) suggest something ominous:

“...The sky too is wrapped in black,
leaden clouds set in rows.
The tall pine is creaking on the shore
as it is broken down.
The lightning is here to splash again
and the thunder is ready for another lightning
bolt.

¹It is our supposition that Galaktion Tabidze must have got acquainted with the Russian translation of Schiller's drama. However, we should mention the fact that by the time Galaktion Tabidze's poem was written, *William Tell* had already been translated into Georgian several times. At different times it was rendered by Nicko Avalishvili in 1872, I. Baqradze in 1905, and Sandro Shanshiashvili in 1927. Talking about the connection between the two literary pieces, the fact that *William Tell* was performed many times on the stage of Rustaveli Theater in Tbilisi should not be overlooked either. The fact is confirmed not only by contemporary press but also by the translator's preface written by Sandro Shanshiashvili.

The moon, the captive of the leaden pond,
now and again shines through
among the clouds.
And then it lights up
the abandoned house,
desolate and decayed,
left without a yard or trees..." [2, pp. 355-356].

Like the fisherman from the German play, Galaktion Tabidze's lyrical hero also wished the stormy weather would get fiercer ("The lightning is here to splash again") as he also thinks it is a divine retribution ("The sky shoots lightnings of wrath...").

William Tell goes back to the shore to the fisherman's hut through the untrodden paths and steep, hazardous rocky cliffs; as for the lyrical hero in Tabidze's poem, when seeing the small house he says: "I, a stranger came here, through the mountains and ravines"...

Schiller's drama is dedicated to the struggle against tyranny and deals with the essential issues of freedom and violence.

The questions that arise are the following: when and under what circumstances was Galaktion Tabidze influenced by this work of Schiller and what are the issues it deals with? When was Tabidze's *Stormy Weather* written?

As I have already mentioned, the poem dates back to 1916. Yet, it was first published in 1940. The manuscript of the first draft of *Stormy Weather* is preserved in the poet's sketchbook of 1935-1940. Thus it will be more trustworthy to assert that the poem was written during this period.

Another entry into this sketchbook made by the poet on the next page of the manuscript **B** speaks in favour of our supposition: "1937. August 27. There was a heavy hail in Tbilisi that lasted nearly 10 seconds. Hailstones were large, like walnuts and it was hailing very hard. I was standing on the balcony and thought that the hailstones that were blasted onto the windowpanes would smash them completely".

With reference to Schiller's work, *Stormy Weather* can be interpreted as an allegory. Galaktion Tabidze points to the tyranny, the cruelty of people and the divine retribution. It can be said that *Stormy Weather* is the poet's evaluation of the 30s of the 20th Century. When we look at the poem from this viewpoint the reason why the poet included *Stormy Weather* in the

separate section of Volume III entitled *From the Old Motives*, published in 1940 becomes obvious. When his *Selected Poems* came out in 1954, Tabidze must have indicated a fictional date – the year of 1916 as the time when the poem was composed.

Finally, we believe that the endings of both pieces of writing are very significant and meaningful; in Schiller's drama evil gets punished, and Tabidze's poem ends on the note that suggests eternity of the stormy weather:

“The second pine is creaking
on the shore
as it is being broken down.
The sky shoots
the lightning of wrath.
The gale is still roaring” [2, p. 355].

Thus, to conclude, our research revealed that *Stormy Weather* by Galaktion Tabidze was written as a result of the inspiration sparked from reading Schiller's drama. Understanding the main message of *William Tell* as a primary source helps us to analyse and appreciate the deeper layers of the Georgian poet's work.

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• The manuscripts mentioned in our article are kept in the Galaktion Tabidze section of Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian literature.