

IRSTI 18.45.01
UDC 78

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2025.2.14.66

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MUSICAL CHRONOTOPE AS A FORM OF ARTISTIC RESISTANCE: A NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ZAIRA ARSENISHVILI'S «REQUIEM»

Annotation

This article explores the potential of enhancing the narrative capacity of verbal art through its convergence with the expressive nature of the musical genre of the requiem. Based on Zaira Arsenishvili's novel Requiem, the author develops an interdisciplinary research methodology. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, the study introduces the notion of the «musical chronotope» as a key analytical tool for examining the novel's form and structure. The article demonstrates how the worldview inherent in the requiem genre shapes every level of the text—from its thematic core to its plot—justifying the fragmentation of the composition and its thematic polyphony. The polyvocality typical of a requiem is shown to enable a critical narrative strategy: the restoration of silenced voices suppressed by political repression. Special attention is given to how musical logic and imagery determine the pacing of narration, shape reflective space, and establish a narrative of spiritual and emotional resistance. Employing a multifaceted approach that includes historical, contextual, holistic, comparative, and interdisciplinary methods, the author argues that the re-evaluation of historical events gains credibility when independent frameworks—such as music—are introduced. The central role of the requiem as a musical genre in Arsenishvili's novel is emphasized through its association with biblical narratives, which in the literary context take on ethical dimensions of morality and conscience as part of the idea of spiritual resistance. This study will be of interest to scholars engaged in interdisciplinary research in music, literature, and related fields of the arts.

Key words

Requiem, genre, musical chronotope, Zaira Arsenishvili, narrative.

Cite

Grigolava, M. 2025. Musical chronotope as a form of artistic resistance: a narratological analysis of Zaira Arsenishvili's «Requiem». Arts Academy Scientific Journal, no. 2(14): 66–80.

FTAXP 18.45.01
ӘЖ 78

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2025.2.14.66

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МУЗЫКАЛЫҚ ХРОНОТОПТЫҢ КӨРКЕМДІК ҚАЙШЫЛЫҚ ҚҰРАЛЫ РЕТІНДЕГІ КӨРІНІСІ: ЗАИРА АРСЕНИШВИЛИДІҢ «РЕКВИЕМ» РОМАНЫНА НАРРАТОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ТАЛДАУ

Аннотация

Мақалада сөз өнерінің баяндау мүмкіндіктерін реквием музыкалық жанрының табиғатымен тоғыстыру арқылы кеңейту жолдары қарастырылады. Заира Арсенишвилидің «Реквием» романы негізінде автор пәнаралық зерттеу әдіснамасын ұсынады. Михаил Бахтиннің хронотоп тұжырымдамасына сүйене отырып, автор романның пішіні мен құрылымын талдауда қолданылатын негізгі құрал ретінде «музыкалық хронотоп» ұғымын енгізеді.

Зерттеуде реквием жанрына тән дүниетаным мәтіннің барлық деңгейін – тақырыбынан бастап сюжетіне дейін – айқындайтын дәлелденеді; композицияның фрагментарлығы мен тақырыптық полифония осы тұрғыда негізделеді. Реквиемге тән көп дауыстылық романдық баяндаудың маңызды стратегиясын жүзеге асырады: репрессия салдарынан жоғалған дауыстарды қалпына келтіреді. Зерттеуде музыкалық логика мен бейнелеудің баяндау ырғағын қалай анықтайтынына, ой кеңістігін қалай қалыптастыратынына және рухани-эмоциялық қайшылықтың нарративін қалай әсер ететіндігіне ерекше назар аударылады. Тарихи, контекстік, тұтас, салыстырмалы және пәнаралық әдістерді қамтитын кешенді талдауға сүйене отырып, автор тарихи оқиғаларды қайта пайымдаудың объективтілігі тәуелсіз бағалау құралдары – мысалы, музыка – арқылы артатынын алға тартады. 3. Арсенишвилидің аталмыш туындысында реквием музыкалық жанрының абсолютті маңыздылығы оның Інжілдік баяндаулармен байланысы арқылы көрсетіледі, бұл байланыс романда мораль мен ар-ұят секілді адамгершілік ұғымдарымен түйісіп, рухани қайшылық идеясына айналады.

Мақала музыка, әдебиет және өнердің өзге де салаларындағы пәнаралық зерттеулермен айналысатын ғалымдарға қызықты болуы мүмкін.

Түйінді сөздер

Реквием, жанр, музыкалық хронотоп, Заира Арсенишвили, нарратив.

Дәйексөз үшін

Григолава, М. 2025. Музыкалық хронотоптың көркемдік қайшылық құралы ретіндегі көрінісі: Заира Арсенишвилидің «Реквием» романына нарратологиялық талдау. Arts Academy ғылыми журналы №2(14): 66–80.

МРНТИ 18.45.01

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2025.2.14.66

УДК 78

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МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ ХРОНОТОП КАК ФОРМА ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОГО СОПРОТИВЛЕНИЯ: НАРРАТОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ РОМАНА «РЕКВИЕМ» ЗАИРЫ АРСЕНИШВИЛИ

Аннотация

В статье изучаются возможности расширения повествовательности словесного вида искусства за счет его сращения с природой музыкального жанра реквиема. На материале романа Заиры Арсенишвили «Реквием» автор развернул методологию междисциплинарного исследования. Обращаясь к концепции хронотопа Михаила Бахтина, автор вводит понятие «музыкального хронотопа» как основного инструмента анализа формы и структуры романа. Автор доказывает, что картина мира музыкального жанра реквиема подчиняет себе все уровни текста от темы до сюжета, обосновывает фрагментарность композиции и тематический полифонизм. Многоголосие, присущее реквиему, реализует важную стратегию романного повествования: восстанавливает голоса, заглушённые репрессиями. Особое внимание в исследовании уделяется тому, как музыкальная логика, музыкальный образ задают темп повествования, формируют пространство для размышления, создают нарратив духовно-эмоционального сопротивления.

Опираясь на комплексный анализ романа, включающий исторический, контекстный, целостный, сопоставительный, междисциплинарный методы исследования, автор проводит мысль о том, что объективность переосмысления исторических событий становится наиболее вероятным при введении независимых инструментов оценки, как, например, музыка. Абсолютная значимость музыкального жанра реквиема в одноименном произведении З.Арсенишвили подчеркивается его связью с библейским нарративом, который в романе оборачивается понятиями морали и совести как нравственными категориями идеи духовного сопротивления.

Статья может быть интересна ученым, интересующимся междисциплинарными исследованиями в области музыки, литературы и иных видов искусств.

Ключевые слова

реквием, жанр, музыкальный хронотоп, Заира Арсенишвили, нарратив.

Для цитирования

Григолава, М. 2025. Музыкальный хронотоп как форма художественного сопротивления: нарратологический анализ романа «Реквием» Заиры Арсенишвили. Научный журнал "Arts Academy", № 2(14): 66–80.

Introduction. In their monograph on socialist realism, Nana Gaprindashvili, Mariam Miresashvili, and Nino Tsereteli offer a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of power enacted by executioners and endured by victims during the era of Bolshevism and the Red Terror. In recent decades, postmodern literature has shown a growing interest in reimagining Stalin and his legacy. This is evident, for instance, in Rostom Chkheidze's novel *The Guest of the Giants*, where Stalin is portrayed as the «Red Emperor», as well as in Aka Morchiladze's more recent works, *Cupid at the Kremlin Wall* and *Rodzina* (translated into Russian as *Motherland*). Further contributions to this evolving discourse include Rezo Cheishvili's fiction-essay narrative in the *Medvedev Forest* and Milan Kundera's novel *The Celebration of Insignificance*, both of which engage with themes of authoritarianism, memory, and the absurdity of power.

Methods of research. This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in textual analysis and historical contextualization. Through a close reading of Zaira Arsenishvili's novel, it examines how the author intertwines personal and collective memory to convey the trauma of Soviet repression in 1930s Georgia. Archival materials, historical documents, and relevant literary criticism have also been consulted to deepen the understanding of the novel's ideological undercurrents and

narrative techniques. By placing *Requiem* within both its historical context and the broader tradition of Georgian postmodern literature, the study highlights Arsenishvili's nuanced engagement with themes of identity, resistance, and moral responsibility under totalitarian rule.

Literature review. Comparative and cross-disciplinary studies that explore intersections between music, choreography, cinema, and literature continue to attract considerable scholarly attention. These approaches offer a rich and integrated framework for analyzing the ways in which different forms of artistic expression inform and enhance one another. One notable example is the work of Theo van Leeuwen – filmmaker, jazz musician, and semiotician, and head of the Department of Language and Communication at Cardiff University. In his influential book *Speech, Music, Sound* (1999), van Leeuwen highlights the theoretical originality of interdisciplinary methods by drawing on a wide array of examples from radio, film, television, classical, and popular music. His analysis provides a detailed account of how perspective, rhythm, textural quality, and other sonic elements function to convey emotion and meaning.

A substantial body of research has also been dedicated to the presence and interpretation of the requiem as a musical genre within literary texts (Eremina 2019; Studennikova 2010;

Petrov 2017; Kisel 2023; Narkulova 2016, among others). These studies often employ hermeneutic analysis to explore the boundary between artistic forms, demonstrating the ongoing relevance and potential of such interdisciplinary inquiry.

The concept of the chronotope, introduced in the first half of the 20th century by Mikhail Bakhtin, has also experienced a revival in recent scholarship, particularly within studies of performance, musicality, and identity. Elyamany (Elyamany 2021), for instance, interprets musical numbers as multimodal chronotopes – complex forms through which resistance and identity are expressed via sound and movement. Of particular interest in her work are emerging conceptual frameworks that propose new dimensions of analysis, such as «grammar of sound» and «sound events». As Elyamany explains, the grammar of sound encompasses not only the structured elements of music – melody, harmony, tempo, meter, and timbre – but also the broader range of sonic choices made to express attitudes and to create coherence across soundscapes. Sound events, in turn, are described in spatial terms as involving a «figure», «ground», and «field», thus highlighting their narrative and symbolic potential.

A related framework is offered by Pshenychna (Pshenychna 2023), who interprets Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a postmodern variation of the «novel

about a musician», emphasizing music as a structural and symbolic expression of identity in postcolonial trauma narratives.

Building on Bakhtin's dialogic model and Lotman's semiotics, Zenkin (Zenkin 2019) conceptualizes music as a space of «self-expanding information»—a phenomenon that not only characterizes canonical art but is inherent in all truly artistic expressions. According to Zenkin, musical structures do not merely represent events or ideas but form a dynamic chronotopic environment that reorganizes the personality of the receiver. This approach allows us to understand Zaira Arsenishvili's *Requiem* as an aesthetic system in which music, narrative, and memory converge into a symbolic act of resistance and self-reconstruction.

In this article we introduce the epochal chronotope, taking into account the important categories of literary criticism: reflection and reception. In the explanations attached to the textbook on literary theory, reflection and reception are presented side by side in alphabetical order. Reflection is defined as the analysis of one's own thoughts and feelings, encompassing contemplation and examination of the depths of one's soul (from the Latin word *reflexio*, meaning turning or shifting), while reception (also derived from Latin – *receptio*) is defined as any form of impact, such as that on an artistic or musical text. In physiology, the term refers to the

conversion of energy into nerve signals (Literary Theory 2008, 340).

The results of the study. It can be argued that all three novels by Zaira Arsenishvili (indeed, her entire body of work) exemplify literary reflection. The narrator, present throughout the first two novels and reappearing in the final sections of the third, shares the role of omniscient observer with the character-protagonist. This narrator reflects upon and analyzes all events—personal and collective, national and universal—while the chronotope of the epoch continuously shapes the experiences of every character in these monumental literary texts.

A broad cast of characters inhabits the chronotope; however, special emphasis is placed on Joseph Stalin and Lavrentiy Beria, who represent the uppermost echelons of political power. For comparison, in Rostom Chkheidze's work, Stalin is portrayed as the Red Emperor (Chkheidze 2015, 268), while in Aka Morchiladze's recent novel, shaped by the legacy of Belad's contemporaries, Stalin appears not as a historical figure but as a symbolic construct (Morchiladze 2024, 171). A particularly striking portrait of Stalin emerges in Arsenishvili's conceptual short story *When Fear and Trembling Rages*.

By contrast, Evgeni Mikeladze is presented as a spiritual ideal. The name of Jerzy Khadarovsky, the author-character of *Requiem*, is explicitly linked to Mikeladze, as the titular

composition is dedicated to him. The term *requiem* thus operates on multiple levels, conveying both the essence of mourning and the zeitgeist of the era.

The expression «The logic of a musical work and the logic of totalitarianism» (Arsenishvili 2021, 112) serves as a stylistic oxymoron in Arsenishvili's prose. On one hand, music represents a nonviolent form of power, a spiritual realm that elevates it above other art forms; on the other hand, totalitarianism stands as its direct negation—an anti-musical, anti-spiritual force.

The narrator-character reflects on the aberrations of thought during the period, likening it to a slaughterhouse or an epidemic, and comparing the Soviet state to a crumbling tower of chimeras. One character, a gifted Russian musician named Makedon who has relocated to Georgia, recalls that his father once owned vast estates near Yaroslavl and had established a school and an agronomic institute for peasants—yet these very peasants eventually killed him, branding him a class enemy. This anecdote finds a parallel in Grigol Robakidze's novel *The Slaughtered Soul*, which depicts the gruesome dismemberment of a landlord's family and the flaying of a horse in rural Russia.

Makedon's reflections—especially his youthful fascination with ethnography—are significant. He notes that in many indigenous languages, the term for «human» applies solely to members of one's own tribe, rendering

the killing of outsiders not morally equivalent to murder. The roots of class, ethnic, and national hatred, he argues, are ancient—»like a worm in the womb«, burrowing deep, consuming, corrupting, and stripping away one's humanity (Arsenishvili 2021, 312).

Alongside the massacres and epidemics, the Red Terror is likened to a natural disaster—impersonal and merciless. Ezhe dedicates his *Requiem* to the exceptional victim of the Terror, Evgeni Mikeladze, a conductor who perished under tragic circumstances. The musical piece becomes Ezhe's own requiem. In the reflections of Ezhe's beloved, Gano, a violent storm that uproots trees becomes a metaphor: natural forces do not discriminate between individuals—yet she holds firm to the belief that survival is always possible. Despite the lawlessness of the time, she refuses to surrender hope (Arsenishvili 2021, 427).

The conceptual framing of the lawlessness as an unpredictable force serves as a powerful metaphor for the era. Paradoxically, in the dungeon-like atmosphere of that epoch, solace is found in contemplating the fate of Lavrentiy Beria. It is striking to consider how many people Beria may have saved, despite his role in the machinery of repression. The narrative mentions rumors that Yezhov had plotted to eliminate him—destining Beria to the same grisly fate as countless others, his body left to rot or be devoured by worms. This image echoes Edgar Allan

Poe's grim insight that «in the Human Comedy, the victorious hero is the worm» (M.G.). Yet Beria, forewarned, escaped to Moscow and reached Stalin first (M.G.). In the end, it was Yezhov—not Beria—who ended up discarded in the Lubyanka's metaphorical trash heap. This passage recalls Dostoevsky's *Demons*, where it is suggested that those who murder together are bound to protect one another until death.

The contrast between Erzha Khadarovsky and Alio Chivadze evokes the classic dichotomy of Mozart and Salieri: one, a supremely gifted composer; the other, an envious and morally corrupt figure. Gano's perception of Alio is sharply rendered—his «clean-shaven cheeks seemed to ooze incompetence and immorality» (Arsenishvili 2021, 431).

The fates of Salieri-like figures such as Alio, along with Beria and Stalin himself, are revealed in a complex and multilayered fashion.

Alio-Salieri, tormented by the brilliance of Khadarovsky's *Requiem*—dedicated to Yevgeni Mikeladze—resolves to compose his own opera about the workers of an underground printing house in Avlabari. It is, according to Alio, the very place where Stalin (Koba) had his «brilliant» article On the Party Disagreements in Gakharia printed. Yet the composer is plagued by uncertainty: how should Stalin be represented on stage? The leader cannot sing arias, nor can he be reduced to a minor background figure.

It is Beria's suggestion that offers a conceptual solution—Stalin must never appear, but everything must be filtered through his gaze, embedded in the memory of others.

This "composer" grows increasingly obsessed with orchestrators who, much to his frustration, are more captivated by Mozart, Schubert, Haydn, and Brahms than by his grand Soviet opera. Alio's internal monologue, as rendered by the author, borders on the tragically grotesque: «Our great present—without the pathos of music?! Alas, the pitiful Georgian symphony in the hands of the ignorant»! (Arsenishvili 2021, 436).

Even Lavrentiy Beria tires of Alio's endless pontificating and bursts out, «Stop writing 'daggers'—you have music to write»! (Arsenishvili 2021, 553).

A central motif of the novel is the growing anticipation surrounding the opening of the Memorial to the Repressed. During rehearsals for the anniversary concert marking the Sovietization of Georgia—ironically, a rehearsal of Alio Chivadze's opera—the entire orchestra is distracted, consumed by thoughts of the upcoming memorial. One poignant visual detail underscores this moment: a photo of Yevgeni Mikeladze is pinned beneath a glowing portrait of Mozart—a juxtaposition the author intentionally emphasizes (M.G.).

The narrator once again demonstrates a sensitive and insightful

grasp of the period: «I always try to avoid looking at the young, smiling man in the tailcoat captured in that final photograph—as if he were already condemned by fate, awaiting his martyrdom». (Arsenishvili 2021, 6).

In the reflections of the young writer—whose presence is inscribed in the novel's full title, *Requiem for a Banjo, a Soprano, and Seven Instruments, or Portrait of a Young Writer*—one theme continually resurfaces: in attempting to understand the era, he cannot escape the devastating awareness that one of the central «commandments» of Soviet life was its systemic immorality, especially the practice of denunciation. Like any person of conscience, he is overcome with revulsion. Yet he remains haunted by the question of where the line between survival and complicity was drawn for those who lived, and died, «like worms beneath the boot of power». His painful admission — «I was one of those people too»! (Arsenishvili 2021, 114)—crystallizes this moral dilemma.

It is, indeed, denunciation—defined here as both a mechanism of survival and a profound ethical corruption—that ultimately claims the lives of both Yevgeni Mikeladze and Erzha Khadarovsky.

The weight carried by the term commandment in this context is especially notable. As Nana Gaprindashvili, Mariam Miresashvili, and Nino Tsereteli observe in their

conceptual monograph, the Bolshevik regime was engaged in crafting a new cosmogony, a new mythology—one that, like all mythic systems, required not only a supreme being, but also its own rigid set of commandments (Gaprindashvili 2010, 68).

The novel's opening lines underscore the continuity of suffering across temporal planes. Though the era of the Red Terror may be over, the bleak conclusion remains: «Still»—a word freighted with meaning—justice lies broken, and human dignity remains worthless (Arsenishvili 2021, 5).

According to the orchestrators, the memorial to the repressed is being constructed near Soganlugh — apparently, the very place where the Chekists once hunted down dissenters.

The silent cry of one character profoundly encapsulates the spirit of the era — he still knows where to go, where to lay flowers, where to kneel. And yet, as noted elsewhere in the novel, everyone understands that the stela cannot possibly bear the names of all the repressed. The mood of the novel's conceptual character, Gano, is steeped in pessimism: our hearts are narrow, and our memory is doubtful...

Stalin is depicted in the narrative precisely as Beria once advised Alio Chivadze — not through direct presence, but through the recollections and reflections of others.

The portrait of the leader takes shape in the words of Samuel, one of the orchestra members, now on his

deathbed. He was the one who had once invited Evgeni Mikeladze to Tbilisi, recognizing in him a kindred spirit. The brutality inflicted on Mikeladze is vividly recalled — his hands beaten, his wrists deliberately twisted, needles pushed beneath his fingernails, while the Chekists stood over him with boots studded in iron. (Cf. Otar Chkheidze's concept of Paganini's fingers — M.G.)

Another character, Jeriko-Deyran — whom the reader has long suspected of being an informant and traitor to Erzha — meditates on Stalin's only real rival in Georgian history: Shota Rustaveli (Arsenishvili 2021, 30). In one particularly tragic passage, after seeing Evgeni Mikeladze's beautiful wife,

Ketevan Orakhelashvili, the same character, Deyran Kibishauri, thinks to himself, I wonder if even Nestan-Darejan is more beautiful than her. (According to rumor, one of the reasons for Mikeladze's death was precisely his wife's extraordinary beauty — a «sin» the Chekists would not forgive.)

According to musician Samuel, Stalin was a clinical dictator, a destroyer of the nation and its freedom. In stark contrast, Gena, the orchestra inspector, sees Stalin's name destined to be written in golden letters in history — as a visionary thinker, a towering political leader, and an unmatched military genius (Arsenishvili 2021, 31). Samuel likens the leader to Kronos, the mythological figure who devoured his own children, deafening the nation for

thirty years with applause and cries of Vasha! In the novel *Oh World...*, applause takes on a deeply conceptual significance: the author's character, Rusiko – the son of a Chekist – encounters Jondo, a man tormented by traumatic epilepsy, at Stalin's funeral, and recalls a vinyl recording where one side captured nothing but thunderous applause crescendoing into a frenzied ovation.

The Requiem text also features the author's grandmother, who was so terrified of Stalin that she never uttered his name, treating it as a taboo. Instead, she simply said, He is cursed. Yet in a deeply moving moment during prayer, the old woman begs the Lord to have mercy even on him – to grant him tears of repentance, to water and soften his soul, scorched by sin, so that the moment of death would not come while his soul remained impenetrably dark. (Arsenishvili 2021, 37) This exemplifies the highest expression of faith – praying not only for loved ones, but also for one's persecutors and enemies, in accordance with the Lord's commandment: Bless those who curse you.

The author recalls the grandmother's letters, written in her flowing cursive script to the "cursed one," in which she assured the leader of her son's innocence and pleaded for his release. But that same handwriting evokes more than just those anguished memories – it seems to embody and symbolize their entire world: their path,

vineyard, meadow, spring, garden – the very soul of their most beloved grandmother herself. In a word, our anguished yet soul-stirring homeland (Arsenishvili 2021, 39).

A particularly powerful concept is expressed in the words of Samuel: after spending so long contemplating revenge, he confesses that the pathos of vengeance has entirely faded. It seems that even revenge, too, must eventually consume itself.

The equally oppressed society lives under the constant weight of the leader's terrible gaze – his ever-watchful, all-seeing, vigilant eye.

In an era of pervasive fear and terror, Ezhi selects seven poems each by Mandelstam and Galaktion – poets outraged by the new Dark Ages – for the libretto. This choice speaks volumes about the young composer's spiritual depth and integrity.

In one of the Requiem's passages («Lacrimosa»), the composer writes a soprano aria in memory of his mother, Wanda Sashczynskaia – daughter of a Polish artist-photographer and a mother from Imereti, surnamed Shavgulidze: The globe of the earth is floating in tears, and my mother cries out to heaven (Arsenishvili 2021, 91).

The Chekists of Stalin-Beria seize the score of Khadarovsky's Requiem. While explaining the essence of its central aria, Gano tells the audience that the male and female voices – the banjo and the soprano – represent all those men and women who have lived

through the apocalypse, from Adam and Eve to our present day. This indirectly invokes one of the darkest conceptual lenses applied to the era – that of the apocalypse. As Gano puts it, This is our cry and our escape from the dark pit to the azure waters (Arsenishvili 2021, 92).

Ezhi's words – Zaira Arsenishvili's words – are sure to remind Georgian readers of the famous essay Through the Thorny Road – Towards Stardom by another great Georgian lost to the Red Terror, Erekle Tatishvili.

In the novel, the terror of 1937 appears as a sweeping plague that suffocates the Soviet people. The aristocracy of blood and spirit were branded as bourgeois agents, Japanese spies, and rabid dogs (Arsenishvili 2021, 85). Only a handful had the courage to speak out against the all-encompassing fear. Among them was a young composer who, when publicly asked to denounce his father at a party meeting at the Leningrad Conservatory (!), hurled a chair through a window and stormed out of the hall in defiance.

Throughout the text, the author inserts powerful summary passages amid the characters' narratives – rhythmic reminders that function as the metronome of the era, keeping the reader attuned to its haunting pulse of «the Great Terror of '37, which raged like a dragon impaled on a pole, devouring half of the cozy opera audience, loyal music lovers, and glaring at the other half with terrible

eyes... a time of retribution, chaos, the eruption of dark forces, unrestrained fury... fear – the destroyer, the destroyer that turns a person into a shriveled rabbit» (Arsenishvili 2021, 303).

Had the thought not emerged – that no one, not even the leaders (M.G.), would have halted this madness – he might have lost his mind completely.

The young writer listens with intense interest to Gano's account of Ezhi's life, seeking to gather the scattered fragments and assemble the full picture of the era – a puzzle of human lives shaped and shattered by terror.

The quote «We were drawn into the same arc of fate» – a phrase of particular significance, as the narrator envisions the events of 1937 from the vantage point of 1960, based on Gano's account (M.G.) – echoes Boris Pasternak's conceptual line, which Doctor Zhivago dedicates to the beautiful Lara: Мы в книге рока на одной строке (We are in the book of fate on one line) (Pasternak 2002, 268).

Thought-provoking reflections on the era's attitude toward Pasternak can also be found in Zaira Arsenishvili's third novel, Collage in the Moonlight. Meanwhile, a poignant line by another victim of the Red Terror, Nikolai Gumilyov – «Бродят бешеные волки по дорогам скрипачей» (Mad wolves roam the roads of violinists) – serves as the epigraph to Requiem.

The author also recalls his own childhood, when, during the

«exposition» of his parents (alongside many other so-called «agents»), no one in the hall dared defend the innocent. In contrast, he admires – and even envies – Ezhi's courage.

As a child, upon leaving that dreadful hall, he could only envision his own death and imagine the nobility of the frightened people's self-sacrifice. This child was killed by us, he writes, by sacrificing precious, innocent people. (Of course, this is merely the child's desperate fantasy, not reality – for those who sacrifice others are incapable of remorse, let alone repentance.)

The writer draws the reader once more into the hellish paradise constructed by the leader, when, at the request of the young composer, Gano reconstructs the text of one of the central parts of the musical composition – the repeatedly mentioned *Lacrimosa*:

Oh, why did you sacrifice us?! Why did you send us a flood and a deluge?! Tears have washed us away, oh Lord, tears have washed us away! Our eyes have filled, our hearing has grown dull, our day has darkened, our faith has vanished... We wail, we lament, tears are pouring down, pouring down like a deluge – our fields, our vineyards are flooded; fields, forests, and tears have covered the earth. Oh, woe to us!... Why, why did you sacrifice us?! Oh Lord... tears have washed us away!

It is no coincidence, we believe, that the paradigms of the field and the vineyard emerge in the final lines of *Lacrimosa*. Tears falling like a deluge

flood these sacred symbols – the field, representing bread, and the vineyard, representing wine. The age of atheism is thus deprived of the grace of communion, for this is the age not of the Lord, but of that cursed one – the leader. (Let us recall Galaktion's bitter prophecy: «A hellish paradise is being built»!)

In grappling with the essence of the recent past – the 1930s – the character Samuel, speaking from the early 1960s, seven years after Stalin's death, describes it as a kind of perpetual motion machine: a devil's engine, creaking with wheels and grinding with teeth – though we know when it began, only the devil knows when it will stop (Arsenishvili 2021, 97). (He adds, with a tragic-grotesque tone, «If I can't be there, of course».). The era of forced unification fought relentlessly against any manifestation of individuality. The text offers a symbolic detail: Ezh's violin, a magnificent creation by a legendary luthier Master Majini, endowed the musician with a uniquely individual sound. The violin's tone was clear and pure, capable of reaching genuine tragic pathos (Arsenishvili 2021, 100).

This reference to the violin – an elite, expressive instrument – reinvoke the epigraph by Gumilyov: «Mad wolves roam the roads of violinists», casting a shadow over the paths of those who dared to be exceptional.

Conclusion. In the end, *Requiem* stands not only as a literary tribute to

the victims of Stalinist terror, but also as a powerful act of remembrance and resistance. Through her poetic, fragmented, and deeply symbolic prose, Arsenishvili captures the voices that were silenced and the emotions that were suppressed during one of the darkest chapters of Georgian history. Her work compels readers to reflect on the cost of lost freedom, the fragility of truth under authoritarian rule, and the enduring power of memory.

As this study has shown, *Requiem* is more than a novel – it is a spiritual and moral testament: a requiem for a

wounded nation and a call to conscience in times of injustice. Through her sensitive and courageous return to the traumas of the past, Arsenishvili gives voice to a collective pain that continues to echo into the present.

In doing so, she affirms that literature holds not only the capacity to represent suffering, but also the sacred power to preserve dignity, inspire resistance, and awaken moral responsibility.

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