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IMPROVISATIONS ON TWO SAMPLES OF FOLK WISDOM IN GEORGIAN LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract

The Surami Fortress by Daniel Chonkadze, a novella based on The Legend of the Surami Fortress, was quite popular among Georgian readers in the 19th century and subsequent years. More than one Georgian literary work offers a story about a youth, Zurab, buried alive within the walls of a fortress, reflecting in various social or political contexts the fate of mothers and their sons, one that leaves its peculiar mark on their present and future. Georgia's fight against external and internal enemies alike defined the lives of mothers and their children, repeating itself throughout the centuries all the while – fathers constantly maintaining combat readiness, many dying in war, and their sons raised mostly by mothers. They were the ones imbuing their sons with patriotism, chivalry, and the values of masculinity. How is The Surami Fortress by Daniel Chonkadze – written in the 19th century – perceived today? And why does one of the characters in Niko Lortkipanidze's Diehards – a work created in the 20th century – read this novella? What does the term "mother's heart" or "son's heart" mean? The following matters are under consideration: Zurab as a sacrifice, the youth's love and a woman, the motivations behind Zurab's self-sacrifice, and the mother's unchanging image, which remains immutable in defiance of sociopolitical shifts.

Keywords: *Georgian literature, sacrifice, homeland, love*

Introduction

I do not believe that there is anyone in Georgia who has not seen the Surami Fortress or, at least, heard of the legend about Zurab, a youth buried alive in the fortification's walls. Before the current highway was built, one – traveling down the road stretching to Batumi on the Black Sea shore in West Georgia, or back from the sea to Tbilisi – would surely pass through Surami where the fortress is found. Art historian Parmen Zakaraia offers a sea of information about this structure: fortress and castle town construction in Georgia traces its roots to classical antiquity. In the 11th-12th centuries, the town of Surami emerged in the territory of Kartli,

being known as town up to the late medieval period. The old town's ruins include the fortress on a high cliff in the eastern section of what is known today as the village of Surami. Zakaraia refers to fortifications as "pillars of self-sacrifice." He writes: "It is known for a fact that a fortification is built by those defending themselves. A strong country pursuing conquest does not need defensive structures – there is no enemy in its territory. Such states wage war in someone else's land! Most of the time, especially in later centuries, we were among those defending themselves" (Zakaraia, 2002, p. 9).

The table of contents section of Folk Wisdom, Volume 3, a book published in 1964, mentions the chapter *Legends, Narrative, and Traditions*, including The Legend of the Surami Fortress. Particular topics are also specified: "for the homeland", "for freedom", "labor and construction", and others. The Legend of the Surami Fortress, incorporated into the topic "for the homeland" as part of this publication, uses various sources. Its encapsulated version goes along the lines of the following:

Pressed for time, Georgia's king is trying to build a fortress in order to defend the country from enemies. Each time a wall's construction is finalized, it collapses. The king's desperate vizier, who was in charge of the fortification's construction, turns to a fortuneteller who replies: "A sacrifice is due to strengthen the structure. If you bury Zurab, his mother's only child, alive within the walls, the fortress will be built to last forever" (Folk Wisdom, 1964, p. 106–107). The text includes a spine-chilling mother-son dialogue:

"Zurab, my son, how far up?" his mother screams.

"Alas, mother, to my ankles!" replies her son.

"Zurab, my son, how far up?"

"Alas, mother, to my knees!"

"Zurab, my son, how far up?"

"Alas, mother, to my chest!"

"Zurab, my son, how far up?"

"Alas, mother, I am as good as dead..." (Folk Wisdom, p. 106–107).

Literary researcher Vakhtang Kotetishvili, in his article *The Origin of the Legend of the Surami Fortress and Its Parallels in World Folklore,* delves into the question of the legend's genesis and asserts: "No legend, fairytale, or any creative work would and could appear without clear-cut actualities. The foundation of any figment of imagination is reality [...] In the same vein, the foundation of our legend must be sought in reality, and this reality lies in human sacrifice. And this legend builds on this reality" (Kotetishvili, 1936, p. 20).

"These ideas of church or wall or bridge wanting human blood or an immured victim to make the foundation steadfast, are not only widespread in European folklore, but local chronicle or tradition asserts them as matter of historical fact in district after district" (Tylor, 1871, p. 94–95). Jacob Grimm cites one example: "A new bridge was about to be built at Halle – eventually finalized in 1843-and people insisted that a living child must be immured in the foundation. For Liebenstein Castle to be solid and unshakeable, a child was bought from its mother for a handful of gold and buried alive within one of the walls..." (Bechstein, Thür. Sag., IV, 157-compare to 206) (Grimm, 2019, p. 779). Georgian scholars were well-aware of these books. For one, Mikheil Chikovani writes: "Discipline-specific literature notes that the customs and legends of immuring human beings in walls or foundations can be found in many other countries, such as Russia, Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, and England" (Chikovani, 1955, p. 835). James Frazer documents one ancient practice: "... immuring a living person in the walls, or crushing him under the foundation-stone of a new building, in order to give strength and durability to the structure, or more definitely in order that the angry ghost may haunt the place and guard it against the intrusion of enemies" (Frazer, 1983, p. 186).

Based on a vast amount of materials, Vakhtang Kotetishvili lists several stages in human sacrifice: 1) Actually offering a human being as a sacrifice, 2) Replacing a human being with an animal, 3) Replacing a human being or a living thing with an object, symbolic sacrifice, 4) Human sacrifice proper: A) as a commemoration, B) as an unbelievable story, and C) as the fictionalization of traditions (Kotetishvili, 1936, p. 21). Of special interest to us are the three explanations of the fourth point in that they relate to both oral traditions and texts by given authors.

Two Georgian writers and The Legend of the Surami Fortress

Several Georgian authors from different eras have taken an interest in The Legend of the Surami Fortress. However, works from two different centuries and eras seem to be of special interest to us. In one of them, Zurab is forcedly led to immurement, i.e. he is an unwilling sacrifice. In the other, Zurab voluntarily chooses the path of self-sacrifice. In the first case, we see a violent act, while the other emphasizes choice. The first work is *The Surami Fortress* by Daniel Chonkadze (1830–1860), and the other is Diehards by Niko Lortkipanidze (1880–1944).

What does the word "diehards", the plural form of "diehard", mean? It stands for an ungovernable and yet honorable person living by moral principles. The "diehard" does not imply willfulness, stubbornness building on capriciousness.

The action in Daniel Chonkadze's story unfolds in Tbilisi, Surami, Istanbul, and various locations in Georgia. *Diehards* by Niko Lortkipanidze takes place in the capital – though never pinpointing Tbilisi – and, as we may speculate, Imereti, one of West Georgia's regions. Vakhtang Kotetishvili argues that tales similar to *The Legend of the Surami Fortress* could be found in West Georgia as well. For example, *The Legend of the Minda* Fortress in Racha tells the story of one Mindeli, a youth whose immurement cemented the foundation of a fortification. One Levan Bakhtadze was sacrificed in a similar manner to build the Khoni Church in Imereti. By order of the kind, the young man was forcedly delivered to the construction site, because he and his mother resisted. "As Levan is immured, his mother, standing nearby, asks, 'How far up, my son Levan?' And Levan answers: 'Alas, mother, up to my ankles" (Kotetishvili, 1936, გვ. 20).

When a writer brings other authors into a literary work

The Surami Fortress by Daniel Chonkadze brings together several short stories composed by young people coming together in Tbilisi's blazing summer heat, in Rike („რიყე" [Rike], one of the Old Tbilisi neighborhoods on the Mtkvari Riverbank [Beridze, 1984, p. 399]). One of the young people is the story's author himself: "And, among them, was your humble servant"—this is how Daniel Chonkadze addresses his readers. In other words, the writer was present at the "unprepared" creation of these stories by different people, through skillful improvisation. The first storyteller, Niko, is encouraged by his friends to start his narrative with the traditional introduction to Georgian fairytales: "Once there was and there was not…" (Chonkadze, 2022, p. 20). As Georgian scholar, philologist, and folklorist Zurab Kiknadze (1933–2022) points out, this phrase is the traditional *tsinkari* antechamber of Georgian fairytales (Kiknadze, 2007, p. 152). The word "tsinkari" in the Georgian language means: 1) a corridor, and 2) a small unoccupied room in the entrance leading into other rooms („წინკარი" [*Tskinkari*], 1986, p. 564). So, in the tsinkari of the fairytale, the author already knows what they want to talk about, but how they will develop the story depends on them. And this is exactly what the introduction to The Surami Fortress draws our attention to: "…one and the same story has many narrators who come up with a plot at the drop of a hat" (Chonkadze, 2023, p. 9). When it comes to putting together a theatrical performance, the "Once there was and there was not" not principle was utilized by Georgian director Mikheil Tumanishvili. The word "was" means reality, a true story, while "was not" stands for something composed, imagined – and all this must be presented by every director in a different manner in one and the same play. Almost halfway through Daniel Chonkadze's work, right before the episode of "Durmishkhan's Betrothal", one of the narrators attempts to end his story on a positive note, hoping that the man won't cheat on the woman. To this end, he turns to a slightly modified version of the traditional closing line of Georgian fairytales: "Trouble there but merrymaking here," eventually coming up with this phrase: "Dumped trouble there but brought merrymaking here" (Chonkadze, 2023, p. 63). But the young men continue narrating just the same. Why? Because the story does not follow the usual path of a fairy tale – good does not triumph over evil, so both trouble and merrymaking are present here.

Daniel Chonkadze links together the stories told by the young people, though, unlike his friends, he does it in written –

not spoken – form. After all, authors, when writing, reconsider what they have seen or heard, logically double-checking everything, and reflecting the results of much thought and contemplation. And, when the pen starts cutting a rug on an unblemished piece of paper, the author transforms this accumulated "what" into "how".

Niko Lortkipanidze sets out to tell the story of Ivane, a lack-all little boy from Imereti. The author refers to him as a "storyteller", while one of the characters calls him a "yarn-spinner". The writer prepares Ivane for these characterizations right from the beginning of the first part of this long story: "...Ivane believed in the dragon, the wishing stone, the fountain of youth as something actually existing, something found right here, somewhere beyond this hill" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 317). Having witnessed a real event, Ivane conveys it in a creative manner and turns it into an example of oral tradition. For example, while fishing he observes a fight between an eagle and a snake, subsequently shaping this event into a nearly cinematic story. A domestic worker in the household of one nobleman, Ivane is married to a woman he adores, she is a best friend, his first listener and sharer in his creative endeavors, i.e. the storyteller needs a listener, an audience, a suitable setup. Having found favor with his master, Ivane never complains. "The servants' quarters, the kitchen, and the stable needed a storyteller – sure enough, Ivane was just the man for this job" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 327).

In the first part of *Diehards*, Ivane's grandson, Zuriko (this name being a diminutive variant of Zurab) is reading a book. "Boy, you've listened to my stories, all right. Now, why don't you tell me what's happening in those books of yours?" Zuriko is about to read out loud. But Ivane cuts him off: "Look me in the eye – there's no storytelling without it!" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 336). The grandson puts the book aside and recounts what he has just read. Ivane objects. You're twisting it, he says and tells his version, however, Lortkipanidze did not provide Ivane's version, as the narrator refused and it could not be recorded. But why does Ivane resist? Probably because he craves live communication allowing him to stir the hearts and souls of his listeners and expecting him to take in their internal monologues, unuttered responses, all these factors constituting his oeuvre, so, when his grandson asks to write down this story for one gymnasium student, Ivane objects: "Paper is not open to what's been said in the first place. [...] Let him come over and listen in person." Most likely, this gymnasium student is Niko Lortkipanidze himself, "entering" in this episode as a character with his "small role," seemingly collecting examples of oral tradition and now offering a first-person narrative as a first-hand account: "...I noticed that, as I tried to write down, he would go slurring, forgetting his words, attempting to draw attention without looking me in the face... " (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 337). In the introduction to *Georgian Oral Tradition,* a book by Petre Umikashvili (1838–1904), published in 1964, Mikheil Chikovani writes: "Petre Umikashvili gathered oral lore in every corner of Georgia, documenting hundreds of pieces narrated directly by storytellers, also establishing permanent partnerships in remote, unreachable areas, in this way enriching his collection. In this cause, Petre also enjoyed tremendous assistance from listeners, gymnasium students" (Umikashvili, 1964, p. 6).

Lortkipanidze asserts that about 50 years have passed since Ivane's storytelling. In other words, based on my calculations, Ivane – whom we can also refer to as a folk narrator – told the story of Zurab's live entombment within the fortress' walls in 1888–1894. This begs the question: What book is Zuriko reading? Undoubtedly, it is *The Surami Fortress*, a popular novella by Daniel Chonkadze. What is untrue in Chonkadze's story? What does Ivane the Storyteller object to? In my opinion, that was Zurab's final episode, when he is forcibly immurement into the wall.

Daniel Chonkadze's novella was published in 1859–1860, and the writer must have been 29 years of age at the time. Niko Lortkipanidze, on the other hand, was considerably past-the-middle-age when writing his story, i.e. in 1938–1944. He started working on *Diehards* at the age of 58, completing it aged 63. Daniel Chonkadze's legacy only consists of one piece – *The Surami Fortress*, while Lortkipanidze's oeuvre includes many other works, those far surpassing *Diehards* in excellence among them. The final

year of working on Diehards happened to be the writer's last year on this earth. In other words, one story belongs to a young author, and the other marks the last piece created by a seasoned writer – and they both walk in the path of sacrifice together, each with his "Zurab". And Guram Rcheulishvili (1934–1960), in notes to his unfinished play, *The Surami Fortress* (1960), also writes: "Immuring him within the fortification transforms its construction into creation! I have heard from poets that creation is a pleasure, but for me it is torment incarnate! Still, after it is built, it may become a pleasure for others as well!" (Rcheulishvili, 2007, p. 404).

Daniel Chonkadze and a victim of deception

Durmishkhan and Gulisvardi, the protagonists of *The Surami Fortress* by Chonkadze, are representatives of the lower social class, descendants of serfs. They fall in love with each other, though the man is interested in making a name for himself more than anything else, and down the road he eventually leaves Gulisvardi. The woman, on the other hand, does not forget her love, and – after having mastered fortunetelling – eventually uses her skill to exact revenge on her former lover. She predicts that a youth will be buried alive within the walls of the Surami Fortress and pinpoints Durmishkhan's only son for the vizier at the royal court in total disarray because of an expected enemy invasion. She says, "You must bury a mother's only son alive within the fortress instead of coins, and this youth is Zurab, Durmishkhan's son" (Chonkadze, 2023, p. 100). The fortuneteller realizes that this verdict separates her from God. And, even though she takes advantage of the country's desperate straits, her conscience tells her otherwise: "Hush, O my heart! It's been over 20 years since I distanced myself from God… " (Chonkadze, 2023, p. 100). In the course of twenty years after separating from her lover, Chonkadze continues, the woman took up acting, implying the art of deception and persuasion. Durmishkhan is also a skilled liar. And he says in relation to her lover, "I've deceived her so many times promising to come" (Chonkadze, 2023, p. 92).

Both Durmishkhan and Gulisvardi utilize different ways to influence and manipulate others, the man with his wealth accumulated through trade, also personal self-realization in society, and the woman with fortunetelling and her knowledge of the psyche of desperate people – she is good at discerning the wishes of people of various strata coming to her to peek into the future. Both characters are talented at what they do, but they use their talents for different purposes.

There are three victims in Chonkadze's work: Georgia, Durmishkhan's son and wife, i.e. Zurab and her mother. The novella also raises the issue of serfdom. And Durmishkhan's striving to make it to the top may lie in the very complex pitting him against the privileged nobility. There is nothing unusual about making a name for oneself at any cost, especially given the fact that aiming for leadership is generally embedded in every male's nature. Durmishkhan achieves leadership through trade, because money he earns imposes obedience on everyone, old and young. Things would have ended with reaching the zenith for this character had it not been for the love he once rejected as a youth and now standing in his way, something that eventually degenerates into the woman's unquenchable passion for revenge. In this work, these two characters are as cruel as the nobility and their behavior. The brutal treatment experienced by Durmishkhan in childhood adds fuel to the fire of his wildness. And, after liberation from serfdom, he now abuses others, with indescribable ungratefulness to boot – disrespecting Osman-Agha who gave him half of his fortune, also forgetting that he was liberated from serfdom through the interference of his lover – qualities certainly missing from the code of chivalry. The writer changes one character's name and religion twice: Nodari-Karapeta-Osman-Agha, and Christian-Muslim-Christian. As Nodar slaughters his master's family, he reciprocates the latter's past brutality with his own. However, Osman-Agha, liberated from serfdom, and wealthy, is for the rest of his life haunted by the image of a child killed by him. He believes that killing a master is fair, though murdering an innocent babe is unfair. Thus, under these circumstances – with the past of the main characters of Durmishkhan and Osman-Agha underpinned by abuse – both the abuser and the abused behave almost identically.

Manifested in the novella through the construction of a fortress, the theme of defending one's homeland comes to the fore in the finale, a factor the author does not prioritize, in my opinion. On the other hand, it is clear as day that, when a writer picks a legend to fictionalize it into literature, it is impossible to avoid the legend's main storyline. The tragic finale in this case, i.e. Zurab's burial alive in the fortress' walls, is in fact the gruesome murder of another human being, because otherwise, when a man goes to war to defend his homeland, he still hopes to survive – and, besides, is there a mission greater than to defend one's homeland? The non-voluntary death of Chonkadze's Zurab is a form of torture, the tragedy of one person further exacerbated by the tragedy of his parents. "Chonkadze's way of understanding Zurab's image differs from folk belief. In the narrative, Zurab is forcedly led to the construction site. An ancient Georgian story, however, argues that Zurab – in his desire to expedite the construction of the Surami Fortress and in this way block the path of an invading enemy – voluntarily sacrifices himself for his homeland" (Chikovani, 1955, p. 831).

The young storytellers in Chonkadze's work lack experience and are unable fully to clarify many things, with passion, emotion limiting their scope of discussion. Even though the stories of their schematic characters feature the issue of serfdom-based abuse, among others, their imagery is still full of lively pictures, effective forms, schemes, the reason why every event in Chonkadze's work comes alive before our eyes. Niko Lortkipanidze, on the other hand, takes his time and narrates with well-balanced emotions. In part two of Diehards, the protagonist, Edisher, returns to the capital from abroad and takes a fresh look at the realm of childhood and adolescence he had known before. This is probably how Niko Lortkipanidze himself looked at his homeland in 1907, after returning to Georgia from his studies in the Leoben Mining Academy, Austria.

Niko Lortkipanidze: from Mother's Heart to Son's Heart

Part one of Niko Lortkipanidze's work contains one episode with the author revealing the age of Ivane the Storyteller. He is 60 years older than his grandson, seminarian Zuriko, that means he is 75 years old. This passage shows that Ivane is busy raising his grandson, though not in a dictatorial manner, but indirectly, based on fiction stemming from reality, through artistically narrating something composed "by others," or perhaps "made up by some ancestor." In the same episode, Ivana's relative appears, who is angry with her child because he wants to go to work in the city and earn money for her grandson's education. Next, Ivane sets out telling a folk story, *Mother's Heart*, which is more like a fairytale, though in his own manner, *Mother's Heart* is a piece of folklore: "A youth extracts his mother's heart and takes it to his beloved. On his way, he stumbles, falls down, and cries, 'O mother!' His mother's heart moans in response: "You're not hurt, are you?" (Mother's Heart, 1974, p. 129). The youth comes to his senses and hurls his mother's heart at his lover forcefully enough to make her give up the ghost (Folk Wisdom, 1964, p. 221–222).

In Lortkipanidze's work, however, Ivane tells this story differently, adding hardworking skills to the youth's handsomeness, also describing the unmatched beauty of his lover. Everyone, both old and young, seem to covet the fate of the young man, whose name Ivane the Storyteller leaves unmentioned. His mother, concerned over her son's sorrow, finds out that the reason behind it is his love for one most gorgeous woman who "standing resembles a poplar tree and sitting is like a fawn" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, ვ. 334). In other words, the woman is extremely refined physically, while the comparison with a fawn implies false perceptions on the part of the young man – when an ugly soul abides in a beautiful body. A woman disguised in the image of a fawn is a dangerous predator, indeed – she demands the ring and the beating heart of the young man's mother. If, in the legend from *Folk Wisdom*, the youth personally removes his mother's heart, Ivane the Storyteller averts matricide from him, in this way mitigating the cruelty of the son and intensifying the mother's self-sacrifice. According to the mother's plan, her son must be liberated from passion, vice and – presently spaced out, nearly out of his mind – return to normal life. The mother must be first to leave

this world, and the son must survive, but how can he live mindless, out of his wits, having lost his own *self*? The mother's self-sacrifice including physical pain brings the son back to his senses. And when he stumbles on his way to his lover, his mother's voice asks, "You haven't hurt your kneecap, have you?"

As the youth passes the ring to his lover, the woman finds flaw with it and, arguing that it is too big, puts it on her big toe and stretches it for the man to kiss. With this inconceivable_gesture, the author turns the woman's mindlessness into a supreme manifestation of ugliness, which is disturbing not only through action but also because of the man's excessive humiliation, something she must have done before. Witnessing this brazen act, his mother's heart cries out: "Save my cherished son – look how he's being abused! Somebody help me! He's about to perish!" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 335).

Once back to his senses, and his eyes open, the young man rushes to his mother. Lortkipanidze's Ivane the Storyteller describes the youth's rush through poetic prose: "…he ran through fields and valleys like a deer, flew over mountains and rocks like an eagle, and crossed the sea and rivers like a trout…" Unable to save her, though, he asks for her forgiveness. Ivane concludes: "There's nothing more truthful than a mother's love!" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 335). After all, Ivane grew up without a mother as he says in the beginning of his story: "Mother has found shelter with our relatives, saying that it would make it easier for her to support us. Sure enough, she sends me money and clothes" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 317). Having grown up practically without a mother, Ivane holds his mother's efforts in high esteem. Unlike motherless Durmishkhan, he has not embrace evil, nor has he taken to theft. On the contrary, he works diligently, composing stories here and there, having an excellent insight into people's psyche, the likely reason why, one sunny day, he delivers a lesson in "mother's truthfulness" to his grandchild and a female relative, using to this end a colorful example. Why? Because Zuriko, fifteen years of age, is about to experience the overwhelming emotions accompanying first love, while the female relative has to share out her hard-earned money for her child.

Mother's Heart, as told by Ivane, is not simply quoted in Lortkipanidze's work. The author is preparing the reader for the second part of Diehards, in which Ivane and his family do not appear at all. The only exception is the name „Zurab"—the full form of the diminutive "Zuriko." But who is Lortkipanidze's Zurab?

The second part of Niko Lortkipanidze's Diehards is mosaic-like and richly expressive – it resembles a prolonged dream, where one story emerges to eclipse another, in turn taking a back seat to yet another, and so on. At times, you feel grounded in a real environment; at other times, you find yourself at a public religious celebration. Sometimes, you hear the story of an impoverished mother and her son (Salome and Zurab); at other times, you read the dialogues of the educated Edisher and his mother, the king, the incapacitated architect, and the nalekari (a former Daghestani who became Georgian). In these shifting scenes, power alternates: now the king prevails, now the discontented people whisper. The architect, punished for the collapse of a prison wall, has his hands and feet cut off – and this act of cruelty jolts you awake from the dream. Elsewhere, at the celebration, there are jesters and clowns, dancers and wrestlers – there is a sorrow and there is a joy in the world the writer has created. Heavy clouds hang over the yet-unbuilt fortress of Niko Lortkipanidze, casting a shadow on its inhabitants and foretelling nothing good.

Sacrifice is a way to escape from this country's chaos – the legend must come true, and the fortress cannot be built unless someone is buried alive in its foundation. Edisher – an educated man fresh back from abroad, "dressed like an artist," "a master of his trade,"—is appalled at the idea of burying a human being alive, at merely imagining a gruesome picture of immurement: "He could imagine someone fighting tooth and nail, fighting with his hands, but shoved back by the embittered workers" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 344)—and, full of concern for the country's fate, Edisher thinks to himself: "Bad omens across the board, enormous sorrow, and even greater injustice" (Lortkipanidze, 2022, p. 345). In this part of the work, following the train of Edisher's thought and putting the links of his ideas next to one

another into one continuous chain, suddenly, out of the blue, unidentified. Suddenly, and seemingly to confuse the reader, the same section begins to introduce the motifs of Ivane's story *Mother's Heart* – women are praising a mother and her son, the mother's name is Salome, while the son's name is not mentioned. The reader is convinced that this praised man is Edisher, whose father has died leaving his mother a widow. In addition, this episode points out that the son is full of sorrow, but what kind of sorrow remains a mystery. An elated reader may think that the riddle is solved: after all, it is Edisher, right? Edisher who encounters terrible chaos in the country. This element of surprise leads one to believe that the mother is identified as Salome, one loving to death and caring for her child, i.e. the mother portrayed by Ivane in *Mother's Heart*.

Later in the story, we find out that it is Zurab, not Edisher, creating in our minds an image of two different men struggling with the same heartache. Edisher's famed father has done a great deal of good things for his homeland. Zurab's father was a man lauded for his chivalry, courageous and strong in fighting foes. If, in Ivane's *Mother's Heart*, the unnamed young man is tormented by his love for a woman, Niko Lortkipanidze's mature man is overwhelmed by his love for his homeland. One may say that Edisher and Zurab are one and the same person symbolically personifying a man's self-sacrifice. Edisher is Zurab's intellectual, creative aspect, while Zurab is the enabler of Edisher's chivalry, and both Edisher and Zurab have their own ways of seeking ways out of the country's dire straits. However, the former cannot sacrifice himself, because, first, he believes it to be mere superstition, and, second, to prevent readers from accusing Edisher of cowardice, the author includes one provision on the list of requirements for a prospective sacrifice: it must be a penurious youth embracing sacrifice of his own volition. As a member of the intelligentsia, Edisher must be quite well-off. One passage even refers to him as "lord." And, if anything, poor people do not study abroad. But Salome's son, Zurab, is poor. His family has been abused and persecuted by their overlord, but he never loses his sense of patriotism. And, in the novella, Zurab applies himself as much as a prince groomed for the throne, i.e. learns how to care after his country from an early age. That is probably why Lortkipanidze picks a quote from poet Grigol Orbeliani's poem as the epigraph for *Die-hards*:

"His heart as strong as diamond the darkest hour cannot change—

And agile, singing, lover of his land he does remain."

A heart that draws love for the homeland like a magnet. Zurab's decision is tragic for his mother – we know a mother's devotion from Ivane's "Mother's Heart". But, since the writer puts love for one's homeland above love for a woman, in Zurab's image he brings together the hearts of all men burning with love for their homeland, while Edisher's image unites the efforts of thinkers serving healthy, positive thinking, studying people, and using their cognitive skills to stand sentinel over their homeland.

Conclusion

Both writers paint a grim finale. Chonkadze's Zurab is grabbed by the hand and bound, i.e. he is taken away by force like a living being offered as a sacrifice. Lortkipanidze's Zurab volunteers to sacrifice himself for the homeland. Although Zurab dies in one work and survives in the other, the second Zurab's effort is equivalent to self-sacrifice, for he chooses and sets out on a path to Golgotha to defend his homeland.

Chonkadze's sacrifice has no future because it is based on the destruction of life, and perhaps that is why, on moonlit nights, only the shadow of the mother circles the proudly standing Surami Fortress, from whose walls Zurab's unceasing tears flow. Lortkipanidze leaves only ruins in the epilogue of the fortress "built by his Zurab" (the author does not specify that this is the Surami Fortress). However, here too, on moonlight nights, a certain living being appears, though it is neither Zurab nor his mother – it is a little boy with curly hair who climbs a rope to ring the bells as a daily reminder for people that self-sacrifice for one's homeland can also be bloodless, and that fierce military action on a battlefield is not the only way to demonstrate one's patriotism. Its scope of activity is broad – it stands for any job accomplished conscientiously and

cognitive abilities in one. Thus, any person today can become a hero, anyone fighting in the battlefield for professional finesse, and such professions abound in this world to include scientists, writers, painters, artisans, green thumbs tending to a municipal flower garden... and soldiers whose profession is to defend one's homeland.

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