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Titsian Tabidze between Ovid and Jonah, Medea and the Psalmist, Scythia and Chaldea: Approaching the Decolonial Potential of Quasi-exile

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Abstract

The present article explores 'somewhere-else-ness' (experiences of exile / strangerhood / misplacement) in the poetry of Titsian Tabidze. It departs from a typology of relevant experiences that goes beyond the limits of the Roman-European "world-system" and views Ovidiac exile as only one cultural archetype among several. It pays attention to the complicity between Pontic elegy represented by Ovid and, most notably from the perspective of Russian-Soviet decoloniality studies, Pushkin (on the one hand) and imperial violence (on the other hand), as well as to its overload with self-extolment. It focusses on three groups of Titsian's poems, to assess the weight of exilic/strangerhood archetypes in and across them: Ovidiac egocentric weep, Jonah's (punishment for) desertion from God-ordained task, weep at the rivers of Babylon, and the strangerhood of a zealot among coreligionists (*gharīb*-hood). The relevance of preference for one or another archetype and of the reluctance to embrace it to what with hindsight can be called a decolonial sensitivity and agenda is explored. Decoloniality double impetus, as liberation from Russia-/Soviet – but also

Europe-centrism, is discerned. I analyse three (of the) 'Scythian elegies' of Titsian, the 1927 "სკიფიის ელეგია" ('Skifia's elegy'), "სკვითური ელეგია: 5" ('Scythian elegies: 5') and "ილაიალი" ('I/iliali'), to show his fundamental reluctance to adopt an Ovidiac-Pushkinian stance, the entanglement in these poems of two archetypes (the Ovidiac and Jonah's), and the presence in them of the sacred history perspective conveyed in the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse. I consider as especially meaningful the linguistic macaronism of the title of the first poem and the palindromic structure of the third one. I analyse an undated poem, 'O Babylonians', to discern the presence of the Psalm's 136 (137) archetype in Titsian's oeuvre, as well as its link to a biographically primeval exilic archetype (of Medea lost abroad) and to Titsian's aspiration for a place in the literary canon. Therefore, I include the 1911 sonnet 'Medea' and the 1916 experimental sonnet 'Pierrot' in the analysis. Finally, I look at the 'obverse side' of Titsian's reluctance to adopt Ovidiac-Pushkinian elegy: the spiritual domestication of select neighbouring countries (Daghestan and Armenia – as fundamentally different from "Scythia"/Russia) and spiritual traditions associated with them, – focussing on the 1927 'Gunib'. Alongside analysis, the six poems are cited in full length, appended with their literal translations. The article is viewed as a preparatory work in two directions: 1) disclosing and assessing the multi-layered and multi-targeted decolonial potential of Titsian Tabidze's oeuvre, 2) an interliterary exploration of quasi-exilic experiences in the Black Sea region. Both prospective paths of research would lead to the demarcation of a crucial thematic pillar (one among no more than four) within a Black Sea Comparative Literature that is still to emerge, and to recognise the indispensability of Titsian Tabidze's oeuvre to understand the constitutive geo-cultural and poetological tensions within the respective subject matter in the post-seventeenth-century regional modernity. On the important literature-historical juncture between early – individualist – modernism and non-individualist avant-garde / conservative post-symbolist modernism / socialist realism, a number of literatures were weary of eurocentrism, this being apparent in a new wave of enchantment with an 'East' and in an embracing of non-mimetism. From a 'Sovietological' perspective, this would imply that the historical scheme of an aborted modernism-and-westernism in the 1920s is a misleading simplification.

Keywords: Titsian Tabidze, somewhere-else-ness (misplacedness), Scythia, Daghestan, waters of Babylon

Introduction

'Somewhere-else-ness' is an umbrella-term for a "family of diverse experiences, from camp incarceration, to trips to the other world and translingual writing" (Ljuckanov, 2021, p. 289) represented most commonly through the notion of 'exile'. While 'exile' proper is only one, and possibly most popular in scholarship, 'family member', its conception is rooted in one among several (two or more) cultural circles or 'world-systems' (on this term: Wallerstein, 1993), namely, the (Greco-)Roman-European one (Pifer, 2018, p. 18).

I will indicate a number of cases of 'exile' in the broad sense, which are likely to be archetypal for cultures in the Mediterranean and the Near East – that is, across the Southern and Eastern boundaries of the (Greco-)Roman-European world.

(1) "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept / when we remembered Zion.[1] / There on the poplars / we hung our harps, […] If I forget you, Jerusalem, / may my right hand forget its skill. […] Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction, […] Happy is the one who seizes your infants / and dashes them against the rocks." (Psalm 136 (137): 1-2, 5, 8-9; New International Version).

(2) "Here it is I that am a barbarian[2], understood by nobody; the Getae laugh stupidly at Latin words" (Tristia, V, x, 37-38; Ovid, 1924/1939[3], p. 249). "Enough that I should live midst ice and Scythian arrows" (Ex Ponto, I, vi, 9-10; p. 301), "if I should die", may "may my bones be not […] trampled by the hoof of a Bistonian horse" (Ex Ponto, I, ii, 107-110; p. 277). "Not here the sweet grape lying hidden in the leafy shade nor the frotting must brimming the deep vats! Fruits are denied in this region […] One may see naked fields […]" (Tristia, III, x, 71-75; p. 141). "Exposed wine stands upright, retaining the shape of the jar, and they drink, not draughts of wine, but fragments served them!" (Tristia, III, x, 23-24; p. 138).

(3) "But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish." (Jonah 1:2)[4]

"From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God." (2:1)

Jonah 'exiled himself' by deserting from God's task. Jonah was 'exiled', or detained, in the big fish because he failed to follow Go's command to go to Nineveh and preach and call for repentance there. Instead, he went to the coastal Tarshish

[1] https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Psalm%20137%3A1

[2] Note the implied antithesis, which clearly implies a sense of superiority, not just indication of difference.

[3] Hereafter, I will refer to this edition by page number only.

[4] Acc. to New International Version, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201%3A3-17&version=NIV.

and, having experienced the storm at sea and the 'detainment', received the mercy to be reborn and complete his mission. There is no 'happy end' in a mode resembling an idyll or the *Odyssey* but re-trailing to another mode of quasi-exile – of being a stranger.

(4) "Islam began as a stranger (*gharīban*), and it will return as a stranger (*gharīban*) as it began. Therefore, blessed are the strangers.", announces a hadith – [purported] saying – of Muhammad (cited after Pifer, 2018, p. 23). "In [Edward] Saidian terms, the exile is forever out of place. But the *gharīb* is also very much of place; it is arguably defined as much by its entrances and encounters as by its exits and departures. […] *ghurba*, or the state of being a *gharīb*, primarily reflects a subjective state within the stranger itself" (Pifer, 2018, p. 19). "Whereas we might consider the *gharīb* as one who enters a foreign society, voluntarily or involuntarily accepting the yoke of estrangement, the exile is conversely defined by her irrevocable departure from home" (ibid, p. 17).

I would cut the typological draft here, to explore the oeuvre of a particular poet for manifestations of these, and possibly some more, archetypes of 'somewhere-else-ness'.

1. "Scythian" elegies of Titsian Tabidze

Titsian Tabidze, a symbolist and post-symbolist poet who failed (and was possibly too reluctant) to fit the aesthetics of emerging socialist realism (Rayfield, 2000, pp. 240-242), happens to have fallen under the combined spell of the archetypes of Jonah[1] and of Ovid. Tabidze hesitantly declines, or blocks, both in a remarkable poem under a macaronic Russian-Georgian title, "სკიფიის ელეგია" ('Skifia's elegy'[2])[3], written (or indicated as written) at the north-western fringe of the Georgian ethno-political space, in Anapa[4].

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[1] და აღვიდა იონა სივლტოლად თარშიდ პირისაგან უფლისა, […] (https://www.orthodoxy.ge/tserili/mtskheturi/iona1-4.htm)

[2] Hereafter, translated titles of Georgian works (poems) will be put in single (semantic) quotation marks, to underline the tentative and semantic character of translations.

[3] The standard Georgian word for 'Scythian-s' has been სკვით-ები (sk'vitebi) (as found, e.g., in K'onst'ant'ine Ch'ich'inadze's translation of Aleksandr Blok's poem for the journal *Mnatobi* in 1924 and in the 1890 chrestomathy in Georgian history compiled by Aleksandre Ch'q'onia), and not სკიფები (sk'ifebi) as implied by Titsian's title.

[4] The Black Sea coast as far as, more or less, modern Anapa is part of wider Georgian polity according to traditional Georgian political geography, despite waves of Abkhazian (*Apswa*, North-West Caucasian mountaineers), Ottoman and Russian colonisations since the 17th century (a comprehensive account on the colonisations by nowadays Georgian scholars in English see in: Gamakharia et al., 2011). This extend is seen, for example, in the mid-18th-century atlas by the Georgian

Elegiac idleness is born by the excess of available resources availed by Roman military (and subsequently economic) hegemony; but it becomes a prerequisite for depreciating that hegemony from within (cf. Keith, 2008, pp. 143-145). While a real, from our, modern, standpoint, elegy is born not in the capital or in the Italian villa but at the limes – by Ovid (cf. ibid). It is a "poem of mourning" (Bardazzi et al., 2025, p. 1). Imaginations about Ovid's lovers/wives from the barbaric hinterland of Tomis[1] seem to be post-imperial prolongations of imperial leisurely – and potentially elegiac – imagination of Propertius (cf. Keith, 2008, p. 146). To summarise, elegy betrays complicity with empire and its violence.

A task, for certain elegists from the 20th century as Titsian Tabidze, would be to disentangle elegy and empire. Under Soviet conditions, some kind of elegiac leisure on the spoils of imperialism could be possible by the mid-1930s, with the great victories over various internal enemies throughout the first and possibly second five-year plans (compare Keith 2008, p. 149, on the "dependence of elegiac leisure on the spoils of Roman imperialism"). An author as Titsian – reluctant to recognise sincerely Soviet modernisation[2], and possibly committed to non-Russian nationalism (cf. Ram, 2005, p. 270; Abuladze, 1999, p. 161), – would give up acquisition of imperial geography (compare Keith, 2008, p. 150, on how an elegy can bear "witness to the extent of Roman commercial interests in the Mediterranean"). Ingrid Kleespies (2012, pp. 93-94), justly, has almost come[3] to Alison Keith's idea of concomitance between (Romantic this time) leisure and imperial conquest.

Unlike mature Ovid, immature Pushkin was exiled for political pronouncement (cf. Kleespies, 2012, pp. 83-84). Titsian may have referred to Pushkin within a replay of Romantic-Decembrist code. Possibly also questioning the depth of Pushkin's insecurity and dissidence (implicitly comparing it with his own). An examination of his translations for the 1937 volume of Pushkin's selected poetry in Georgian, in which his name was understandably skipped, but which might have included more than the three translations attributed to him (Tabidze, 2015, pp. 443-446), can be informing, just as a close reading of the rest his poems mentioning Pushkin[4].

Crown Prince Vakhusht'i Bagrat'ioni (see, e.g., https://commons. wikimedia.org/wiki/ File: Map_of_Georgia_by_Prince_Vakhushti_Bagrationi.11.jpg); and as echoed in the postmodern piece of counterfactual history shaped as the novel 'Santa Esperansa' by Aka Morchladze.

[1] As in some works of Romanian literature, e.g. Saviana Stănescu's *For a barbarian woman*.

[2] As analysis of several of his works, incl. of apparent eulogies like *Rioni-porti* (Rioni-Port) would show. Harsha Ram's analysis of the poem 'Petersburg', esp. of its 1934 redaction, is indicative (Ram, 2005, p. 260).

[3] "[T]he Russian wanderer and the Russian army [,…] are perhaps more closely linked than they initially appear" (p. 93).

[4] Most notably, "Ilaiali" [untranslatable?], 1926 (T'abidze, 2015, pp. 121-122).

Unlike Ovid, who faced barbarous desert in Tomis, Titsian faced the trace of Pushkin in Anapa,[1] where apparently Scythia began for his perception/imagination. Hence he experienced an inter-cultural encounter, not a culture-barbarity one, even if a tint of 'barbarising' the 'Scythians' in Ticìan's 'Scythian' elegies ('Skifia's elegy', 'Scythian elegies: 5', 'Ilaiali') is evident.

It seems that Titsian made a move that contrasted him to Pushkin but at the same time he had to avoid re-adopting the position of Ovid.[2] (Cf. Kleespies, 2012, p. 86: Pushkin's "To Ovid" is revealing about "the development of a distinct Pushkinian identity that […] is characterized as both an exile and a wanderer". "Pushkin's 'severe Slav' […] is the antithesis of Ovid's lachrymose Roman.".) Unlike both predecessors, Titsian deliberates whether he has come 'here' upon his own will; and he seems to see it as neither a 'pit' nor a 'refuge / idyll' ("counterintuitive space of freedom") (cf. Kleespies, 2012, p. 87). Thus, he would produce neither a lament nor a self-affirmative idyll, but something deeply ambivalent or something completely different.

Pushkin leaves room to interpret his "To Ovid" as a testimony to Russian superiority over Romans (of poetry only?). Something styled as a self-willed exile is compared to the passive one. Titsian has, due to post-medieval inertia, to carve out a superiority for his own stock (genus, poetry); would that lie in the non-exile, in the 'neither-nor'? Russian poets facilitate his task. It is Pushkin who identified Slav and Scythian. Ticìan must have been sensitive to this; and added to it the famous identification of Russians and Scythians by Aleksandr Blok.

Polemic reinterpreting of apparent predecessors' exile as voluntary or non-voluntary, and as one of involuntary intruders, in order to (re)position oneself, would be at the core of our interest in the Titsian's case.

1. 1. 'Skifian elegy'

This poem is absent from most Soviet editions of Titsian. I stumbled upon it in the Literary Museum's 2015 edition, which, unfortunately, lacks any scholarly apparatus. In the 3-volume 1967 edition, it is printed as [part] II of a 'Scythian elegy', "სკვითური ელეგია" (Tabize, 1967, vol. 1, p. 126).

Its apparent specificities are the lingual macaronism of its title and the apparent but profoundly ambiguous self-inscription into the tradition of Black Sea coast elegies initiated by Ovid and continued by Pushkin, among others.

[1] More on this: Lyutskanov, 2019, p. 460.

[2] Titsian's relation to both could be explained in the terms of Bloomian theory of anxiety of influence, in line with the general characterisation of the poet by Harsha Ram (2005, pp. 246-247).

„სკიფიის ელეგია[1]

განა თუ მართლა გადმოვიკარგე, / მე ჩემი ნებით გადმოვიკარგე. / ვხედავ სკვიფების გათელილ მხარეს, / ვიცი, ეს მიწა მე აღარ მარგებს... / მე მართლა მიყვარს ჩემი ქვეყანა, / მაგრამ ეს გრძნობა ვის დავაჯერო, / სატეხი გახდა ორპირში ყანა, / აქ კი გვიმრების დავეძებ ჩეროს. / და სტირის ჩემში პუშკინის ლექსი, / დგება სკიფია და ქიმერია. / მე ვის მოვთხოვო ეხლა ალერსი, / ცრემლებზე ცრემლი რომ მომერია. / ჩამოიტირებს ბრმა მეფანდურე / და აატირებს ქრისტეს ბაზარზე. / ამბობს ცრემლებით ქვეყნის სამდურავს / *ზეის მიმბული*[2] ძაღლი ბაწარზე. / მეც მაგონდება ჩემი ბავშვობა. / მეც მეტირება, არ ვიცი, რაზე. / ათასჯერ გული რომ გადავრაზე, / მაღირსეთ ერთი ცრემლის გაშრობა. / სტირის მოხუცი ქვეყნის აღსასრულს, / და აკვანიდან ამის მოლოდინს. / მეც ქარიშხლიანს ვიგონებ წარსულს, / და სინანულის ცრემლი ჩამომდის, / მომსდევენ ცხენით მთვრალი სკიფები, / მეც ვსვამ „კაბერნე“-ს და არ ვითვრები...

3 სექთემბერი, 1926, ანაპა“ (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p. 119).

‘Skifias elegy

Do you think that if I really *lost myself into this distant*[3] *place*[4],
I[5] by my will lost myself into this distant place.
I look at the skifs’ trampled underfoot side/region,
I know, this land does not anymore make use for me…

[1] I will be shaping the citations of the original as prose to spare space, and my literal translation as verse to facilitate understanding (admitting that its deliberately un-English word order is often hard to follow). Yet wherever graphically possible, I shall be quoting originals and translations in parallel in their verse shapes. Regarding word order, I might have chosen a *functional* literal translation, one that systemically considers the differences between the ‘unmarked’ word orders in the two languages. I refrained, finding the task too complex; and doubting whether fulfilling it would make enough sense: verse structure inevitably adds semantic accents that obfuscate the perception of a word order as ‘unmarked’ (‘normal’) or ‘marked’.

[2] T’abidze, tic1967, vol. 1, p. 126: ძუით მიბმული.

[3] distant and/or alien/foreign (see the next note).

[4] The italicised (by me) phrase translates the verb in this line, repeating this explanation „უცხო (შორ) ადგილას გადმოიყვანს, გადმოისვრის, გადმოხვეწს (ვინმეს)“ (https://ena.ge/explanatory-online).

[5] Italicisation marks first person singular introduced through pronoun (and not through verbal prefix). Having different phonetic values, they participate in different strings of semantic modelling of the poem through its phonetics. With due respect to the position of the established scholar of Titsian’s oeuvre Mirian Abuladze, who thinks Titsian’s poetry is more visual than acoustic (1999, p. 161), I would note that this poetry has apparent acousticproperties that are semantically relevant.

I really love my world/country,
But this feeling whom to prove,
For crushing [harvesting] became in Orpiri the field,
While here of the ferns I am looking for the shades.[1]
And weeps in me Pushkin's verse[2],
Stand up Skifia and Cimmeria.
I whom to ask now for caress,
On tears tear when wells from me.
Will weep in turn[3] the blind pandurist
And will make weep Christ at the market.
Speaks out with tears world's/country's reproach[,]
Whistles a tied up dog on woollen thread.[4]
I too am frequented by memories of my childhood.
I too am urged to weep, I don't know about what.
Thousand times [my] heart as I barred (bolted),
[You-pl.] granted me one tear's drying.
Weeps the old [man] at world's/country's Judgement Day[5],
And at from-the-cradle its expectance.

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[1] Compare: "Там нивы без теней, холмы без винограда" (Pushkin, 'To Ovid').

[2] Pushkin, Ovid, Scythia and weeping are present together in Pushkin's poem 'To Ovid' ('Collection of works', vol. 3, 1838, p. 140-4). Why Pushkin's verse weeps in Titsian's lyrical 'I'? First, it may be empathic to Ovid, "Как часто, увлечен унылых струн игрою, / Я сердцем следовал, Овидий, за тобою", "Карающую длань слезами отклоните" (Pushkin cites possible words of Ovid to his friends). Second, Pushkin's verse may feel itself uncomfortable within Titsian('s) in a way recalling a verse by Nikolai Gumilev, "Во мне кричит ветшающий Адам" ('Cries in me ageing Adam'), from his well-known poem 'Five-feet iambs'. Under the second hypothesis, I would suggest Titsian says that he himself is becoming a 'new' Adam, which disposition upsets the presence of, or fidelity to, Pushkin: who was almost as egocentric as Ovid had been. Pushkin wrote: "утешься, не увял Овидиев венец!"; but I don't know whether Pushkin's wreath, on its turn, has not waned in Titsian. To summarise, weeping Ovid and weeping Pushin's verse *in* the lyrical 'I' of Titsian recall the weeping Adam.

[3] Or: drains down to us his weep (ßɔðო-)

[4] The two lines replay (and mock?) banal imagery. Dog seems to stay for a poet, woollen thread for a 'harp's' string, whistling for elegiac/uncompliant poetry. Normalising the word order would give: 'Whistles on woollen thread the tied dog' or 'Whistles the dog tied on woollen thread'.

[5] Weeping is world's general property, Tician has wrestled it from the egocentric poets. Ovidiac elegy has been Christianised.

I too remember stormy past,
And of grief a tear runs out,
Pursue me on horse(s) drunken Skifs
I too drink "Cabernet" and do not get drunk…

3 September, 1926
Anapa'

The macaronism of the title may suggest a detachment from a discourse about Scythians, an indirect quotation of a discourse, an ascribing of that discourse and of Scythian identity to Russians. It may also hint at the bilinguality of Russian imperial Tiflis, as employed by the natural primitivist Pirosmani, hence be a cautious demonstration of affinity to pre-Soviet epochs and to naïvism (as a refuge from Sovietising politicisation). It may even indicate Titsian's intercultural split between being a Georgian modernist poet with mixed affiliations (France, Persia, Chaldea, and Russia [=Scythia?]) and a Soviet, potentially *trans*national poet.

The mentioned ambiguity is dual. First, Titsian is reluctant to take any of the predecessors' stances: Ovid's of a patient of an imposed exile, and Pushkin's of a patient who swiftly re-experienced his predicament as an opportunity and even as a voluntary self-exile. Second, Titsian accumulates other creatures' (reasons to) cry, thus becoming an antipode to Ovid and approximating Christ taking everybody's grieves on Himself. Weeping is world's general property, Titsian has wrestled it from the egocentric poets. Ovidiac-Pushkinian elegy has been Christianised.

The ending of the poem arguably makes self-distancing from both predecessors and from both imperial presences clearer. I see no indications that Titsian would like to be buried in Scythia; hence, if Pushkin seeks to inscribe himself in a tradition stemming from Ovid (Kleespies, 2012, p. 89)[1], Titsian hardly does so – even more, against the background of neither lamenting spatial marginalisation nor idealising it. Whereas the meeting with "Ovid's trace" allows Pushkin to "claim dual patrimony" (Slavic/Scythian *and* Roman) (ibid, 90), Titsian seems to deliberate whether to assume or confirm the acquisition of either of them and thus to make his identity triple. He seems to self-ironically assume the Roman (or Romance: French) one and delimitate himself from the Scythian. The latter identity, during the poem itself, starts being dissociated from a certain regional/local or indigenous one, thus indirectly signifying a certain '*tertium*', beside southern/western civilisational con-

[1] According to Kleespies's reading, Pushkin deliberates, and welcomingly, the option of being buried near Ovid's grave.

quest and northern barbarous retaliation / mirroring / emulation. There is a delicate evidence that Titsian carves a middle zone between the Helleno-Macedono-Romans of the South and the Scythians of the North: he suggests that Scythians misuse wine by not being able to bear its alcoholic strength or by drinking too much. In this very way he hints at the ancient Greek mentions or topos that Hellenes, unlike Scythians but also Thracians, cannot or do not drink wine unmixed, undiluted with water (cf. Hartog, 1988, pp. 169-170, who mentions Herodotus, Anacreon, Plato and others). ("The Athenian of the Laws declares: 'You [Lacedaemonians], as you say, abstain from it altogether, whereas the Scythians and Thracians, both men and women, take their wine neat'", cit. by Hartog, 170).

But looking closer at Ovid's works from "Scythia" helps modify our assessment of Titsian's position. Deliberating the reasons for being punished, Ovid denies that offending words slipped out from his mouth while drunk too much wine (Tristia, III, v, 47-48; p. 123); because, we could simulate a memory error or an invention through montage, he used to be a water-drinker (Ex Ponto, I, x, 29-30; p. 317). Contemplating his present desperate condition, he says wine does not "attract" him (Ex Ponto, IV, ii, 41; p. 429). Against this background, Titsian's drinking cabernet is a declaration of frond (not of innocence). "Unmixed wine" appears repeatedly in Ovid as a metaphor of poetic inspiration and/or sincere tribute to a god. But the image of the drunken Scythian horde is not present in Ovid. Hence, we can suppose the (less visible) impact of another ancient source (besides Ovid). Yet these are preliminary considerations, which have to be checked against the context of our prospective knowledge or at least hypothesising about to what extent and through what mediation Titsian was exposed to ancient sources, incl. Ovid.

To summarise, both southern and northern imperial agents get intoxicated because are unable to drink pure wine. In other words, they either lack self-restraint when pursuing some lofty goal or contaminate the lofty goal with pursuit of mean interests. What the kind of lofty goal can an imperial – or massive counter-imperial – power pursue? Of course, cosmisation of inhabited world; or destruction of an evil world-kingdom, to establish one that is true.

The last two lines of the 'Skifian elegy' are different in the version published in the largest Soviet edition of Titsian's works, from 1967: "მელანდებიან ზღვაზე სკვითები / და სინანულის ცრემლი ჩამოდის" ('Appear to me [as apparitions] on sea Scythians / and a tear of grief/regret goes down [from my eye]'). That could have been the version acceptable for censorship or produced by it. It does not end by contrasting the Scythians and the lyrical 'I'. The Scythians become apparitions of themselves, and the 'I' seems to regret for something: one can suggest that he half-

repents for improper activity during a certain moment in the past or for misattributing Scythianness to Russians and Bolsheviks. Most importantly for the topic of the present article, the lyrical 'I' may have embarked on a sea voyage (Whether a return one to Georgia or one further into 'Scythia', it is difficult to judge.). More likely, he only refocused his attention to the sea, maintaining the landscape scale and openness to the epic genre.

1. 2. „Scythian elegies: 5"

In publications preceding the 2015 one, this poem appeared divided into quatrains.

At first sight, the poem is about the perseverance of poetry over imperial violence. It continues the confusing parallel use of 'Scythia' and 'Cimmeria', which I am not prepared to comment here. And it evidently inscribes itself, as well as the Pontic elegiac tradition, into Biblical sacred history anchored in the books of prophet Daniel and of the Apocalypse. Exploration of the Georgian outshoots of this tradition – which most likely have informed Titsian's vision (minding, of course, his father being a parish priest and his early education) – will not be attempted here.

„სკვითური ელეგიები"
5

მაშინ ოვიდი სტიროდა აქ რომს / და იქ დარჩენილ შვილების ალერსს, / ფოლადის ნადუღს დროც ვეღარ აქრობს, / რომიც ვერ უძლებს ასეთ ნაჭედ ლექსს. / სტიროდა შემდეგ კიდევ აქ პუშკინ, / ნისლით დაბურულ პეტროგრადის ცას, / თითქო ეს იყო ჯერ კიდევ გუშინ / და პეტერბურგი კიდეც დაიქცა. / აქ ალექსანდრე მაკედონელმა / ამორძალების შემუსრა ჯარი, / მაგრამ გასცვალა ქალის ქამარში / ლომმა ლომური თავის აბჯარი. / უტეხდენ ცხენებს მაგარ ხერხემალს / აქ გადამთვრალი სკვითების ურდო, / გზათ გაუვლია აქ მაჰმადის ხმალს, / რომ დუნაიზე გადაეყუდოს. / ბევრი სხვა ტომი, ბევრი სხვა თესლი / ამ ზღვის ნაპირებს გადურევია, / მაგრამ დამშვიდდა იმათი გესლი, / მწუხრის ნისლშია დღეს ქიმერია. / რა მინდა მე აქ? – რისთვის მოვედი? / განა თუ ვიტყვი ჩემ გულის სათქმელს. / ყელწაგდებული იმღერის გედი, / პირდაპირ სცემენ -- შუბლის საფეთქელს. / მაგრამ გადავა კიდევ სხვა ტომი, / იქნებ ევქსინის პონტიც ამოშრებს, / მხოლოდ იცოცხლებს ლექსის ატომით, / რაც პოეტის გულს ცეცხლით ამოჭრეს. / მაშინ ოვიდი სტიროდა აქ რომს

/ და იქ დარჩენილ შვილების ალერსს, / პოლადის ნადუღს დროც ველარ აქრობს / და მე ვაგრძელებ განუწყვეტელ ლექსს...

14 სექტემბერი, 1926, ანაპა"

(Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p. 123; in Tabidze, 1967, vol. 1, pp. 124-125, it appears as 'Scythian elegy: [part] I', while in 1934: 192-193 as simply 'Scythian elegy', while '…[part] II', or 'Skyfian elegy', is absent from that edition).

'Scythian elegies
5
Then Ovid was crying here about Rome
And about there-left children's caress,
Steel-scale (flake, deposit) even time is not able to douse/blow out,
Rome too cannot overpower such hammer-forged poem.
Was crying afterwards too here Pushkin,
About mist-covered Petersburg's sky,
As if this was only yesterday
And Petersburg too changed.
Here Alexander the Macedon
Of Amazons destroyed the army,

But changed into woman's girdle
The lion his own leonine armour.
Were [was] breaking horses' robust spine
Here the overdrunk Scythians' horde[1],
On its way came (reached) here Mohamed's sword,
So that on Danube to lean.
Many other tribes, many other offspring[s]
At the shores of this sea have gone mad/mixed,

[1] "Pirithoüs[:] A Lapith, whose chief interest for Ovid was his friendship with Theseus, whom he accompanied down to Hades in an attempt to carry off Persephone (according to one version as a wife for Pirithoüs himself, in return for his having helped Theseus abduct the young Helen). Both were held captive in the lower world; Theseus was rescued by Heracles; Pirithoüs was not so lucky. His other claim to fame was his marriage to Butes' daughter Hippodameia: at the wedding-feast the *Centaurs, extremely drunk, tried to rape the bride*, and a great brawl took place, which the Lapiths won. The incident became popular in 5th cent. art, as a symbol of civilization triumphant over barbarism." (Ovid, 2005, p. 416; emphasis added).

But calmed down their poison/rust,
In dusk/vespers ['grief' is the same root] mist is today Cimmeria.
What do I want here? – What for did I come?
I wonder whether in order to say what my heart had for saying.
Neck-brought-forward will sing a swan,
Frontally [they] hit – forehead's temple.
But will go over one more tribe,
Maybe even Euxinos Pontos it will dry out,
[It] Only will live long with the poem's atom,
Which poet's heart with fire had cut out.
Then Ovid was crying here about Rome
And the there left children's caress,
Steel-scale even time is not able to douse/quench/blow out
And I prolong the uninterruptable poem…

Anapa
14 September, 1926'.

No smoke here but mist and possibly vapour (out of quenching – putting a hot metal into water to be cooled): an indicative absence, a specific self-inclusion into the tradition of the image of 'smoke of homeland' linking Ovid, Pushkin and Ilia Ch'av-ch'avadze, among others (on the interliterary thread of 'smoke of homeland' see: Beridze: in press; Kleespeis, 2012, pp. 122-123). Titsian's lyrical 'I' occupies a place analogous to one just outside the Darial Pass, in the very beginning of the northern plains, so within Georgian literary memory these two elegies are likely to establish link first and foremost with Ch'avch'avadze's 'Traveller's letters/writings' (მგზავრის წერილები, 1861).

For me, the differences between the two elegies are not easy to perceive. In Titsian's lifetime, the 'second' one was printed in quatrains. Both are of 10-syllabled lines. The 'second' one is styled as part of a cycle[1], and has fully Georgian title, while the title of the first is macaronic, Russian-Georgian but with Georgian letters.

[1] In Soviet publications, and in known to me post-Soviet ones, the poem lacks this feature. The cycle might be a mystification, or be a hidden one, 'submerged' under misleading titles. Besides 'Skifian elegy' (and 'Ilaiali'), we may possibly include „დეზერტირები ისროდენ თოფებს…" ('The deserters smeared/shot with their guns…'), „წარწერა წიგნზე 'ცხენი ანგელოსით" ('Inscription on the book „Horse ridden by angel (/?Angel-like horse)"), „ქართლის ცხოვრება: შესავალი" ('Life of Georgia: Introduction'), and, as a sixth poem, 'Stalin'. Steel (iron/coal), horse riding, poetry creation and tears seem to be the main recurrent motifs.

The second poem is less ambivalent. It apparently shows its lyrical speaker follow the programme of Pushkin following the programme of Ovid as the latter was reconstructed by Pushkin. We can guess that the core of the programme is political dissent expressed through poetry; Ovid had lamented, Pushkin overcame the self-lamenting stance styling himself as almost a self-exile, Titsian seems to have been inbetween in the first poem. In the second poem he ascribed mourning for the imperial city to Pushkin, making him more similar to Ovid and making himself slightly dissimilar from both Pushkin and Ovid. In the end of his 'To Ovid', Pushkin admitted his loneliness among people but his non-loneliness amidst the landscape and from the perspective of posteriority. (The latter he shared with his addressee: before being an elegy, 'To Ovid' pertains to the genre of 'poetic address'.) In his second poem, Titsian substituted non-loneliness amidst landscape with non-loneliness amidst historical layers that far surpassed those of Rome and of Romanticism. So why the first poem has remained less published than the second? Because it was (more) ambiguous, I guess; because it was detached or distanced from Russian-language poetical discourse; because it ascribed, through a transparent allegory at the end, alcoholism to either Russians or Bolsheviks, making the lyrical speaker distinctly non-Russian and non-Bolshevik; because it put the stress on both Titsian's autochtonity and (non-pathetic) link to the West. I believe ambiguity, doubt, irresolution may have been the gravest defect. Even graver may have been the unheroic ending, a kind of a retreat from an epic (even if fragmented and ambiguous) space into a 'chamber' one that is either a parody or a travesty.[1]

Both poems have apocalyptic overtones: linked to the Book of Apocalypse and to the Book of Daniel. These overtones are focused on the topos of succession of world-kingdoms from the Book of Daniel. The elegies' implicit author is reluctant to embrace the Scythian/communist/northern just as the Roman/southern kingdom.

It is a reluctance to embrace the elegiac genre as well, indicative of indecision amidst three opportunities: political conformism, (simulative) apoliticism, and frond. If we assume the perspective of his hypothetical frond, Titsian went to 'Tarshish' and stayed there; neither lamenting nor enjoying one's staying at a margin; sitting in neither exile nor self-exile; neither sailing the sea nor going to 'Nineveh' (identifiable with the apparent 'imperial' centre Moscow, rather than with the micro-imperial one of Tiflis-Tbilisi) to profess non-conformism. Exploration of the biographical context

[1] The ending is partly reminiscent, to my mind, of the declaration of the protagonist of Dostoevskii's 'Notes from the underground' that even if the world were to collapse, he would need his tea.

may dilute or sharpen the suggested meaning of the poetic text. As well, dispel the doubt that we impose the model of Jonah on Titsian.

1. 3. 'Ilaiali'

'Ilaiali' pertains to the same group of poems and occupies a central place from the standpoint of our topic, because this poem bluntly embodies the condition of reversibility, vacillation, indecision. Through apparent intertextual reference, it supercedes the 'Scythian' exile topic while remaining within the field of exile writing.

The title of this poem encodes a palindromic (to-and-fro movement) and a symmetric structure. It is supported on (self-)narrative level by the in fact framing statement 'I am in Scythia […] I am not in Scythia, it is a mirage'. Next, four lines in the middle of poem (lines 33-36 out of 68) support the guess that the title refers to, inter alia, the man-swan-man transformation of Gottfried from Wagner's *Lohengrin*. The title is, besides, a prosodic middle ground with its seven syllables – the poem alternates nine- and five-syllabled lines.

„ილაიალი“	**„Ilaiali“ (or: ilaiali)**
სკიფიაში ვარ... ქიმერიის	In Scyфia am… With Cimmeria's
მწუხრით დამწვარი,	Sorrow burnt through,
ალი, ძვირფასო, მე შენი ხმით	Ali, dear, I with your voice
ვკითხულობ პუშკინს,	Am reading Pushkin,
ბახჩისარაის შადრევანის	Of Bakhchisarai fountain
მასველებს ღვარი,	Moistens me (lit. Makes me wet) the stream,
ძველ შადრევანებს ატირებას	Old fountains' power to stir weeping
არავინ უშლის.	No one defuses.
და **ვეკითხ**ები ამ დაბურულ	And I demand an answer from this clothed
სკვითების ღამეს:	Scythian [of Scythians] night:
რა იქნა ჩვენი ჭაბუკობა	What useful *turned out from*[1] our youth
და გატაცება?	And fascination[2]?
ვინ გადაფისა ასე გული	Who tarred all around in such a way the heart
მშრალი ბალღამით	
და არ გვაცალა შთაგონების	
დავაჟკაცება.	

[1] The italicised phrase has a phrasal meaning too: "where did he/they go (lost themselves)?".
[2] The state of being captured and/or fascinated (direct/metaphorical meaning); I chose the second one.

მალე ტფილისში, როგორც წინათ
ვაჟა-ფშაველა,
მე ჩამოვიტან ხურჯინებით
დაწერილ ლექსებს,
მაგრამ ლექსებზე მეტი მომაქვს,
მაინც ნაღველი,
უჩემოთ ასე სამშობლოში
რომ გამილესეს.
და გეფიცები მეც ოვიდის
და**მწუხრ**ებულ ლანდს,
რომ ძველებურზე კიდევ უფრო
შენთან ვარ **ახლო**,
ვოცნებობ შენთან რუსთაველზე
ტირილით გავლას,
დავიწყებული სტრიქონები
რომ განვი**ახლო**თ.
ვიგონებ იმ დროს, როცა
შეგხვდით
მართლა ლოენგრინს,
თეთრი ვაშლის ხე თეთრ ხიდეზე
მოსცურდი გედით.
გიგონებთ რაინდს, სამუდამო
ლექსით დაბეგრილს,
რომ გათენებას ქუთაისშიც
ვეღარ ვიგებდით.

With dry phlegm[1]
And did not give us time for [our]
memories
To become manly.
Soon in Tfilisi, like earlier
Vazha-Pshavela,
I will carry here down with saddlebag
The written [by me] poems,
But besides poems I am bringing,
However[,] bile (/gloom),
In such my absence from [our]
homeland
To be grinded for (/plastered on) me.
And I too swear you by Ovid's
Sorrowful phantom,
That even more than in old times[2]
With you I am close,
I dream with you of/about Rustaveli
While with weep walk,[3]
Forgotten verses
So that (=In order) to renew.
I remember that time, when you met
Indeed Lohengrin,
White apple tree on white bridge
Approached swimming as a swan.[4]

[1] A homonym-based pun option: 'ball-night'. If "phlegm" is retained, it hints at ancient theory of bodily humours and, hence, at other works of Tician Tabidze, most notably, the first part of the narrative poem 'Rioni-Port'.

[2] Lit.: That than in old times even more.

[3] I dream of walk with you on Rustaveli while weeping. ("Weep" can be attributed to both dreaming and walk.)

[4] In the French medieval romance *La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* "All the boys regain human form but one. While other seek their own fortunes, one boy cannot part with his brothers turned permanently into a swan, and becomes Swan Knight. […] In the early 13th century, the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach adapted the Swan Knight motif for his epic *Parzival*. Here the story is attached to Loherangrin […]. As in other versions, Loherangrin is a knight who arrives in a swan-pulled boat to defend a lady" ("Knight of the Swan", 2026).

ვიგონებ ტფილისს.. რძიან დილას
და ვარდისუბანს,
აბნეულ სიტყვას, ლექსების
ორთქლს,
ილაიალის
და საიათნოვას სიმღერებით
აყვანილ დუქანს.
ალი, ძვირფასო! დაგვრჩა რამე
იმ ცეცხლის **ალის**?
თვრამეტი **წელი**, დასაწვავი,
თვრამეტი **წელი**.
ჩვენ გუსარები -- გაფრენილი
ჰო**ლანდი**ელი.
მომტირის გული, სასიკვდილე,
გული **ალალი**,
ციცინათელათ გადამდნარი
და ილაიალი...
ბუინოს აირეს.. ალეხანდრო
და კასტილია!
თეთრი **საბნებით** თავწაკრული
მალაელები.
იმ ტანჯულ დღეთა პანაშვიდი
გადახდილია,
საბანეევას უნაზეს მზ**ით**
ნამტირალევი.
თითქო გუგუნებს ამაღამაც
დავითის ზარი
და ეს სკიტია სიზმარია,
მხოლოდ სიზმარი...

14 სექტემბერი, 1926
ანაპა

You (pl.) remember[/listen to] the
knight, forever
With poem levied,[1]
So that all night non-sleep in
Kutaisi too
No more we were able to
understand.
I remember Tfilisi.. Milky morning
And Vardisubani,
Thrown (up) word, poems' vapour,
By Ilaiali's
And by Sayat-Nova's songs
Grabbed/lifted dukhan/eatery.
Ali, dear! Did something remain to us
From that fire's flame?
Eighteenth year, the igniting,
Eighteenth year.
We [were] hussars – flown off
Hollanders.
With weep follows me a heart, bound to
die[2]
Heart righteous,
Into firefly melted-through
And ilaiali-ish…
Bue/inos Aires.. Alejandro
From/And Castile!
With white sheets their heads tied up
Malaysians (/'Hiders').
Of those tormenting days the memorial
service
Is paid/carried out,
With Sabaneeva's most gentle sun
Tear-moistened/-stained.

[1] Either obliged to produce poems or charged through a poem. In both cases, a bond between knighthood and poetry is meant (either stated or decreed).
[2] Or: death-carrying.

As if cooes/murmurs/whistles in this
night too
David's bell/lamenting/horror
And this Scyфia is an illusion,
Only illusion.

14 September, 1926
Anapa

(Tabidze, 2015, vol.1, pp. 121-122; emphasis added)

The prosody (alternation of long and short verses – nine- vs. five-syllabled) reminds a famous early poem by the Russian "decadent" poet Zinaida Hippius: "Песня" ('A song'); but she simply repeats the phrase after the caesura as a next line.

Subtextually, the lyrical 'I' can be identified with Telramund ("banished"), the Swan Knight's paganising opponent, from Wagner's opera; that is, with an anti-Lohengrin. But this is only at first sight. "Ortrud […] tells Elsa that the swan is actually Gottfried, Elsa's brother, whom she [Otrud] cursed to become a swan", according to "*Lohengrin* (opera)" (2026). The main conflict from Wagner's opera, between a re-paganising Telramund and the initially only dreamt about Swan-Knight who is to represent Elsa in the defence of her right over the Duchy of Brabant, can be easily superimposed on Georgian reality of the 1920s. At first sight, re-paganisation would stay for pre-Soviet empire, while Lohengrin would be an allegory for a champion of Sovietisation. A second look would identify paganism with rule of violent power – hence, with both Tsarist and Soviet rule over Georgia. And it would identify Christianity with short-lived but still dreamt of independent Georgia, as a product of rule of love, or mutual recognition abstaining from violence, between nations. The title encodes an oscillation between the two interpretative options, but also a vacillating identification between the Kingdom of East Francia / Germany encompassing Brabant (on the one hand) and "Scythia" (Russian Empire, Soviet Union) (on the other hand). Within this framework, the end of the poem might signify a final dispel of the identification. Stalin is not Henry the Fowler. He is a Telramund who has grabbed the rule not only over the Duchy but also over the whole Kingdom. Minding the possible psychology of defeat(ism) in Titsian, we may find a third option, a reading opposite to the one just highlighted, no less tenable. According to it, Telramund/ paganism would be associated with Georgian particularism. Comprehending the whole of the poem, especially the final lines' counterposition of a David to Scythia-turned-illusion, rules out the validity of the just mentioned third option.

Scythia is a space of sorrow, which, as it occurs, does not fit the lyrical 'I', despite his genuine non-enthusiasm (with whatever, but especially with the building of socialism – as we indirectly infer from other works: 'Rioni-Port', 'New Colchis' etc.). I guess we are urged to understand that Ovidiac-Pushkinian detachment and self-extolment is not Titsian's path to shape, intertextually, his sadness and his dissent.

According to the postscript, which is unlikely to be an editorial conjecture, the poem was written or completed on 14 September (1926, in Anapa) – just as 'Skifian elegy' and 'Scythian elegies: 5'. According to Old Style, this is the day of the Finding/Raising up of the Holy Cross, and of Passing away of John Chrysostom (moved to 13 November) (https://www.orthodoxy.ge/kalendari.htm). Reference to any of the two events would make sense in a work by Titsian. On the one hand, a frequently used property of the Holy Cross, esp. of its countless small copies for private use, has been to dispel satanic presence. Therefore, the paratext affirms that "Scythia" has been an illusion with metaphysical dimension. On the other hand, Titsian has a number of poems featuring a Chrysostom (gathered as microcycle in: Tabidze, 1934, pp. 145-154); it seems that in the poems dated "14 September" he leaves his Chrysostom rest in peace.

The key word of the poem concentrates the semantics of reversibility, and esp. between a speaker of poetry and poetic speech, which is apparently thematised in the famous 'Poem-landslide' (ლექსი მეწყერი). Concretisation of reversibility is achieved through the meaning of the verses preceding the (re)appearance of "ilaiali" (line 44): the poems-levied and poems-laden knight and the throwing-up of a word in the vapour (not mist!).

A poetic ethymologisation of "i-l-a-i-ali" based on phonetic proximity to "al-ali" ('merlin' (falcon-like bird); 'just, righteous'; 'one's own, dearest') and analogy to "aket – ikit" seems possible; thus the enigmatic word would hint to otherworldly righteousness? And what about "ilali", 'ear-pick' – which would imply that the poem is a kind of exercise in clearing one's listening ability? Does i-laioba mean something? ლალვა, ვილალვი (lalva, vilalvi) – to be abused/cursed/called names according to Chubinashvili (1984) and 'drive cattle; fight, contend' according to Rayfeld et al. (2007). There are also ლალაობა, ლალა, ლალი: nurse/look after, peony, ruby. Cf. the nouns ტრ-იალი, კრიალი, ფრიალი, დრიალი, ზრიალი. ხრიალი, გრიალი, შრიალი, ბრიალი, ჭრიალი...; დარიალი (all but the first present in Titsian's works). ვილევი, ვილიე – be exhausted, I am exhausted (emaciated). Hence ილიებული, ?ილიალი, but not our word. ა(ღ)ლევს, ალია climb up, conquer sth; *ი-ალია ?climb up oneself, conquer oneself; *ი-ალია(ლუ)ლი ?(one) who has conquered/conquers oneself. And also the Arabic *awliya' Allah*, 'Friends of God', designa-

ting “the prophets and the Imams, the elite of humanity to whom the divine secrets are revealed” (Corbin, 2006, p. 26, cf. 256), or “initiates”, esp. in the context of Shia Sufism (Corbin, 1994, p. 54). A poet claiming to have put in the rose of Hafez in the vase of Prudhomme (Tabidze, 1934, p. 121), and who had ‘Imitations of Quran’ as one among only three Aleksandr Pushkin’s pieces proven translated by him, should have had some idea of Islamic mysticism and non-marginal place for it in his ‘picture of the world’.

The mysterious word “ilaiali” repeats the name of the mysterious heroine of Knut Hamsun’s novel ‘Hunger’, whom the protagonist, a starving young man restraining his physical needs to the degree of absurd, kisses and with whom possibly has some “physical intimacy”. One can link knighthood in the poem to him, as Hamsun’s protagonist “exhibits a self-created code of chivalry, giving money and clothes to needy children and vagrants, not eating food given to him, and turning himself in for stealing” (“Hunger”, 2026). Hamsun wrote his first novel after his second ill-fated stay in America. May “Scythia” recall America, besides its more traditional meanings? The nameless protagonist of ‘Hunger’, Loehengrin and the Flying Hollander form a chord (in the musical sense) or a palimpsest, with which or whom we can identify the lyrical ‘I’ or rather ‘we’ of the poem: the poet and his devotee (Ali Arsenishvili). Unlike in standard love poetry, ‘I’ and ‘you’ are not confronted but form a ‘we’. The protagonist of ‘Hunger’ boards a Russian ship in the end of the novel. This ship is to take him not to Russia but to England and then to Spain (Cadiz!) with a load of coal (potentially an occult symbol!). If he proves incapable as a cabin boy, the captain would leave him in England (Gamsun 1910: 145)[1]. But, I would add, if he reaches Cadiz, the historically archetypal departure point for America, what would prevent him from trying to reach Buenos Aires? The link between the novel and Titsian’s poem is the name Ilaiali, which emblematises, first of all, reversibility. Buenos Aires in Titsian’s poem possibly at the possible final destination of travel in Hamsun’s novel or café in Tbilisi (Tiflis).

But the dedication of the poem to Ali Arsenishvili makes clear another semantisation of the word: a palindromic repetition of “Ali”. As “Ali” is a name charged with religious history, it can be linked, within the oeuvre of Titsian, not only with one or with another stance towards Islam and esp. Shia Islam, but also towards Pushkin and Avetik Isaakian (see below).

[1] Reference to the 1910 Russian edition of Hamsun is deliberate, for through it, most likely, Titsian got acquainted with the novel.

'Iliaiali' may refer to the person whom the poem is dedicated – Ali (Aleksandre) Ilia's son Arsenishvili: as an approximate reverse of Ali-Ilia. We may imagine aliilia or iliaiali being inscribed on a ring, which is being viewed from different standpoints. Punctuality would necessitate adding an 'i' in the reconstructed inscription: 'ali-ilia-i'. As for the meaning of such sequence of letters, it would be in Russian: 'Ilia and Ali', indirectly – 'father and son'. Hence, ambiguity and reversibility is encoded in the reconstructible lexical semantics of the title, not only in it rhetorical structure of a palindrome. If we mind that the name of Ali Arsenishvisli according to his identity document was Aleksandre, another layer of ambiguity is added. In some broad Islamicate context, or in a mental framework referring to the world of Islam, 'Ali' (the first Muslim martyr, Muhammad's nephew and first Imam of Shia Muslims) and 'Aleksandre' (a legendary world conqueror) would signify two poles. These two poles are compatible with, if we are to refer to historical mythology related to Georgia, to Orpheus and Jason. These are the poles of self-sacrificial entrance into the Otherworld, and of conquests in 'this' world. The pair Jason – Orpheus (understood not as comrades but as typological antipodes) underlines at least one poem by Titsian, 'Colchis waits for you, o new Orpheus', so the analogy suggested by me is, I believe, not ungrounded.

It is possible to extract from the poem meaning that would link it to 'ali' in the Georgian demonological sense of a humans-drowning or appearing like mirage which inflicts illness-bringing fear or causing dumbness-bringing wind water or forest creature appearing as a beautiful golden-haired (or frightening with thorny body, iron hoofs etc.) female ("ali", 2003; Mindadze 2013, pp. 132–133).[1] The inscription on the hypothetical ring might repel 'ali'-s, and do it in the most 'literal', or clearly diagrammatical manner: 'ilaiali' might mean 'go back, ali'. In this case, the aspect of reversibility dominates over the one of ambiguity. While the title would have an apotropaic function.

It is possible to identify the just mentioned "ali" with the agent infusing the lyrical 'I' with what turned out to be the "illusion" of "Scythia", or that illusion itself.

If we turn to Hamsun's novel, the unnamed protagonist and 'I'-narrator meets for first the girl whom he *ad hoc* names "Iliaiali" under circumstances resembling a 'real-life', an 'enacted' analogue of a palindrome: "I am again keeping up with her and pass by, suddenly turn back and meet her face to face, in order to inspect her visually. I am standing and looking into her eyes and this instant I think up a name, which I have never heard – a slipperily and nervously sounding name: Ilaiali" (Gam-

[1] Valerian Gaphrindashvili's Ophelias are for sure dependent on this demonology.

sun, 1910, p. 10). To distil the aspect important for my argument: he anticipates the present in order to look at its face from the standpoint of future. Unlike the protagonist of Hamsun, Titsian's one and Titsian himself do not board a ship (or board it 'behind the curtains' of lyric narration only to return). If we suggest the presence of the Jonah archetype, which is tentative on whether we detect the presence (suppressed or not) of a mission to be carried by Titsian or his protagonist, we would add the following. Titsian (or his lyrical protagonist) may have the task of persevering in his homeland, to become the new Orpheus waited for by Colchis, instead of going, indeed defecting, abroad, 'Scythia' (Russia) being part of this 'abroad' (and Paris – its apparent and polemical image, see below). If in Hamsun's novel the (reoccurring) encounter with Ilaiali, half-invented by the protagonist, drives him, through vicissitudes, towards leaving his home city, the complex symbol of Ilaiali in Titsian's poem helps his protagonist discern the irreality of the adjacent country and stay/return home.

Summarising observations and speculations shared above, I would say the poem together with its title signifies a process of deliberation between two options and an incantation to be spared the wrong decision.

I believe 'Ilaiali' has an early 'prequel', as far as the life-path of the lyrical 'I' is concerned, – 'Pierrot', from 1916. The 1916 leave has reached, by 1926, its inner limit and was mature to fold back.

1. 4. 'Pierrot'

„პიერო"

აყვავებულა გაზაფხული ზაფხულად ბაღში,
ვარდი თუ უფრო წიტელია - თორემ არ მკრთალობს,
და ართობს ისევ გამოცდილი ძველი ტოლ[უმ]ბაში,
ძველი აშიკიც სიყვარულზე სალტომორტალობს.
იყო ბესიკი, საიათნოვა, თეიმურაზი..
ამაყ პატრონებს მოელიან მცველნი კარებში.
დამშვიდდი, სულო, სამუდამოდ გადაირაზე,
საწყალ პიეროს გზა დაებნა უცხო მხარეში...
სიზმარი თუა - სიზმარია მხოლოდ ჩვენი დღე,
მეფობს წარსული... ძველ ჩრდილების არის აქ ბინა.
სტირის პიერო: კოლომბინა, ახ, კოლომბინა!..
[1916]" (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p. 63).

„Pier(r)o(t)“

Has blossomed the spring into summer in the garden,
Rose is more red, isn't it, - otherwise will not wane,
And amuses as before the experienced old toastmaster,
While the old minstrel on love performs salto mortale.
There were Besiki, Saiatnova, Theimuraz..
Proud masters are awaited by guards at the doors.
Calm down, o soul, forever bolt (lock) [yourself],[1]
Poor Pierrot [his] way lost in a foreign side (country)…
Isn't it a dream – a dream is only our day[2],
Reigns the past… Of old shadows is here the lodging.[3]
Weeps Pierrot: Colombina, ah, Colombina!..'.

This poem is about seeking of place in the poetic canon, where Colombina is a symbol referring to both 'the Muse' and recognition, while Pierrot's loss of path in foreign countries might refer to alien poetics which, on its turn may be understood as symbolic self-exile in the manner of Medea. Poets already in the canon play the role of the successful pretender, that is, 'Harlequin': Besiki, Saiatnova and Teimuraz. With this poem in mind, all preceding and postceding deliberations of Titsian's lyrical protagonist about leaving his homeland can be read as deliberations about poetics as well. The potential of this name, Pierrot, to signify social displacedness, puts it in one group with symbols like Ovid and Hamlet (and Jonah?), and, within the oeuvre of Titsian, Pierrot turns out to be a prefiguration of his Hamlet and his Ovid – of his dis- and misplaced characters – and also of his lyrical 'I' that transcends them. Pierrot is a prefiguration of Titsian's ნაკვცარი (see below). We may only speculate whether Pierrot acquired the experience of an Orpheus by the 1930s, when Titsian wrote 'Colchis waits for you, o new Orpheus'. At least, an anticipation of such acquisition can be guessed as present in the implicit author of Titsian. The one who departed as Pierrot was cautiously hoped to come back as a new Orpheus (his return-as-a-dandy with a red carnage should have been dismissed as either lacking transformative power or unreal). Pierrot, being a diminutive from 'Peter', correlates with "Titsian" as a product of a reverse transformation from "T'it'e", and hence is likely to play a role in Titsian's 'onomastic auto-mythology'.

[1] Or: forever shut yourself by bolt and hasp! (ре3е). A second option, if an -a- is inserted: "go on a permanent traversal".
[2] Most likely, 'only a dream is our day'; and not 'only our day is a dream'.
[3] Or: residence. Anglicised word-order: Here is the lodging of old shadows.

In his article 'The muse of Titsian Tabidze's poetry' Murad Mtvarelidze (1999, pp. 200-201) cites the text of this poem with some difference in punctuation and with more exact dating: "1916, November". I refrain from bringing into my analysis the biographical context outlined by Mtvarelidze. According to Tamar Barbakadze (1999, p. 172), 'Pierrot' is a(n Italian) sonnet with last stanza omitted or lacking; I tend to consider this opinion assumptive and claim, instead, its astrophism (unless a 11-lined stanza existed within the reach of Titsian's awareness).

1. 5. Prospects

There is at least one more Titsian's poem referring to the Ovidiac – Pushkinian Pontic elegy: 'To Melita: a Dadaist madrigal' (T'abize, 2015, vol. 1, p. 90), cited in Mtvarelidze's article (1999, pp. 212-213), 'To Melita: a Dadaist madrigal'. It substantially coincides with the second one of the two 'Melita'-s in the *ant*humous selection of Titsian's works (T'abize, 1934, pp. 77-78[1], 150-151). Mtvarelidze cites the following date of creation: "1923, May", the 2015 edition "17 May, 1923", while the 1934 edition has "May 1927". The poem just marginally refers to the aforementioned tradition, but, notably, introduces a new element: "[…] / შენ კი, მელიტა, ალბად უყურებ / ტიუტჩევის და რომის ცას / […]" ('While you, Melita, maybe are watching / Tiutchev's and Rome's sky.').

2. Titsian's 'somewhere-else-ness' beside the archetypes of Ovid and Jonah

Titsian authored a poem closely following the 'weeping at the waters of Babylon' archetype, in his 'Hebrew melody' (1926; Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1. pp. 127-128); I shall analyse a more complicated self-inscription into it further below.

Earlier lyrics of Titsian suggests the power of another archetype of exile for him: the self-exile of Medea. He seems to be afraid, consciously and subconsciously alike, to repeat her path, have her faith. A late poem that remained, as far as I know, unpublished in Soviet times, is indicative of this fear. He ascribes to, as we read between the lines, to Parisian Georgian émigrés the property of 'Babylonians': that is, those cursed by the weeping Jews from their historical prototype. As if glad that he had not fallen in the trap of a Medea, Titsian hurries to ascribe this misfortune to émigrés, but makes the reference indirect, as a means to be more matter-of-fact adeq-

[1] Unfortunately, pages 67–78 are missing from the copy available in the National Parliamentary Library in Tbilisi.

uate, to achieve more expressivity and some ambiguity. Depicting a group of political dissenters through the figure of weepers at the waters of Babylon or Paris would be pertinent, while through Medea – not. Comparative expressivity is debatable. Ambiguity is the most important asset for Titsian and his scholars. Easily ascribed to Georgian émigrés, the status of weeping Babylonians struck by historical nemesis can easily revive the other half of the prototypical picture: while Jews weep in Babylonian captivity, Judea is devastated and depopulated. Why not to associate, per analogy, such a miserable condition with Soviet Georgia, despite that apparently the opposite is valid? There is some historical and onomastic proximity between Babylonians and Chaldeans,[1] whom, possibly under the influence of Ivane Javakhishvili (Ram, 2005, p. 272 n. 17)[2] or of Nikolai Marr (Nerler, 2019, p. 285), Titsian considered the ancestors of Georgians within his "Chaldean myth" (Beridze, under press, pp. 131-132)[3]. They are broad synonyms. Therefore, we may assume that, in the poetic sacred history of Titsian, erstwhile Chaldeans split into Soviet Georgians and Babylonians-weeping-at-Seine (and Paris is the Babylon of the early 20th century!). If we try to overlay this symbolic disposition with the archetype of Jonah, we would identify Georgia as Jonah's homeland, Paris as the belly of the big fish, and Nineveh as a third place which Titsian's poem left unmentioned but which we would identify as Moscow. Reproach towards émigrés might be for their defection from a Georgian effort to persevere despite Sovietisation, and not for being anti-Soviet. Of course, this reading risks at overinterpreting: it relies on the preconception that Titsian is more deviant than loyal to Soviet power. Despite poster-like vividness of the leitmotif –

[1] Historians called the last dynasty of Babylonian kings, which included the famous destroyer of Jerusalem and the First Temple Nebuchadnezzar, "Chaldean" dynasty (Beaulieu, 2013, p. 32). As well known, in classical antiquity and later, Chaldeans were famous for capabilities in magic.

[2] 'History of Georgian people', parts 1 and 2, 1913, pp. 34–35.

[3] Now (Kavtaradze, 1985, p. 47; Chant'ladze, 2012, pp. 202–202) we can speak of a coincidence and confusion of Pontic/Anatolian 'Kh/Chaldia(ns)' (ხალიბები, cf. Bakradze, 1889, p. 18) and Mesopotamian 'Chaldea(ns)' (cf. Beaulieu, 2013). Already Dimitri Bakradze (1889, pp. 28, 34) gives room for linking and even identifying the two groups and countries (Pontic and Mesopotamian Chaldea), referring to Ernest Renan and Victor Langlois (p. 28 n. 1) but sparing his own opinion. A third territory and people bearing the same name (Kh/Chaldia = Urartu) and more likely linked to the Pontic one should be added – the ones around Lake Van in pre-Achaemenid antiquity (Lynch, 1901, pp. 67-70). Normative knowledge in late imperial Russia disambiguated between the three groups (through different entries for Khalybs and Chaldeans in the Brockhaus and Efron encyclopedia). The 1928 'Dictionary of foreign words' merely claimed that the southeast of Mesopotamia is Georgians' original homeland (Imedashvili, 1928, col. 771). A recent dissertation (Oboladze, 2022, pp. 140-142) considers Titsian's "Chaldean myth" within a perspective not easily compatible with ours. I would view the myth beyond the framework of modernist enchantment with cosmopolitan cities and their rural alternatives.

and I would say satirical – image of weeping Babylonians, the poem turns out to be a Symbolist one. Sacred History symbolism lurks behind the political allegory. It links three archetypes of misplacedness: of weeping Jews, of Jonah and of Medea. With sight of the early sonnet 'Medea: a sonnet' (1911) etc. and of the 'Scythian' elegies, we may summarise that Titsian, fearing to follow the path of Jonah into the belly of the fish, and fearing from following the path of Medea, refrains both from emigrating and from going to/settling in Russia. He discerns a fair middle-ground somewhere between, above and beside the conjuncture of Georgia and Soviet Russia. An important means to articulate that middle ground in the last year of his life was his participation in the Pushkin jubilee celebration.

2. 1. 'Medea: a sonnet' (1911)

„მედეა“
სონეტი

ი. გრიშაშვილს

ნუ მომაგონებთ შვების გაზაფხულს,
ჩემთვის დაღუპულს, ჩემთვის დამარხულს!..
ვინ განმიახლებს დამჭკნარ გვირგვინებს?
ვინ დამიბრუნებს იმ ნეტარ დღეებს!..
უცხო მხარეში სული ღონდება:
ჩემი მამული მომაგონდება...
ვაგლახ! ჩამოსჭკნა ალერსის ბაღი --
მკვდარს არ მიმიღებს მშობლის წიაღი...

სტიროდეს მეფის აეტის ასულს,
ერთხელ უცოდველ კოლხეთის ქალწულს,
უცხოთა შორის, უცხო მხარეში –
ის ცოცხლათ შთავა ცივ სამარეში,
და იქაც ძვლები შიშით იძრწოლებს,
მამულის წყევლას რა გაიგონებს...
[1911]" (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p. 34).

„Medea “
A sonnet

To I. Grishashvili

Don't remind me liberation spring[1],
For my sake destroyed, for my sake buried!..
Who will renovate for me the withered wreaths[2]?
Who will return to me those blissed days!..
In a foreign side (country) [my] soul is worrying:
My fatherland is being reminded to me[3]…
Woe[4] to me! Withered down caress's[5] garden –
[As I am] Dead I am not accepted by homeland's soil…
Would weep king Aetes' daughter,
Once sinless Colchis' maiden,
Foreigners amidst, in a foreign side (country) –
Alive she descended into cold grave[6]
And there too [her] bones in fear will shake,
Fatherland's curse as [she] hears[7]…'.

As a whole, the sonnet prefigures his 'O Babylonians…': an émigré weeps over her homelessness and her previous mistakes or sins; in 'O Babylonians' the role of the prosecutor has been taken by a separate party (the lyrical I), the sinner is looked at as second grammatical person. Here, the weeping émigré is assigned direct speech within the first eight lines of the poem,[8] while the tone of the implicit author delivered though the lyrical 'I' of the subsequent six lines is neutral.

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[1] Or: spring of rejoice, spring of rest

[2] Or: crowns

[3] Less literally: "comes to my memory".

[4] The root of "vaglakh", ვაგლახ, means destitute/ion, impoverish(ment); etymological interpretation of the exclamation would possibly lead us to 'I impoverished myself'.

[5] Or: affection; and possibly hinting at an archaic homonym, "woman's vest" (Rayfield et al, 2006).

[6] lit. 'place of internment', though the same root means 'fast(ing)' as well. The connotation of hiding (and not of contact with earth as in სა-ფლავ-ი) is present. See Chubinashvili's (1984) dictionary.

[7] 'hear' and 'remember' have the same root in Georgian, which root signifies basically intellectual perception, mind. It is present both in the first and last word of the poem.

[8] I guess the lack of graphical division into the usualised sonnet stanzas signifies an experimental attitude to the genre. With this in mind, Barbakadze's statement that 'Pierrot' is a sonnet seems more likely.

2. 2. 'O Babylonians' (unknown date)

„ბაბილონელნო, სენას ნაპირზე / გ[რ]ძელთმებიანო ერემიებო. / ნაცარი თავზე, ნაცარი პირზე, / და თქვენ ენასაც ობი მოება. / სად არის თქვენი პიიტიკოსი, / რომ შედავება ჩვენი ინებოს?.. //

ეტყოდა განა რამეს ქართველებს, / სიმებ მოხსნილი იმისი ქნარი?! / ახალ ცხოვრებით როგორც იელვებს, / ძვლებ გამოხრული და გადამ-ჭკნარი. / აქ კიდევ ღელავს ზღვა შთაგონების, / დაუცხრომელი და ბობოქარი. //

სხვა საქართველო რომელი გვახსოვს / ასე მედგარი და ბედნიერი? / ერობას სწევდენ ერისთავები, / ხალხი კი იყო მუდამ მშიერი. / აღსდგა ძლიერი და მშვენიერი / უკვდავი შრომით უკვდავი ერი. //

შავად გაცხიათ ღალატის ლაქა, / როგორ დადიხართ ქვეყნად, რა პირით. / როცა უღონო ერთი ჭინჭრაქა / ჩვენ ხალხს შავი ზღვის დაწვას დაპირდით. / ერთი იკითხეთ, რას გარგებო აქა, / უცხო ქვექნებში სინ-ჯოთ ამიდი. //

დამწვარი არი თქვენი იმედი, / ხალხს კი გაეხსნა სამოთხის კარი, / ბაბილონელნო! სენას ნაპირზე / წამოიყარეთ თავზე ნაცარი. / ახალ ცხოვრებას ვეღარ იხილავს / სული დახსნილი და ნაკაცარი. //

სად არის თქვენი პიიტიკოსი, / რომ სულთათანით აგიგით წესი, / მიიღეთ შორი საფლავის ქვებზე / საბჭოთა მგოსნის მრისხანე ლექსი!.." (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p. 231).

'O Babylonians, on the Seine's bank
O l[o]ng-haired Jeremias.
Ash(es) on head, ash(es) (ნაცარი) on mouth,
And your tongue too mould wrapped.
Where is your poet[1],
In order a start of argument with ours to claim[2]?..

Was really saying[3] something to the Georgians,
Strings-untied his lyre?![4]
With new life how to flash,
[Being] Bones-corroded/gnawed and withered-up.

[1] An archaic form is used, as the Russian пиит.
[2] express a wish
[3] claiming, announcing, singing
[4] In Anglicised word order: 'Was his strings-untied lyre really saying something to the Georgians?!'.

Here again/still is agitated sea of inspirations[1],
Uncorrodable/Ungnawable and stormy.

Another Georgia who of us remembers
So much fierce/thundering and happy?
People's feasts used to be harnessed[2] by local governors,[3]
While folks[4] were always hungry.
Rose up mighty and wonderful
With immortal[5] labour immortal people (nation).

In black[6] you smeared treason's stain,
How do you walk in the world, with what face.
As if [while being] a powerless wren
To our folks Black Sea's ignition you would promise.
One [thing] [do] ask, what use can I bring you at this point,
In foreign countries you to taste the (?)weather.[7]

Burnt down is your hope,
While the folks untied (opened) the heaven's door,
O Babylonians! At Seine's bank
Do throw on your heads ash(es) (/mildew).
New life cannot anymore be seen[8]

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[1] 'Here' is the sea of inspirations, 'there' is a riverbank, possibly of memories. Through allusion, Titsian seems to ascribe to the émigrés an inheritance to Baratashvili's 'Thoughts at the bank of Mtkvari', which would fit his (Tician's) undercurrently ambivalent stance (see below).

[2] Alternatively: "community feasts […] by community governors", to keep the etymological figure. And: "would be" instead of "used to be". Or: "local *communities* used to be *toiled* by local governors". This reading is less likely, because of the partial semantic overlap with ხალხი (folks, people) in the next line and ensuing redundancy.

[3] An association with harnessed or a pair of yoked cattle. So the local governor is like the human and people like the cattle. The verse is based on etymological figure: "Er-oba […] eris-ta-vebi". Er- means people; -oba is a suffix meaning 'a multitude of' or just a substantivation that means to express a more abstract notion than the one in the substativated verb or noun; "tavi" is 'head'. The line is also a 'diagrammic' sketch of the situation expressed through the lexical meanings of the involved words: 'community is toiled/harnessed by community-heads'.

[4] "(common) people" or "population" is more proper, but I chose to definitely disambiguate from ერი, 'people / nation'.

[5] Or: "unkillable", on both occasions.

[6] Beside 'black', may mean 'bold' in the typographic sense.

[7] Smoother: '…how can I help you now / To taste the weather in foreign countries'.

[8] or 'seen in a dream'.

By soul untied/enfeebled and misfit (ნაკაცარი).
Where is your poet,
In order to perform for you a funeral[1] rite,
Do receive on distant graves'[2] stones
Soviet poet's angry poem!..[3]'.

Two words in this text need special attention – ნაცარი (stanza 1, line 3) and ნაკაცარი (stanza 5, line 6). The first activates an additional level of the Biblical imagery in the poem, while the second one links Biblical topology (the refuted stone which turned out a corner stone) with the experience of somewhere-else-ness, in particular, of being a stranger.

Instead of ash/es, the first word could be translated as mildew, 'fungus on grapes' (oidium tuckery).[4] Associating either a human or a country related to that human to grapes would be expected in a text with Biblical topoi. Hence, both homonyms are activated in the poem. The first meaning, 'ash/es', is being activated, besides, along both meaning of the first homonym – the direct, 'ashes', and the indirect, 'grey hair'. So the 'Babylonians' are like statues of people performing the rituals or quasi-rituals of putting ash on one's head and putting ash on one's mouth (symbolic self-infliction of muteness). Then they have their hairs grey by trouble and ageing. Finally, they are like vines or grapes attacked by specific fungi that most likely prevent the grapes from ripening and being used for wine.

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[1] "მიცვალებულის სულის მოსახსენებელი საეკლესიო საგალობელი" (Explanatory, 2006-2026). 'sultatanit' seems an abbreviated form of the adjective 'sultataniti', coming from the noun "sultatana" The noun contains 'souls': 'with souls together', "sulta-tan(a)". So we have a release of farewell to souls. In a mode of pun however, we may read the adjective as composite, as 'with-souls-and-body' or 'with the body of souls'.

[2] Lit. 'burying place'. The root emphasises the presence of/within soil.

[3] That is, the Soviet poet entitles himself to write the epitaphs for/on their gravestones.

[4] "A grey-white, dusty, fungal growth consisting of mycelia, conidia and conidiophores coat much of the infected plant. Chasmothecia, which are the overwintering structures, present themselves as tiny, spherical fruiting structures that go from white, to yellowish-brown to black in color, and are about the size of the head of a pin. Symptoms that occur as a result of the infection include necrosis, stunting, leaf curling, and a decrease in quality of the fruit produced. […] Powdery Mildew thrives in warm, moist environments and infects younger plant tissues like fruit, leaves, and green stems and buds. Free water can disrupt conidia and only requires a humid microclimate for infection. Most infection begins when spring rain (2.5mm) falls and temperatures are approximately 15 °C or higher" ("Erysiphe necator", 2026). – Wikipedia. Imeretian rainy and moistly Aprils, Mays and Junes did endanger wines correspondingly. I allowed myself the lengthy quotation because I believe the phenomenology of the decease may have been perceived as paralleling the socio-psychological 'decease' of misadaptation to the 'spring' of Sovietising Georgia.

The second word, “nak’acari”, ნაკაცარი, is translated in the Rayfield et al (2006) dictionary also as “superfluous man” and “non-entity”. I believe it can be translated as well as “parahuman” or “quasi-human”. According to the explanatory dictionary (2006-2026), this is a bookish word meaning ‘a human who cannot find his or her place within new society, who has become superfluous/unnecessary for new life’. Apparently a Soviet neologism, it is the original contribution of Georgian Sovietisation to the typology and terminology of quasi-exilic experience, experience of misplacedness. In a way, it is both a synonym and antonym of *gharīb*: an alien among ostensibly one’s own folks, when not him is a ‘zealot’ among vacillating and reluctant majority, but he is a reluctant person among a majority of ‘zealots’. (An older meaning of the word is ‘non-man (არაკაცი-1) [deserving contempt, non puttable at any position (არჩასაგდები), cut-off from men], a degenerated, bestialised (human)’.) It is clear to me that Titsian addressed the denigrating portrait of the émigrés to himself too – even more to himself than to them; an ostensibly poster-like *zakaznoj* portrait mirroring, being actually an indirect auto-portrait. Titsian hinted at his sense of being superfluous, unnecessary in Soviet Georgia already in his 1928 ‘Rioni-port’ (second part, first in the 2015 edition). A completely opposite condition of the self in space and among people is conveyed in his ‘Avtodor of the deserts’ (2015, vol. 1, pp. 169-170, see 170), no 3 of his ‘Armenian’ cycle. One can suspect a tribute to myth of friendship of Soviet peoples, but why this myth is not put into action on the occasion of “Scythia”? Here we approach a peripheral facet of our topic: which non-Georgian spaces are alien and which are non-alien to Titsian’s lyrical ‘I’? Armenia and Dagestan vs. “Scythia”.

3. The ‘trans-alpine’ space as domestic space: a reversal of Ovidiac-Pushkinian ‘Orientalism’ and of non-conformist’s superfluousness: ‘Gunib’

„გუნიბი“
Могилы вольности Гилгебиль и Гуниб!
В. Хлебников

გადმოვიარე დაღესტანი... ვნახე გუნიბი,
გიაური ვარ - და ვარ მაინც ეხლა მიურიდი,
ხმალი ლეკური ამდეხანაც არ იღუნება,
ამ ხმალს მე ეხლაც სიხარულით გულს გავუყრიდი.

დაუთოვია სისპეტაკე ზეცას თეთრ თოვლით,
სდგანან ზვავების ეშაფოტათ მაღალი მთები,
მოდუღს გრიგალი შურისძიების მეორე მოსვლით,
იხტიოზავრის წარღვნის ღამეს დაეფეთება.
ვხატავ არწივთა სამუდამოთ დანგრეულ ბუდეს
და მოგონების სირცხვილიდან თვალი მევსება,
ამ ცის სიმაღლეს შეგინება რომ გაუბედეს,
ამის სირცხვილი, საქართველოვ, შენც ხომ გედება.
ქართული ძვლები ალპებიან აქ რუსის ხიშტებს,
მეცოდებიან ამ საწყალთა გახრული ძვლები,
სული თან წაყვათ სამოთხეში მამაც ჯიგიტებს
და თქვენ კი დარჩით, ჩემო ძმებო, გაძარცულები.
და ამაღამაც, როცა ლეწავს ყველაფერს ქარი,
მიურიდების სულს კიდევ ლოცავს მათი იმამი.
თქვენი კი წახდა სამუდამოთ ბრძოლა მედგარი,
არც დაგიტირებთ უცხოეთში უცხოთა[1] ღამე.
არ მისროლია მე არასდროს ჯერ კაჟის თოფი,
არც გალესილი მრტყმია წელზე ლეკური ხმალი --
მაგრამ უეცრად ვაჟკაცობამ მეც შემაშფოთა,
არ მინდა, ვიყო მე პოეტი სისხლით დამფრთხალი
და ამ ღამიდან დაწყებული დღე რაც კი გის,
მე ვწერ პოემას: რომ გარეცხოს თქვენი ღალატი.

17 მაისი, 1927

ტფილისი" (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 1, p.).

„Gunib"
The cemeteries of liberty Gilgebil and Gunib!
V. Xlebnikov

I came through to Daghestan… I saw Gunib,
I am a giaour – and I am however now a murid,
The sword of Lezgians so much times is not bent,
This sword I now still with joy in [my] heart will insert.
Has thrown limpidness the sky with white snow,
Sit as an échafaud (scaffold) of avalanches high mountains,

[1] უცხოების? or უცხოებს? or უცხოებმა? I admit the Genitive makes most sense.

Boils in[1] a hurricane with revenge's second coming,
Flushing away an ichthyosaur, gets the night panicked.
I paint eagles' forever ruined nest
And from memories' shame my eye is filling (getting full),
This sky height that a desecration was dared,[2]
Of this the shame, o Georgia, won't on you too fall[?]
Georgian bones cause decay here to Russian bayonets,
Call to me of these pitiable [dead] the gnawed bones,
Soul[s] just at this moment you stretch to [catch] in Heaven [dwelling]
brave jigits[3]
Yet you will remain, my brothers, destitute (stripped bare).
And this night too, when threshes/smashes everything the wind,
Murids' souls again blesses their imam.
While yours damaged for ever the fight fierce/thunderous
And will not weep (lament) for you in a foreign land a foreigners' night.
I still have never shot with a flint gun,
Neither sharpened has stricken me in the waist Lezgian sword –
But suddenly braveness (manhood) me too bothered,
I do not want to be a poet with blood startled
And since [the very moment when] the day that begun with this night
has persevered[4],
I write a *poema* [narrative/long poem]: to be washed up your treason.
17 May, 1927
Tfilisi'.

Titsian broadens Nikoloz Baratashvili's motif of orphaned poet/nation, expressed in his 'Orphaned soul' and 'The tomb of king Erekle' (Rayfield, 2000, pp. 146–147). Titsian broadens his own earlier reinterpretation of the motif as a destitution of the (Christian) faith of fathers (distinguished from Chaldean pagan forefathers) (a 'fatherlessness' analysed by Bela Ts'puria (1999, pp. 192–197)). Being or-

[1] Boils while, connotatively, approaching 'us': because of the semantics of the desemanticised in this word prefix mo-. The last word in the verse, "mosvla", helps the receiver re-semanticise 'mo-dughs'.
[2] 'That somebody dared a desecration of this celestial height'.
[3] A very difficult verse for me. An addition of a syllable may substantially change the meaning. Into 'Spirit and Father take you in Heaven to jigits'.
[4] Lit.: present tense. The lexical meaning is insecure: გება – expect, hope, ვჰგებ, ?ჰგებ, ?ჰგის...; be, persevere – ვჰგიებ, ვჰგიე, ჰგიე, ჰგია... ან დაგვა, 1) ვსდაგავ... ვიწვი inflame, 2) ვჰგვი, გავე – ცოცხით გავწმენდ (clean with) broom.

phaned turns out to be just one kind (even if very important) of being destitute. So one (a nation, a poet) can be destitute (stripped bare) of parents, of homeland, of place in Heaven, of (see below) teacher/master. Concern or anxiety about the danger of such broad destitution, either of one's own self or of the Georgian nation, seems to be the invariant topic of Titsian.

The poem uses Muslim Persian, socialist revolutionary and Christian symbolism, to express repentance and entrance, on behalf of Georgians, into mystical union with the Lezgians (and, indirectly, to assume studentship under Imam Shamil).[1] The key symbolic images are the one of the Nightingale (unobtrusively played by the lyrical 'I') and the Rose (represented by Lezgian's bravery and their imam's blessing/ pray for them) and of the Cavalry and the Second Coming (this dual image oscillates between the modern shape of a scaffold and its Christian original). A feeling of monumentality and even oecumenical encompass is achieved through the juxtaposition of macro- and micro-topographical scales in the sixth line: 'Sit at a scaffold of avalanches the mountains', – which indirectly identifies mountains with animate beings. The main feeling, besides the recurrent shame (and repentance), is the one of destitution (depravedness of, in the first place, honour and a proper teacher/master), which is a broadening of Baratashvili's image of orphaned nation (=depravedness of parents). The poem invites to be inscribed in Titsian's corpus about misplacement for two reasons: it shapes misplacement as an aspect of multiaspectual mis-being; and it encourages comparison between two adjacent to Georgia foreign lands – Daghestan and "Scythia", the latter turning out to be the foreign land indeed.

4. Conclusion

The observations of the present analysis should be checked against a closer reading of the analysed poems and a selective reference to their biographical contexts.

The analysis should be complemented by widening of the textual material.

First, by a close look at Pushkin-mentioning texts of Titsian and at his translations from that poet. I would mention now what seem to me the most important texts of this group. These are the poem 'To A. Pushkin' (22 Jan. 1937; 2015, vol. 1, pp. 211–213)[2], and some letters by and to him. A letter, co-authored with Nikolo Mi-

[1] Considering Rebecca Gould's excellent (to my mind) analysis of 'Gunib' (Gould, 2016, pp. 175-181) and re-using it to explore Titsian's experiences of misplacement, as well as commenting on the differences between mine and her translations of the poem, needs a separate effort (article).

[2] A 1936 letter by Grigorii Sannikov gives a hint that it was a commissioned poem (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 2, p. 435); however, it far exceeded the recommended eight to twelve lines.

cishvili and Simon Chikovani, to the film-producing factory of Georgia in June 1936, pleading for creating a film about Ilia Chavchavadze on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of his death (Tabidze, 2015, vol. 2, pp. 404-405), shows that his mind was anchored on the Georgian historical calendar, despite the in fact colonial anxiety about the Pushkin's jubilee. In a letter from 2 August 1936 Ilia Zilberstein expresses his wish to discuss with Titsian "whatever matters around Pushkin, in particular about my screenplay", indicates that "the film is being shot now, I guess, around Kazbek in full speed" (2015, vol. 2, p. 415). A letter by Aleksandr Mitrofanov from 20 October 1936 (2015, vol. 2, p. 422) shows that Titsian was writing an article 'Pushkin in Georgia'. One by Elena Rozmirovich (31 Dec. 1936) – that Titsian was the chief of the Pushkin jubilee committee in Georgia (ibid: 434), and one by Aleksandr Bubnov and E. Rozmirovich (8 May 1937) that Titsian was awarded a bronze medal about the Pushkin celebrations (ibid: 447). Until a scholarly edition of Titsian's heritage is being prepared, we would have a limited idea about his contribution to the 1937 Georgian edition of Pushkin. Apparently, he translated part IX of 'Imitation of Quran', and 'Monastery at Kazbek' and 'To Iazykov'[1]. I would define the common thematic denominator of these three pieces thus: the (im)potency of the Ovidiac-Pushkinian elegiac tradition to understand regional Christian and Muslim artefacts and mentalities. I would suggest that by processing these three works, Titsian was able to compare the relative value of different cultural archetypes of somewhere-else-ness vis-à-vis his personal experience of ნაკაცარი (misfit) in Soviet Georgia.

A second group of relevant material would include texts 'domestifying' Georgian neighbourhood. Unlike "Scythia", Daghestan, but also Armenia, were felt as domestic spaces. In „უდაბნოთა ავტოდორი" ('Avtodor [Auto way] of the deserts')[2], the third poem in Titsian's cycle *სომხეთში* (In Armenia)[3], he wrote: „მე უცხო თემში ვიყავი სტუმრად, / მაგრამ იქ უცხო არავინ არი" ('I was guest at a foreign tribe (nation), / but here no one was foreign'). Besides conventional and expected disparaging misinformation about Dashnaks (the Armenian analogues of the Mensheviks ruling the first Georgian republic, 1918-1921), and expected noise about "the tempo of building of socialism", the text of Titsian names anchors for the

[1] This poem mentions Ovid; just as Tician's own 'Indeed I said that this Chrysostom is a frog…'. In the latter text, against possible expectations, Ovid features not as a weeper but as one by whom Phasis was eulogised. A 'Copernican' turn!

[2] „…და ავტოდორი დიდ უდაბნოთა..." ('…an the Auto way of the big deserts…') in the 1934 edition.

[3] I would not dismiss the cycle as simply a piece of work on Soviet theme, as M. Abuladze seems to do (1999, p. 161; compare idem, 1961, pp. 94-95).

Georgian-Armenian friendship that are incompatible with the framework of official discourse of friendship of (Soviet) peoples. These were Gilgamesh, the Bible and the Doors of Heaven (Tabidze 2015, vol. 1, pp. 169-170; the same in 1934, pp. 209, 206, 208). Evidently, Titsian maintained his "Chaldean myth". In the same poem, Titsian mentions the piece of Armenian poetry he translated and published (Avetik Isaakian's 'Abul ala Maari', in 1929 or 1930 and in 1936). It is not important for the present article whether his choice preceded the trip to Soviet Armenia or post-ceded it. The work chosen thematises 'somewhere-else-ness' and misplacement activating cultural memory disentangled from Ovidiac-Pushkinian elegiac tradition and that implements a new step in Titsian's erstwhile metapoetic task of putting the rose of Hafez in the vase of Prudhomme etc.

A third group of relevant material has to be gathered around mentions of words meaning 'exile', 'refugee', 'homeless' etc. Thus, ლტოლვ- is present in „მედეას სიმღერა" ('Medea's song', [1910]) – 'you were not able to host my refugees' (2015, vol. 1, p. 17), while in 'In Armenia' cycle fifth poem 'The/A salamuri is salamuri, isn't it?' (1931) we read: 'In this canyon right to this place is spread / the non-buried refugees' carrion' (ibid: 171).

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