

## Pataphysical Discourse and Georgian Reflections in Comparative Analysis of Georgian and French Avant-Garde

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### Abstract

This paper studies Alfred Jarry's Pataphysics and searches for Pataphysical reflections in Georgian modernist literature, including works by Georgian modernist writers Konstantine Gamsakhurdia (1893-1975) and Demna Shengelaiia (1896-1980), and contemporary Georgian writer Tamaz Chiladze (born 1931), in a comparative analysis of the Georgian and French avant-garde movements. The former was 'born' in an isolated environment, in a country with a rich cultural background and literary tradition, first under the rule of Russian Tsarism (1801-1918) and then under the oppression of the Soviet Union (1921-1989). The Georgian avant-garde was never totally European but Asian too, and came to a 'bloody', tragic end as a victim of the Soviet totalitarian regime, whereas the French avant-garde was rather free, bold, limitless, and uncontrolled. Examining these two absolutely different avant-gardes and studying Pataphysical themes and reflections in Georgian literature in hindsight will provide a valuable picture of the movement and the period itself.

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### Introduction

Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), French symbolist writer and precursor of the Theatre of the Absurd of France, author of a scandalous play, *Ubu Roi*, invented Pataphysics<sup>1</sup> during the period of French avant-garde (*La belle époque*) to mock at metaphysics and traditional sciences (as in Pataphysics 'each experimental case is a unique phenomenon following its own unique Laws'), stating that if there is Metaphysics, there must be Pataphysics too – the realm beyond metaphysics. Alfred Jarry finally formed the theory of Pataphysics in his neo-scientific novel *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* (released posthumously in 1922), in which Jarry discusses the principles and themes of Pataphysics and gives the reader a comprehensive definition:

Pataphysics is superimposed on metaphysics and extends it as far beyond as the latter extends beyond physics [...] Pataphysics will examine laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one [...] Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineament.<sup>2</sup>

1 French La 'Pataphysique – pseudo-science and philosophy. Etymological spelling, Greek: τὰ ἐπὶ τὰ μεταφυσικά – 'that which is above metaphysics'.

2 Alfred Jarry, *Selected Stories of Alfred Jarry* trans. Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor (London: Methuen, 1965 [1911]) 145.

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Pataphysics was born during the French avant-garde, accompanying an Anarchist movement like an explosion, when artists started realising that saloon gatherings were not sufficient anymore and they were in desperate need of something more – a bigger arena to have a wider audience and to make louder, bolder, even outrageous performances: ‘They developed a systematic technique of scandal in order to keep their ideas before the public.’<sup>3</sup>

As for Georgian modernist writers, after three years of independence (1918-1921) they had to create their literary works during the Soviet Union regime, during which Georgian modernism and avant-garde struggled hard to survive but, unfortunately, could not and turned out to be very short-lived. According to the Georgian contemporary scholar Bela Tsifuria the formation and development of Georgian avant-garde took place through two directions: multicultural avant-garde (as being one of the centres of South-Eastern Europe, Caucasian and Russian avant-garde, 1918-1921) and Georgian avant-garde (1910-1920). It finally ceased to exist in the 1930s when the Soviet regime officially declared modernism to be a kind of formalism, as a part of bourgeois culture. As for avant-garde with its conceptual radicalism and anti-Soviet discourse, it was forcibly moved to a marginal position and, finally, after 1930s it was totally destroyed and replaced by socialistic realism. However, Georgian authors were able to write several works with avant-garde elements, in which we can identify Pataphysical themes and reflections (hallucination, ‘pataphysical defamiliarisation’, dream, the ‘death’ of God, anomaly, *Clinamen*, parallel times). As for Georgian avant-garde, it has not until now been uncovered and profoundly studied even by Georgian scholars as throughout the whole twentieth century during the Soviet Union Regime, after Georgia was forcibly made a Soviet country and a peripheral zone of the Soviet Union, it became the part of the forbidden memory, forgotten history.

### Historical-Chronological Survey of Georgian Modernism/avant-garde

The beginning of the twentieth century is the time when ‘The monster [Tsarism], which was considered to be undefeated, fell down with just a single flick.’<sup>4</sup> As a result, Georgian literary life and process became lively and more profound, and new directions started emerging. Poets of different generations and beliefs peacefully co-existed and co-worked.

In 1915 Akaki Tsereteli and Vazha-Pshavela, two great Georgian realist writers, passed away. Georgian symbolist poet Galaktion Tabidze wrote, ‘the great époque has ended’.<sup>5</sup> The writers of a new generation had to take up a new responsibility as the society expected something innovative from them. So, the scenario completely changes: first of all, it is important to admit that, generally, modernism or avant-gardism is associated with mainly symbolism in Georgia. In other words, the Georgian symbolist school is the representative of the methodological novelties and the groupings of the 1920s, the name of which is *Tsisferkantselebi* (‘The Bluehorners’). The name of this group meant to connect Europe and Asia: the word ‘blue’ stood for the tradition of the European romanticism and ‘horns’ for the Georgian tradition.

After the declaration of the independence of Georgia on 26 May 1918, Tbilisi became a cultural centre. Russian writers and artists escaping from the Red Russian Revolution began to arrive in Georgia. The literary elite of Kutaisi moved to Tbilisi too. So, Tbilisi became ‘the city

3 Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, Revised edition. (Toronto: Random House, 1968) 34.

4 Kita Abashidze, *ცხოვრება და ხელოვნება [Life and Art]* (Tbilisi: თბილისის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, 1971) xx. Translation mine.

<sup>5</sup> Galaktion Tabidze, *რჩეული ნაწარმოებები [Selected Works]*, (Tbilisi: Palitra L, 2011), 25.

of poets'. According to Bela Tsipuria's research, one of the tasks that *Tsisferkantselebi* set themselves was the positioning of Georgia as a cultural centre of modernism and refusing to accept that Georgia was on the periphery in relation with the Russian imperial centre. Moreover, the leader of the group even stated in the first manifesto that 'After Georgia Paris is the most sacred country.'<sup>6</sup>After 1918 the futurists escaping from the Russian Bolshevik Revolution started migrating to Georgia: Aleqsei Kruchnick, Ygor Terentiev, the brothers Ilia and Kiril Zdanevich, Vasil Kamenski and others. They would organise artistic and literary evenings in Tiflis cafes and cabarets. All these processes were taking place in a small country that always had to defend itself and fight for its independence, national identity and state system.

However, in 1921 the 'monster', whose defeat Georgia celebrated at the beginning of the twentieth century, came back, but this time as a Soviet Union. The totalitarian regime reached its climax in 1930s and started destroying Georgian Modernism: many artists were either arrested, exiled or shot. In 1931 *Tsisferkantselebi* declared self-liquidation. This act is finally followed by the 'bloody end' executed by the Soviet Union ideology and regime: on 22 July 1937 the leader of *Tsisferkantselebi* commits suicide directly in the so-called Palace of Writers, just after the meeting. In 1937 many other Georgian writers and artists were either shot or exiled forever.

As for the representative of the other literary direction of that period in Georgia, it was the group of futurists with an initiative of fighting against traditions and calling for novelties on behalf of avant-garde, which finally formed its 'ideology' with a manifesto *Georgia-Phoenix* published on 6-7 May 1922. They declared futuristic aesthetics as the only modern art, stating 'We reject everything that is behind us and from now on Georgia starts from us'.<sup>7</sup> In 1924-1928 Georgian futurists published three journals: *H2SO4* (1924, one issue), *Literatura da Skhva* (*Literature and Other*, 1925, one issue), *Memartskheneoba* (*Leftism* 1927-28, two issues), and one newspaper *Drouli* (*Timely*, 1925-26, three issues). It is worth mentioning that the manifestoes of symbolism and of futurism were printed in the French journal entitled *Phigaro* on 18 September, 1886 (Jean Moreas) and on February 20, 1909 (Philipo Tomazo Marinetti). As for *H2SO4*, it was not just the name of the journal but also the name of the group uniting the principles of Dadaism, Constructivism and Futurism, which insisted on being the only art of socialistic revolution. Georgian futurists, members of *H2SO4* were Simon Chiqovani, Beno Gordeziani, Irakli Gamrekeli, Pavlo Nozadzeetc.

What was Georgian futurism (*H2SO4*) and symbolism (*Tsisferi Kantsebi*) like in sum? Georgian modernism, or avant-garde, was born in the closed surroundings, which later became the victim of the totalitarian regime of the soviet ideology. Irma Ratiani notes that

We should probably take modernist writing as the model of anti-Soviet discourse with its diverse forms and tributaries, for it was high modernism characterized by a striving for representational freedom, the artistic tendencies of quest for truth and establishment of individuality that constituted the main threat to Soviet demagogues.<sup>8</sup>

Both symbolism (which is associated with modernism in Georgia) and avant-gardism started rather late in Georgia for a number of reasons. When symbolists started their grouping in

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<sup>6</sup>Bela Tsipuria, 'ცობფერო განწყობი' და ავანგარდო [*Blue Horns' and Avant-garde*], *Poetry Studies* (Tbilisi) 5 (2012) 172-83.

<sup>7</sup>*Manifesto*, 1922. (My translation).

<sup>8</sup>Irma Ratiani, 'Models of Literary Discourse in Conditions of Soviet Totalitarianism,' *Litinfo* 4.2(2010). Online. <http://www.litinfo.ge/vol-4-iss-2/ratiai.htm> Accessed 15 February 2017.

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Georgia, the period of symbolism was already passed in Europe and Russia. However, they were pioneers in Georgia trying to destroy conventions and establish novelties in poetry. Therefore, they are associated with avant-gardism in Georgia. What is more, the Georgian avant-garde was neither political as was the case with the European avant-garde, nor did it ever try to change the values of society. Besides this, the Tiflis avant-garde upheld the idea of the European and Asian unity. One more thing that makes the Georgian avant-garde different from the European is that for the European the present is the result of the past and beginning of the future, which is a determiner. As for Georgian avant-garde, it considers reality more as space than time and ‘it still perceives time epically.’<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as Luigi Magarotto, an Italian Kartvelologist and the researcher of Georgian avant-garde asserted, ‘In no other countries did a tradition and history have as strong influence as they did in Georgia. The attempts of Georgian modernists were somehow even the continuation of the tradition.’<sup>10</sup> In conclusion, it could be seen that although they were late to form futurism, manifestoes and scandals compared with Europe, Georgian avant-garde and modernist writers, in general, could still find in the background of the world avant-garde experience an original and unique path:

It is obvious that Georgian literary modernism is a unique phenomenon in European literature and it does not represent an imitative appendage to European modernism or a peripheral sphere. On the contrary, Georgian modernism creates a totally imitative invariant of European modernism. It does broaden and extend European modernism.<sup>11</sup>

### **Parisian avant-garde and *La Belle Époque***

This scenario of the avant-garde in Paris is totally different. The French call this period *la belle époque*, ‘the good old days’ – 30 years of peace and quiet, prosperity and internal contradiction. This period was described by Roger Shattuck as the ‘Banquet Years,’<sup>12</sup> a real carnival, which lasted 1885–1914 in Paris. Paris represented the cultural capital of the world that time. The lifestyle of the high-class bourgeois society was associated with hypocrisy, false values, recklessness and immorality, which was soon followed by avant-garde turning all the values upside-down. Prior to this, a ‘wake-up funeral’ took place in Paris, partly bringing about the revolution in arts and literature: in May 1885, Victor Hugo died. It could be said that the avant-garde started in Paris when France was freed from a man as well as a literary movement and was able to start a totally new *époque*.

Indeed, Paris became an artistic hub of the world in the first half of the twentieth century. The years which were going to be followed by the First World War were characterised by great experimentation and a variety of artistic movements, including Fauvism, Cubism and Orphism. For artists, musicians and writers from all over the world the city was like a magnet attracting them to a place that was synonymous with personal and artistic freedom – especially during the

<sup>9</sup>Tamar Paichadze, *მოდერნიზმის მოდელის გაზრებისთვის ქართულ შემოქმედებებში სივრცეში [To the Genesis of Modernist Models in Georgian Creative Space]*, *Ars Georgica*. Online magazine, Series B. Modern and Contemporary Art. George Chubinashvili National Center for Research of Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, Tbilisi. 2015, Tbilisi. Available through: <http://www.georgianart.ge/index.php/en/research/90-2011-12-08-16-19-47.html> Accessed on 15 February 2017.

<sup>10</sup>Alastair Brotchie, *Alfred Jarry: a Pataphysical Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011) 148.

<sup>11</sup>Koka Bregadze, *ქართული ავანგარდი [Georgian Modernism]* (Tbilisi: Meridiani, 2013) 11.

<sup>12</sup>Roger Shattuck refers to La Belle Époque as ‘Banquet Years’. He also describes the death of Victor Hugo in *The Banquet Years*, revised edition (Toronto: Random House, 1968).

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rise of totalitarian governments in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Among all the 'layers' that made up the city, the most popular and demanding was still the salon, where the aristocracy developed the conversation of what were considered as 'great minds'. But soon the great performers started moving from salon to the café. So, the century changed slowly but firmly. Artists discovered that their path was hardly being followed with a great enthusiasm. They constituted what we call the avant-garde, a 'tradition of heterodoxy and opposition which defied civilized values in the name of individual consciousness.'<sup>13</sup> They started and followed systematic scandals so as to keep their ideas before the public. The *Lapin Agile*, the Montmartre cabaret that succeeded the *Chat Noir* around the turn of the century, would host many celebrations. Indeed, it was carnival time in Paris.

A number of personalities, impresarios and patrons were prominent in the Parisian avant-garde. Apollinaire, a keen advocate of *l'esprit nouveau*, was a leading art critic, who wrote enthusiastically about Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Simultanism. His collection of poems, *Calligrammes* (1918), is a demonstration of an early avant-garde through complex ideograms and spatial arrangements of words and letters on a page. In Paris, everything is happening at the same time: Picasso and Braque bring cubism and Éric Satie resumes composing. After fifteen years of reticence, Paul Valéry starts writing poetry whereas André Gide accomplishes his novel of *l'acte gratuit*, *Les caves du Vatican*. Last but not least, Alfred Jarry ridicules the whole French Bourgeoisie creating the monstrous personage of Ubu and at the same time invents Pataphysics, philosophy and pseudo-science to mock at metaphysics and traditional sciences.

These were the early demonstrations, manifestations of the French avant-garde during which it served as a true community:

To a greater extent than at any time since the Renaissance, painters, writers, and musicians lived and worked together and tried their hands at each other's arts in an atmosphere of perpetual collaboration [...] the avant-garde first formed in France as there was an artistic tradition of defiance, and it has lasted longer there because the country as a whole has only reluctantly taken to heart the lessons of its own most venturesome talents.<sup>14</sup>

So, what were the two very different avant-gardes like in sum? The Georgian avant-garde started in the isolated environment and was associated with symbolism. Later it was continued with futurism; it was non-political, represented only culture and was never totally European but Asian too. The Georgian avant-garde co-existed with foreign avant-gardists staying in Tiflis. Besides this, it could not totally lose touch with the traditions and the past. Finally, Georgian avant-garde ceased with a 'bloody', tragic end as it became a victim of the Soviet totalitarian regime. It lasted for about 20 years. We have an absolutely different scenario in French avant-garde: it started in Bourgeois environment and came with Anarchism. Unlike Georgian avant-garde, French one was free, bold and limitless and was never associated with symbolism. What is more, it tried hard to change social values and sometimes even lost touch with human values, something that never took place in Georgian avant-garde. Finally, the avant-garde was first formed in France and lasted longer there than in other country.

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13 Shattuck, 24

14 Shattuck, 42

## Who is Alfred Jarry and what is ‘Pataphysical Discourse’?

As one of the main goals of this paper is to study and demonstrate at what extent avant-garde can develop, what kind of manifestations it can have when it is free like wind and is able to blow in any directions at any speed and in any manner, we refer to Pataphysics not just as a science and philosophy but also as the best embodiment of a free, limitless avant-garde – Pataphysics is a manifestation what levels avant-garde can reach in a free environment. As for Georgian avant-garde, it is a good example how avant-garde can be destroyed and distorted during any totalitarian regime; how severely it is degraded and tormented because of being controlled, censored, and locked in a vacuum by the system.

Alfred Jarry was not just a writer. He was a playwright and director of his own life as well: his whole life was like a play of a tragicomic genre. Not only did he write the play *Ubu Roi* but he also created a new personage, a new human exposing rather than hiding all his internal faults and monstrosity – the era of hypocrisy, mannerism and courtesy is over, and it is time to unmask, let all guises go away and show what we really are deep down. And Jarry lived like Ubu, the most grotesque personage of that time in Paris, talked like him and walked like him to ridicule more the bourgeois society and the naturalism of the theatre of Paris as well as the values of the humanity in general. Ubu was not just a fictional character protesting against Parisian bourgeoisie and the values of Naturalism in the French theatre of that time. Ubu was a ‘real’ character embodied by Jarry, who was the beginning of a new philosophy and (anti-) science in Paris, and whose path was continued by Dr Faustroll, another character by Jarry. The paradox is that Jarry’s personages were ‘real’, and Jarry himself turned into a scandalous fictional character walking in the Parisian streets, visiting cabarets on Montmartre, shocking the French society with his sarcasm, mockery and gaining more enemies than friends. Jarry lived like a Pataphysical personage – living his life at full extent and staging his early death at the age of 34. No, Jarry did not commit suicide. And yet, his life-style, his philosophy and the way he perceived the world, events, things and people, caused his early death. Before his death, Alfred Jarry invented a new ‘science’, Pataphysics, *the science of imaginary solutions*. Roger Shattuck, an American scholar studying the French avant-garde, expressed the essence of Pataphysics more simply: ‘Pataphysics, then, is an inner attitude, a discipline, a science, and an art, which allows each person to live his life as an exception, providing no law but his own.’<sup>15</sup>

Finally, we have reached our destination – ‘pataphysical discourse’. In the paper I define ‘Pataphysical Discourse’ as Pataphysical themes, symbols and literary devices, and the language itself used by Jarry in his works, which were reflected in the works of the Georgian authors even though they were not aware of Pataphysics. However, since modernism and avant-gardism were so developed in Georgia, the country was ready to receive Pataphysics at the level of cultural intuition and reflection. I discovered the following themes that form Pataphysical discourse in several Georgian literary works of that period: hallucination, dream, parallel times, decomposition of the plot, anomaly, *Clinamen*, ‘Pataphysical defamiliarisation’ and the ‘death’ of God. Georgian writers and artists were not familiar with Pataphysics that time: they had no knowledge of Alfred Jarry and his philosophy, and even if they did, it would have been unfavourable and even hazardous for them under the Bolshevik totalitarian regime. It is quite remarkable that when these writers came up with something new that they did so in the same manner and within a few decades of each other, in different countries, cultures and

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15 Shattuck, 28.

environments, absolutely independently from one another, just because they were in need of better self-expression, innovations, or some circumstances push them to do something to take them beyond their world. Georgian writers managed to leave the boundaries of physics and metaphysics in search of something more: more freedom and liberation, destruction of conventions, of 'normality', existing values; contradicting and protesting against reality. Or maybe a totalitarian regime is the best incentive for writers to come up with something like Pataphysics as a form of protest: 'The primary feature of totalitarianism as enforced rule is creation of ideological dictatorship, forming of clichés and their implementation. This obviously restricts considerably the frame of literary freedom.'<sup>16</sup>

### 'Pataphysical Defamiliarisation' - Pataphysical Anomaly and *Clinamen*

According to the Russian Formalists,

the aim of art is to give the sensation of things as they are perceived rather than as they are known or recognised. The technique of art is the device of 'defamiliarisation' of things and the device of laboured forms, which increases the difficulty and the length of perception as perceptive process in art is autotelic and must be prolonged [...] to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase difficulty and the length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.<sup>17</sup>

So, the role of art is to make things seem unfamiliar and not automatic and make us see them as though we saw them for the first time. This is absolutely pataphysical, as in Pataphysics there are no repetitions, all things and occasions are unique following their own unique rules. Jarry defamiliarises things, events, personages at the extent that it is almost impossible to identify them conventionally. Moreover, the process of perception takes place at different stages and for the reader it is too hard and complicated to do it at one try. As pataphysician Ruy Launoir noted, 'the pataphysician proposes to decorate with new solutions our representations of the poverty-stricken, linear, "world".'<sup>18</sup>

It can be considered that it is Pataphysical anomaly and *clinamen* that best demonstrates Pataphysical defamiliarisation. Anomaly, which primitively can be defined as something that does not fit, is probably the most common theme of Pataphysics. It is noteworthy to mention that Pataphysical anomaly is always internal, following its own contradictory logic and rules. In the Pataphysical realm, in theory, it should be absolutely unnecessary and impossible to have any anomalies as in Pataphysics there are no repetitions but everything is equally exceptional and unique. Therefore, 'Pataphysical anomaly exists *within* the rules that it contradicts'.<sup>19</sup> Surprisingly, Pataphysical anomaly, which might be considered as the central Pataphysical energy, is as absurd as the thing it contradicts and always ready to destroy the surroundings (clichés, rules, laws, established opinions, common sense, values). Alfred Jarry's most grotesque

<sup>16</sup>Irma Ratiani, 'Models of Literary Discourse in Conditions of Soviet Totalitarianism', *Litinfo* 4.2 (2010). Online. <http://www.litinfo.ge/vol-4-iss-2/ratiani.htm> Accessed 15 February 2017.

<sup>17</sup>Viktor Shklovskij, 'Art as Technique, *ОПОЯЗ* 1917. Online.<http://www.opojaz.ru/manifests/kakpriem.html> Accessed on 15 February 2017 (Russ.: Шкловский, В., 1917. 'Вступительные замечания', *ОПОЯЗ*). Translation mine.

<sup>18</sup>Andrew Hultkrans, Review of 'Pataphysics: A Useless Guide by Andrew Hugill', *Bookforum* 13 November 2012, 13. Online. <http://www.bookforum.com/review/10464> Accessed 15 February 2017.

<sup>19</sup>Andrew Hugill, *Pataphysics, A Useless Guide* (London: The MIT Press, 2012) 13.

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personage Ubu is a perfect embodiment of Pataphysical anomaly – his reign was monstrous but, in fact, he could not change the world as his reign was a like a momentary eruption after which everything returned to its primary place as if there was no chaos and anarchy in the country at all. So, in Pataphysics the *anomalos* is more a surprise, often grotesque, realised through defamiliarisation, which, in reality, causes laughter and amusement rather than tragedy. Cristian Bök goes even further in his attempt to connect Formalism with Pataphysics while discussing the ignored, unused possibilities of the language in narration and emphasising ‘the novelty of anomaly’, and proposes the following:

Formalism almost verges upon the 'pataphysical insofar as its scientific evaluation of poetry privileges the novelty of anomaly – the surprising noises in the alienation effect of *ostranenie*. Like Futurism, such Formalism tries to use the language of scientific methodology in order to examine the neglected machinery of language itself, not the word as sign, but the word as such (*slovokaktakavoe*). Such a machine embodies a 'pataphysical retroversion that does not simply use its devices to convey a narrative meaning, but uses such meaning as an excuse to deploy innovative devices.<sup>20</sup>

Pataphysical novels are ‘Pataphysical defamiliarisation’ of the world – objects, people, events – as we know it. Jarry often applies this technique, mostly in his descriptive language, and presents things not just differently but in an anomalous manner – rather strangely: one could never ever imagine to see this way in the world we live in. Very often Jarry’s defamiliarisation is of a paranormal character: he totally distorted people, things, events; made them come out of their niche and presented them in a totally unusual, anomalistic manner. Therefore, *Clinamen* by Lucretius, unpredictable swerve of atoms (the name he gave to this phenomenon to defend Epicurus’ atomistic doctrine) is the concept that is central to Pataphysics as it is about exception, anomaly, deviation. In one of the chapters of *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician*, Jarry mentions *Clinamen* as ‘the unforeseen beast *Clinamen* ejaculated on to the walls of its universe’, which is followed by the description of the Pataphysically defamiliarised world: ‘What a beautiful sunset! Or rather it is the moon, like a porthole in a hogshead of wine greater than a ship, or like the oily stopper of an Italian flask’, or ‘The river has a fat, soft face for the smack of oars, a neck with many wrinkles, a blue skin with green downy hair’, or ‘God forbids Adam and Eve to touch the tree of good and evil. The angel Lucifer runs away’.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, very often his method of defamiliarisation is either grotesque or funny, or even both at the same time. The personage of Pere Ubu would serve as the best example in this case as he is both ruthless and amusing at the same time, bringing about lots of laughter in the play.

As for the reflections of ‘pataphysical defamiliarisation’ in Georgian fiction of that period, the best example of this is the novel titled *Sanavardo*,<sup>22</sup> which was written in the modernist period by Demna Shengelaia. His manner of describing things are rather strange and paradoxical, sometimes even funny. It is noteworthy that Demna Shengelaia wrote and published *Sanavardo* in 1924 when the development of Georgian fiction was beset by problems including the tense

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<sup>20</sup>Christian Bök, ‘Pataphysics: the Poetics of an Imaginary Science’ (Illinois: North-Western University Press, 2002) 120-1. Online.[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD\\_0020/NQ27282.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD_0020/NQ27282.pdf) Accessed 15 February 2017.

<sup>21</sup>Alfred Jarry, *Collected Works II, Three Early Novels, Absolute Love, Days and Nights, Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician*, translated by Alexis Lykiard and Simon Watson Taylor (London: Atlas Press, 2006 [1897])196-7.

<sup>22</sup>Sanavardo is the name of the village in the east of Georgia.



political environment – the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union. So the novel was like the first flow unleashed to form a new type of Georgian novel, a modernist novel. Apart from its outstanding form, contents, poetics and language, the author invented a literary device that had been totally unknown before and created a modernist experimental novel – the problem of time and space is surmounted, which is often achieved through defamiliarisation: while creating artistic images in the structure of the novel, the writer uses absolutely strange and unexpected descriptive techniques for the construction of the fiction, which leads the reader to the illusionary, imaginary world of the ordinary things and occasions, presented in unordinary and sometimes abnormal way. Here are several examples:

There in the darkness the night rolled down the ground like a puppy, barking and howling;  
The sun is shining brightly directly on the moor and the blown up poison is flapping on the surface of the ground like sweetness;  
The night overgrown with moss was already rotten and moon was like a swollen stomach of a person diseased with leprosy;  
The moon dreared like a ripe cucumber;  
The mosquitoes are fluttering on the rays of the moon;  
The fever was pouring down on the ground like a yellow mucus;  
The moors have evaporated and are blowing off steam in the white-hot air;  
And the night went away whereas the morning is still so far away.<sup>23</sup>

The novel is full of such defamiliarised descriptions of the nature, of the environment. The writer goes too close to the objects and uncovers all the hidden details. That's why very often the realistic perspective is distorted and the reader starts believing that the night can roll down and bark, the moor can evaporate, the moon has not got beam but rays and there is no morning coming after the night has gone... Through this device – making unfamiliar what is familiar – the author manages to create an illusion of free associations. There is an absolutely old new world in front of us – this is a pataphysical world, the one that is and starts after metaphysics.

### Hallucination, Dream

As I have said, Georgian avant-gardism was forcibly stopped in 1930s due to the Soviet Union repressions and pressure. A very talented generation was liquidated. Of course, it was an artificial cessation of something very natural and this phenomenon (avant-garde) could not ultimately have been 'ceased' – it would have burst out again sooner or later, because avant-gardism was not a movement, class, or genre but it was a way of life that is always present. In 1950s some young Georgian writers manage again to create literary works with the elements of avant-garde. In the stories by Tamaz Chiladze, we were able to discover Pataphysical reflections such as dream/hallucination and parallel times leading to one of the central themes of Pataphysics called antinomy, or the plus-minus theory, which proves the simultaneous existence of the opposites. In Jarry everything is upside down: values are devalued as 'incongruity of life

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<sup>23</sup>Demna Shengelaia, *სანავარდო* [*Sanavardo*] (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1968). Translations mine.

must be understood as a source not of disgust but of joy. The intelligence can feed on triviality and by persistence create sublime'.<sup>24</sup>

So, Jarry started with absurdity and ended up in hallucination, violated consciousness. Using this literary device is not a novelty in our time as the first German romantics discovered another realm of dreams, which was resumed by Gerard de Nerval and Rimbaud. Their experience of dreams played a big role for Jarry and other avant-garde writers of The Banquet Years, who polished this technique and lead it towards hallucination. And Jarry's life itself was like a dream, or more a nightmare, which is not frightening but absurdist, outrageous but funny. In his early poetry Jarry applies traditional images of night and darkness to create dream surroundings. In the novel entitled *The Days and Nights (Les Jours et Les Nuits)* the author even goes further and depicts the possibility of the existence of a 'true hallucination', the continuous waking dream in which night cannot be distinguished from day and vice versa. Applying dream techniques in the arts meant an effort to overcome unrestricted intuitions of time and space, as I have said.

*The Crane* by Tamaz Chiladze (1964) is one of the outstanding stories in this sense: the character reaches such a state through dreaming or hallucination that it is hard both for him and for the reader to tell which is a dream (that is very hallucinatory on its side) and which is reality, or if a dream is really a dream or a reality and vice versa. The story starts with the scene of a husband and a wife: the man, Ucha, is in his bed and the wife is sitting on the bed looking through the window, describing to the man the sky full of cranes. The crane is the central motif in the story. The man likes the atmosphere a lot: he feels tired and drowsy and the voice of the woman pleases him as it calms him down like sleep does as 'this voice [...] was like a dream that one can hear rather than see.'<sup>25</sup> The author mentions the word 'dream' several times in the story. As for Tsira, the woman character, she is absolutely ostracised from reality, from the present time. Her husband helps her connect with the reality. Tsira only recognises the future: she actually does live in 'tomorrow'. When the man first saw her, she was walking in the bazaar wearing a white dress and sandals in the rain and smiling, taking no notice of the colourful fabrics on the stalls, nor ripe water-melons and trumpeters playing a melody. She was walking smiling and could neither see nor hear anything around her. Throughout the whole story the husband helps his wife, he even forces her not to lose touch with the present and past. In his hallucinatory dreams Ucha tries hard to remind her that they are a couple:

You must have become my wife. Don't you remember? We loved each other!

(The woman is laughing)

I have known you for a long time.

(The woman is laughing)

How could you forget everything.

Hush! Stop talking! – responded the woman.

We could have been happy!

Hush! Hush! - repeated the woman.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, he forces her to wear the dress she wore at their wedding day, which the woman cannot remember, or does not want to remember, as she asks the man, 'What? Which dress?' Then she exclaims his name several times 'Ucha! Ucha!', protesting against his request, protesting at

24 Shattuck, 34.

25 Tamaz Chiladze, *ჭიქა [The Crane]* (Tbilisi: Merani, 1994) 11.

26 Chiladze, 77. My translation.

being connected with the past as she has no sense of time – her husband serves as her sense of past time as well as her memory, which she neglects and avoids. Indeed, the wife is devoid of memory but only waits for something to happen in the future. Thus in the text we encounter parallel times – past, present and future – occurring simultaneously. As for the husband, he lives in two times, present and past at the same time, due to the memories, which are rather hallucinatory: sometimes it is quite hard to tell whether the man remembers something that really happened to him in the past or whether this is just a mirage; imagination occurring in the present time. So in the text there are certainly pataphysical reflections of plus and minus theory presented in terms of times. The factor of the memory makes this process even more intense as the man's memories are mostly hallucinatory.

There is a very similar scenario in *Days and Nights* by Alfred Jarry. Sengle, the main character, in love with the Memory of Self, is in need of a living, visible friend, since he has no recollection of his Self, being totally devoid of memory:

Sengle was discovering the true metaphysical cause of the happiness of loving [...] the enjoyment of anachronism and communing of his own past [...] It is admirable to live two different moments of time simultaneously; this is all that is required to live out authentically one moment of eternity, or rather, all eternity, since it has no moments [...] The present, possessing its past in the heart of another, at the same time lives out its Self and its Self plus something. If a moment of the past or a moment of the present existed separately at one point in time, it would not perceive this Plus something which is quite simply the Act of Perception. This is love of oneself and one's own past perceived in the eye of another.<sup>27</sup>

Alfred Jarry masterfully used the literary device of hallucination or dream in the novel through the alternations of chapters set during daytimes that are described as though they are happening at night, and vice versa, until that alternation itself breaks down: finally all the borders between the day and the night, the present and the past, reality and hallucination are eliminated and the oppositions reach a climax in the chapter entitled 'Pataphysics', in which Jarry mentions Leibniz and referred to 'Leibniz's definition, that perception is a hallucination which is true',<sup>28</sup> which he inverted – 'hallucination is a perception which is false' and formed a final definition of the hallucination: 'And he [Sengal] believed [...] there are only hallucinations, or perceptions, and that there are neither nights nor days [...] and that life is continuous.'<sup>29</sup> *Days and Nights* can be considered as one of the last literary creations still applying the language of Symbolism as well as modern literary devices such as recollection, dream, hallucination. Allastair Brotchie argues that 'Joyce was certainly familiar with Jarry's work, and the Surrealists' debt to him is immense and acknowledged.'<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Jarry, *Collected Works*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> It might seem that Jarry misattributed Taine's formulation of the concept of hallucination, 'external perception is a true hallucination', to Leibniz. However, Leibniz had already said this more than a century before Taine, but the latter expressed it in a more direct and simple manner, as Jarry tried to emphasise (Taine's *De l'intelligence*, Book 1, Part 2, Ch. 1).

<sup>29</sup> Jarry, *Collected Works* 75.

<sup>30</sup> Jarry, *Collected Works* 20.

## Ecstatic Hallucination

In the short story *Bells in the Gale* by Konstantine Gamsakhurdia (1924) the author applies the literary device of hallucination to make the character leave the boundaries of a reality which is very harsh for him, to liberate himself from all the chains that connect him with limited human abilities and to make his dream come true, feel happy and be devoid of any restrictions. In the story the cross has been removed from St Zaqaria Church, the priest has stopped his services, shaved his beard and opened a tavern. Only Sexton Oqropir still remembers God and he feels desperate due to the situation in the village: people have forgotten God, nobody goes to church anymore, a play titled ‘Arsena the Gunman’ is being staged in church in place of a sermon, and people are living in subservience to the satanic époque. Sexton Oqropir’s is said to be ‘a boring and nightmarish dream. The dream that a person will not even remember after waking up: how was it? Why was it?’<sup>31</sup> Reading this passage, one can feel a little confused about the reality and the dream: the writer does not say that his life was like a nightmare but that his life was a nightmare, was a boring dream, it is hard to determine what is real and what is a dream, or they are the same or one unity. So, Oqropir’s life is a dream and dream is his life, which is so monotonous that he does not remember much, nor does he regret or feel happy about anything much – he has been ringing the church bells for 25 years. On Easter Eve Sexton Oqropir is invited to the cabaret to drink wine. After drinking nine glasses of wine he falls into a hallucinatory realm. For the first time after so many years he starts feeling a little joy deep down. It is pouring down outside, the wind is blowing very strongly and clouds are on fire. He starts running in the dark through the village towards the church, feeling unusually full of joy, and finally climbing the steps to the bell tower he starts ringing first the small bells and then the bigger ones. And soon he reaches the climax of hallucination and enters an ecstasy: the bells start singing together with drunken angels and a bright milky path opens between the bell-ringer and the sky. Oqropir feels extremely happy and the unleashed bells start blowing with laughter towards the skies, singing loudly. An innocent moon is laughing on the draw-sheets of the white clouds like a baby Jesus in the cattle-shed of the shepherds. The clouds of ships with the sails of scarlet blood are blowing towards the moon and Jesus is hanging upside-down on the mast of the clouds like a wrecker pirate. Finally, the gale gets so strong that it destroys the bell-tower. Oqropir is dashed to the ground and dies in an ecstasy. And suddenly the author arises an existential question: ‘All his life Oqropir had thought about what life was like. Is not it a short fairy-tale?’ Then the author himself refers to ‘ecstasy’ in the story – ‘I want to sing for the ones killed in the ecstasy.’<sup>32</sup> So, this is one of the first texts in Georgian modernist literature in which the author uses the literary device of hallucination to help a depressed character escape the frames of reality and limited possibilities, to uncover hidden abilities inside him, use his imagination, feel free and happy, make his dream come true and, finally, die in this condition.

## The Concept of the ‘Death’ of God in Comparative Analysis

The attitude towards the concept of ‘death’ of God in Georgian and French avant-garde literature is absolutely different: since God has ‘died’ the human has become supreme, the only divinity. So, the God has been removed from the literature and the human has taken His place. French personages do not suffer from the ‘death of God’ but try in a humorous way to become divine

31Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, *ზარეზი გროგალში (The Bells in the Gale)* (Tbilisi: Palitra L, 2012 [1924]) 11.

32Gamsakhurdia, 20.



themselves, to unleash, uncover all their abilities, conscious and unconscious, to become almighty. In *La Dragonne* Jarry states bluntly: ‘We have covered a few years in our evolution since the guinea pig ... God is dead.’<sup>33</sup>In the texts of Jarry the reader comes across many manifestations of this tendency: in the play entitled *The Caesar Anti-Christ* the Almighty God leaves a hair in the brothel and panics when the hair starts making a noise that might reveal the fact that God has visited the brothel. He feels totally desperate and miserable and starts complaining: ‘Up until now, I believed myself to be the All-Powerful; but no; now I am forced to hang my head in shame and admit I am a miserable wretch!’<sup>34</sup> Moreover, one of the Jarry’s characters says ‘I am God’, and another, Pere Ubu, a very grotesque and ruthless anti-hero, is referred to as ‘the Reverend Father Ubu, of the Society of Jesus’. All these cases are rather comical and hilarious. However, interestingly, the absence, the death of God is tragic in Georgian texts: it is emphasised that people should believe in something, otherwise, they cannot exist; God protected a man from evil and now, without God, people are desperate and helpless. In most texts of this period Georgian authors try to show that the souls of non-believers are always occupied by Satan. In the story titled *The Photographer* by Konstantine Gamsakhurdia the main character, a photographer refuses to take a photo of the city as there is no God there – ‘The Godless city is not worth being taken a photo of’<sup>35</sup>, says the black bird to the photographer and he breaks his camera immediately. Such attitude towards God is quite common in Georgian works of that period.

Why were Georgian writers (and readers accordingly) not able to put up with the ‘death’ of God, or treat this idea humorously (as French writers did)? The answer to this question has deeper roots than might be apparent: historically, Georgia was a country and state built on three major elements, ‘Language, Motherland, Faith’<sup>36</sup>, which helped the country to survive the attacks of its enemies throughout centuries. It seems that the factor of religion or God could not be ignored during the modernist period but became even stronger in order to survive when the Bolshevik regime was established in Georgia. Sadly, the independence of Georgia lasted for just three years (1918-1921). Another factor is that religion, fear and love of God had always been deeply rooted consciously and unconsciously among Georgians religion has always played an indispensable role for them through a history of being attacked and conquered by Muslim enemies. Presumably, Georgian writers could not dare, or just were not willing, to mock at God or abuse Him even during the period of modernism and the avant-garde, but preferred to demonstrate how tragic, hopeless and vulnerable the country and people are without God. What is more, the leading Georgian modernist writers used to travel to Germany at that time; some of them were educated there. It seems that German literature and writers (Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann) had some influence on them in terms of the idea of ‘death of God’, for whom the absence of god is not amusing or beneficial at all but the beginning of degradation of a person, of morality and of human values.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Shattuck 40.

<sup>34</sup> Hugill, *Pataphysics* 227.

<sup>35</sup> Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, *ფოტოგრაფი (The Photographer)* (Tbilisi: Palitra L, 2012 [1924]) 76.

<sup>36</sup> Ilia Chavchavadze, prominent Georgian writer and public figure of the nineteenth century postulated the central ideology of the Georgian nationality this way. *ოსმალის საქართველო [Osmano's Georgia]*. Newspaper ‘Iveria’, #9, 1877, Tbilisi.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that in particular environments writers might come up with something totally new, outstanding, and sometimes scandalous and develop it as a 'science' and philosophy and even give it a name such as 'Pataphysics'. Others might feel a strong urge for novelties to destroy barriers in art and literature, protesting against an unfavourable political and social environment, and, therefore, might start developing a novel literary device without giving it a name or even realising how far they have gone – unknowingly some modernist Georgian writers got into the pataphysical realm without even knowing it. The goal is achieved in both scenarios: Jarry was very lucky that he was born in *la belle époque*, because the French avant-garde was so reckless, free and limitless and allowed him to leave behind every form, every norm, every value firmly existing throughout the centuries. He totally destroyed and distorted definitions, views and clichés, and he did it very noisily, shouting loudly, behaving boldly without caring much about the outcomes, society, friends, without even fearing death. As for Georgian authors, they did all of these things rather quietly, tragically, heavily, and painfully for many reasons, objective and subjective. That is why a pataphysical discourse developed in Georgia as reflections, though not conspicuously or to its full extent. And yet, it did develop because '*La Pataphisique est la science...*'<sup>37</sup>

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37 Alfred Jarry finished his neo-scientific novel *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien* ['Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician'] with the sentence '*La Pataphisique est la science...*'

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