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## **Shadow Feminism in Elfriede Jelinek's "Lust" (Comparative reading and analysis of Mikheil Javakhishvili's "Jaqo's Dispossessed")**

### **ABSTRACT**

The main goal of the research topic is to show how and in what form, in the process of teaching literature and reading literary texts, in the context of modern theoretical models developed within adjacent disciplines and adapted to literature, the interpretative reading of key episodes and female characters can be carried out against the background of comparative analysis. Before we begin to discuss the texts and analyze the noteworthy episodes in terms of the characters, ideological load, connotation, or contexts related to them, we consider it necessary to thoroughly consider the key biographical factors of the authors. This thorough consideration is crucial as it significantly influences the process of forming their personalities, creative thinking, and consequently, their works. The scientific article also provides a brief overview of the sharpest and contradictory assessments of the works discussed in the article by critics and a discussion of the theoretical framework. We adapt this framework to the texts and analyze it in the context of specific episodes, attempting to interpret the female characters. In our discussion of the female characters of the works selected within the framework of our research topic, we will analyze the aspects of feminist theory.

**Keywords:** *Elfriede Jelinek's "Lust"; Mikheil Javakhishvili's "Jaqo's Dispossessed"; "Shadow Feminism"; Comparative Analyses; Interpretive Reading.*

### **Introduction**

Considering the specifics of teaching literary texts and the main goals and skills to be developed in literature teaching, namely, the need to create a critical and self-reflexive approach to the development of cross-disciplinary and transferable, intercultural competencies; national and universal values; interpretation of texts; we consider it necessary to use comparative analyses and interpretive reading approaches in the process of discussing the representational features of female characters and in-depth reading of the literary texts. This will allow us to examine the female characters depicted in two different works in the light of modern feminist theories when conducting a comparative analysis of texts by authors from different eras and with two distinct cultural and national identities. Let us actively engage in interpretive diversity, read from various perspectives, and, most importantly, by adapting current and cutting-edge theoretical models to literary texts, be able to understand works familiar to us in a new way and see them from a different perspective.

## Literature Review

Comparative reading and analysis is a critical skill that involves analyzing and evaluating the similarities and differences between two or more texts. It allows students to distinguish between perspectives, themes, and arguments effectively. This skill improves comprehension by encouraging readers to recognize nuances and complexities in the approaches or contexts of different authors. Comparative reading sharpens analytical skills and promotes a deeper understanding of the material, making it an essential component of academic success. Comparative reading is a method of analyzing and examining these texts side by side to reveal connections, contrasts, and perspectives that may not be apparent when reading them in isolation. In modern times, comparative analysis helps students develop critical thinking skills and an appreciation for diverse perspectives. Students become more able to discern nuanced interpretations and construct comprehensive analyses by considering multiple perspectives. In addition, comparative reading and analysis reflect real-world scenarios where information is rarely single or isolated. Instead, it requires integrative thinking, fostering valuable skills across various academic and professional fields (Guzzetti, 2002, 82-85).

In analytical reading, comparative analysis is a methodical approach that allows you to examine and understand texts by connecting them. It is a powerful tool for discovering nuanced meanings and achieving holistic interpretation. The roots of comparative reading and analysis can be traced back to medieval scholastic practice, where scholars were required to compare classical texts from different cultures to interpret religious and philosophical ideologies better. This method allows us to critically analyze works from various genres or cultures in more modern educational settings, expanding understanding beyond individual perspectives. The practice of comparative reading develops essential skills such as critical thinking, attention to detail, and the ability to synthesize complex ideas. These skills transcend academic needs and offer valuable applications in problem-solving and decision-making (Pickvance, 2001, 7-11).

Using comparative reading and analysis techniques offers the opportunity to develop the ability to analyze and synthesize information from different texts deeply. This involves identifying key similarities and differences that can broaden the scope of understanding and comprehension across texts. Comparing and contrasting reading passages has been an integral pedagogical practice since the earliest days of literary education. By engaging in this process, we become familiar with the ability to discern variations in authorial intent and narrative style, which are crucial for comprehensive analysis. By practicing reading and analyzing literary texts in this way, we develop the ability to identify surface-level differences and deeper, thematic distinctions and connections, strengthening critical thinking skills across disciplines. This approach often goes beyond simply comparing two texts and

offers the opportunity to understand cultural, historical and ideological contexts. This broader perspective is invaluable in fostering an understanding of different worldviews and a deeper appreciation of diverse narrative techniques, ultimately leading to a more nuanced and empathetic worldview.

## **Methodology**

The article is based on a desk research analysis, within the framework of which we studied the personal diaries of the authors (Elfriede Jelinek and Mikheil Javakhishvili), interviews, biographies and opinions, negative and positive assessments expressed in scientific circles and within the framework of literary criticism, about their works (“Lust” and “Jaqo’s Dispossessed”). Also, since the aim of the scientific article was to study the main female characters of both texts from different perspectives within the framework of comparative analysis and interpretive reading, we included in the text of the article a brief history of feminist theory, the essence, and main characteristics of “Shadow Feminism”.

## **Discussion**

### ***Psycho Portrait of the Authors and their Creative Sense***

Before proceeding to in-depth reading of specific texts and moving on to comparative analysis, we introduce students to and help them analyze those important and key biographical details, life experiences, and personal stories that have had a significant (conscious or unconscious, direct or figurative) impact on the authors’ worldview, create imagination, and the process of forming specific works.

1.1. According to the speaker of the Swedish Academy, Mr. Per Erik Wastberg, Elfriede Jelinek moves the reader to the depths of the soul with her anger and passions and therefore deserves the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004: “musical flow of voices and counter-voices in novels and plays that, with extraordinary linguistic zeal, reveal the absurdity of society’s clichés and their subjugating power” (Gogolashvili, 2006, 244). It is worth noting that in her homeland, Elfriede Jelinek is known as a scandalous author and is not very well liked by the majority, since with her work, Elfriede Jelinek shows Austria a mirror into which it is not at all pleasant to look. The hostile and aggressive attitude towards the female writer was also conditioned by the fact that she had repeatedly criticized her compatriots for their indifferent attitude towards the Nazi past, which is why the author was given the epithet “a polluter of her own nest”. The author herself noted in an interview that she is like a murderer at her desk, because in real life, she is not able to do that. At this point, she fights those she envies because they have settled comfortably into everyday life. Because she is a totalitarian being and

because the Nazis lived here, no one has the right to peace and happiness. As a Professor Horace Oscar Axel Engdahl notes in his speech, the author with her lively, rough and sharp linguistic and expressive means, creates the impression that she is everywhere in the text and nowhere simultaneously, as if she encompasses the entire text. Thus, the writer "deliberately opens her work to the clichés that flood the news media, advertising, and popular culture – the collective subconscious of our time. She manipulates the codes of pulp literature, comics, soap, operas, pornography, and folkloristic novels, so that the inherent madness in these ostensibly harmless consumer phenomena shines through. He mimics the prejudices we would never admit to, and captures, hidden behind common sense, a poisonous mumble of no origin or address: The voice of masses" (Gogolashvili, 2006, 245). It is important to emphasize that Elfriede Jelinek does not fit society's frameworks, priorities, tastes, or the era's demands. She describes the dark pictures of life with complete clarity. It was interesting to see the author's allegorical description of life and her identical essence, overview of others and herself/the everyday and creative path, as well as description of the metaphor of language as her own discussing creative identity and the universality, indeterminacy and self-sufficiency of the writing process, it's comprehensiveness, language as a writer's tool and its many-faceted mask. "Yes, it dares to be confident and to rule over me. This language does not love me. It would gladly love the virtuous people there, on the road, beside whom it runs like a dog and bows its head as if it were so obedient. It disobeys not only me, but also nobody. The language exists for itself. It screams at night because they have forgotten to light the lamps along this road. After all, only the sun is their food source" (Gogolashvili, 2006, 246).

Notably, the writer's parents had a particular influence on her personality and creativity. The author's father, a Czech Jew from the socialist working class, Friedrich Jelinek, although he escaped persecution during World War II, the fact that his close relatives were victims of the Holocaust had a negative psychological impact on him. The writer herself always suffered and noted in interviews that the greatest and main regret of her life was that she could not properly care for her elderly, mentally ill father (Gogolashvili, 2006, 260-261). It is also noteworthy that Elfriede Jelinek had a tense relationship with her mother, Olga Buchner, who was of Romanian-German origin, from a bourgeois circle, from a wealthy family. Her mother tried to make a brilliant musician out of a writer, so she was taught to play various musical instruments from an early age. However, in parallel with her musical education at the Vienna Conservatory, Elfriede Jelinek studied art history and theater at the University of Vienna. It is also worth noting the biographical fact that due to an anxiety disorder, the writer stopped studying and lived in complete isolation in her parents' house for a year (she also had severe social claustrophobia), when she began her in-depth literary work and chose writing as a form of

artistic self-expression.

In the work of Elfriede Jelinek, on the one hand, there is a sharp criticism of Austria's Nazi past and an attempt to distance herself from her homeland, on the other hand, there is a close connection of her work with the tradition of Austrian Literature. Honegger notes that the influence of Austrian writers such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Marlen Haushofer and Robert Musil is noticeable in her novels (Honegger, 2006, 9-11). Within the framework of modern literary criticism, it has been repeatedly noted that Elfriede Jelinek can be considered a feminist writer who presents gender relations, female sexuality, pop culture, women's faces and their place in the surrounding reality (Stevens, 2016, 169-199). The repeatedly revealed and recurring psychological or sexual violence against women, as well as, in general, the pagan confrontation between the sexes, are the main thematic directions of her work. For example, in the novel "Women as Lovers", the writer presents a woman as a victim, formed in a cruel, unforgiving patriarchal environment. In the semi-autobiographical novel "The Piano Teacher", the writer deals with the suppression of sexuality. Elfriede Jelinek's important novels are "Wonderful, Wonderful Times" (1980); "Lust" (1989); "Greed" (2000). Jelinek created her paradigm of the text. Her text represents a space with layers of meaning because language is the seat of her being, spiritual life and physical existence (Gogolashvili, 2006, 244). Thus, we consider the fundamental origin of the "Women as Lovers" and "Lust" of the novels to be the presentation of the common cultural and psychological problem that considers "creating a family", the obligatory/necessary existence of the other half and attachment to a man as the only way to escape from the hopeless, unpromising existence of the "weaker sex". The female characters in the writer's works "deserve" the status of a married, engaged, loved woman by offering their bodies, denying their essence, giving up their identity and all-around obedience. There can be no talk of love, mutual trust and respect in an environment where a man as a rule, controls his destiny (at least without waiting for the woman's permission). In contrast, a woman is often subjected to fate, because a woman must "catch up with fate", become someone else's property. Based on the above, Elfriede Jelinek shows us in her novels that in such families and relationships, love turns into a bitter, destructive and traumatic experience, a terrifying sexual relationship, in which the man only cares about satisfying his own needs. At the same time, the woman patiently waits for the sexual act and the accompanying physical or sexual violence to end. The illusion of escaping eternal boredom and hopelessness by creating a family or relying on a man throws disappointed women into even greater misery and an endlessly disenfranchised space, within which their identity begins to be destroyed, their voice is suppressed, they become worthless, they become completely degraded and they experience an existential crisis.

Because of her literary language and scenes with female characters, critics often referred to

Elfriede Jelinek as a literary masochist, a literary porn star, an apologist for obscenity, and a "red pornographer". Many people are still offended by the writer's work, especially moralists, anti-feminists, anti-fascists, religious people and those who see novels by female writers as nothing more than provocative and blatant immorality. Knut Ahnlund described Jelinek's work as "whining unenjoyable public pornography", as well as "a mass of text shoveled together without artistic structure". It is not difficult to determine the reasons for such assessments if one understands that creativity focused on pessimistic moods and negative, depressive, violent stories, is a sharp revelation (a sharp reminder) of the hidden weaknesses, fears, complexes and shortcomings of the masculine world, since they clearly show human contempt and the instinct of self-preservation. Thus, in her work, the author studied the Australian national character and in the post-fascist period, presented the internal kitchen of family life and marriage as a boiling mixture of bitterness, anger, limited intimacy and cruel incestuous love (Honegger, 2006, 13).

1.2. Mikheil Javakhishvili was born in the village of Tserakvi, in the family of Saba Adamashvili and Elene Burnadze. The writer's father, Saba Adamashvili, was a loyal and hardworking farmer by nature, who spent his whole life working on the land, so he wanted his son to receive an agricultural education, which is why his son graduated from a farming school, from which Mikheil Javakhishvili, along with other excellent students, was sent to Yalta to continue his studies. It is noteworthy that, unlike her husband, Mikheil's mother always felt her son's uniqueness and loved him exceptionally, pouring more care and attention on him than on her daughters. The writer loved his mother and his sisters with a poor love. That is why the pre-New Year period of 1899 was the most significant psychological trauma for the writer, when his mother and 14-year-old sister, Sofio, resisted two armed villagers who had broken into their house and wanted to kidnap Sofio. In the process of resisting, the mother and daughter were mortally wounded while the writer himself had gone to study and his father to work in another village. After this tragedy that devastated his wife and daughter, on the anniversary of their deaths, Mikheil Javakhishvili's father also died, and the 22-year old student returned to his homeland from the Yalta school. From that time on, the young writer, along with great spiritual pain and orphanhood, also experienced unbearable economic hardship. Years pass and the life of the 30-year-old writer, in addition to the unbelievable murder of his mother and sister, is filled with several more traumatic events (his arrest in 1910 and imprisonment in Metekhi prison, his exile to Rostov-on-don). On February 25, 1921, the 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army, which invaded Tbilisi, breaks his entire space and determines the decline of his future life – imprisonment in 1923 on charges of representing the National Democratic Party, followed by the failure of the 1924 uprising and the bloody repressions of 1937, to which Mikheil Javakhishvili also fell victim – he was arrested again and, as a traitor to the country and

a spy, was shot.

Against the backdrop of such a difficult life path, spiritual pain and psychological trauma, it is not surprising that Mikheil Javakhishvili's work was from the very beginning connected with depth psychology, the issue of the relationship between the individual and society, crowd psychology, existential philosophy, the breakdown of self-identification, national nihilism, sexuality and psychoanalysis. The relationship between a man and a woman, carnal love, was presented in all the intensity in Mikheil Javakhishvili's work, unfolded in a naturalistic, writing skill, and realistic manner. The writer is well acquainted with a woman's psychology and sexuality. The primacy of the flesh is noticeable in the works of Mikheil Javakhishvili, although in the love described by the writer, a synthesis of traditional and modern worldviews is felt. Love is a distinctive and sublime feeling, but it is conditioned by sexual desire; it follows carnal pleasure. Erotic scenes, nakedness pf the flesh are acceptable and necessary for the writer, since by showing the characters in such a state, the depth of the human psyche, their character, are revealed more fully and realistically. Thus, the character resembles is living, real person, and the reader can identify with the character. Therefore, for Mikheil Javakshishvili, it is noteworthy to elaborate on such psychological themes as: the independence of personality and society, establishing the connection between the conscious and unconscious of a person, outlining the faces of the “innocent perpetrator” and the victim, and in the second period of his creativity – the artistic depiction of gender and sexuality, the manifestation of sexual instinct and its forms, which represent the convergence of mental and physical impulses, the natural, spontaneous manifestation of longing, when the censorship of the mind is powerless and the actions of a person no longer obey public morality. The disenfranchised Nutsa and Eka, Sofia, who succumbs to the temptations of the crowd, Tamro, tormented by the unrealization of her sexual desires, the deceived Margo (“The Ownerless”; “Oblivion”; “The Devil’s Stone”; “The Golden Tooth”; “Nine Virgins”; “The Third”; “Jaqo’s Dispossessed”), these are the female characters who have to live in a society based on selfishness and hypocrisy, distorted by false morality, injustice and outdated ideas, and are faced with the necessity of making the right moral choice and maintaining inner freedom. From the perspective of the idea of freedom, the writer begins to elaborate on the “philosophy of the crowd” and “women’s issues”. The author realistically depicts the reality in which time oppresses, limits and personally or morally humiliates women. The female characters are allegorical and generalized, but at the same time, they embody living, real women. With their weakness, mistakes, passions, and desires, they present women capable of family loyalty, exemplary motherhood and love for their homeland to reader. Still, at the same time, they also like a pleasant, carefree life, they feel their bodies’ desirability, desire to strive for personal freedom and happiness and the need for material well-being. They

sometime take morally unjustified steps and deceive themselves with the illusion of happiness, they are searching for real love and inner peace. Thus, Mikheil Javakhishvili's prose reflects the psycho philosophical transfer of the important theme of women's emancipation from social themes: on the one hand, it represents the disenfranchised state of women, and on the other hand, the problem of gender identification and sexual freedom related to personal identity, which, along with the writer's creativity, cultural and national identity, allows us to analyze it in the context of feminist theory and gender studies (Khomeriki, 2008, 5-12).

Like Elfriede Jelinek, Mikheil Javakhishvili's work irritated many scholars, writers, critics, and citizens, especially with the publication of his novel "Jaqo's Dispossessed". "This novel immediately caused an unprecedented stir and conflicting opinions in Georgian society. Numerous reviews were written, each one devastating the other. One part of society even took the work as a personal insult. The exception was a small number of reviews that objectively evaluated the work" (Javakhishvili, 2000, 36). "Jaqo's Dispossessed" was positively evaluated by Ivane gomarteli and Ioseb Imedashvili, who believed the novel represents a search for something new and deeply expresses contemporaneity: "He offered us such a deep psychological analysis of the spiritual illness of a part of the intelligentsia of that time, the like which has not existed in Georgian writing before". The opposite opinion was expressed by Ana Ghviniashvili, who considered "Jaqo's Dispossessed" to be a fabricated work, and the novel's characters to be unreal people. In her assessment, Mikheil Javakhishvili showed us only a sexually exhausted woman in the form of Margo. Critic Shalva Radiani discusses "Jaqo's Dispossessed" in detail, focusing primarily on the issue of sexuality and noting that this problem has recently become relevant in Georgian writing. The scientist sees nothing wrong with the artistic depiction of such an important issue, but he worries that Georgian writers are losing their boundaries. From this angle, Shalva Radiani discusses Mikheil Javakhishvili's works, concluding that the writer deals with this critical issue superficially and one-sidedly. The writer's work was negatively assessed by Ippolite Vartagava, who called "Jaqo's Dispossessed" a pathological-anecdotal novel about Jaqo and Margo. According to Giorgi Natroshvili, Mikheil Javakhishvili is becoming a follower of "zoological realism". The writer's characters are not public figures, but naked physiological pieces of flesh. According to Giorgi Natroshvili, the writer's favorite images are the naked biological description of a woman, scenes of female rape. Thus, Soviet and post-Soviet literary criticism, to lower bad taste to the level of the uncultured reader's consciousness, to satisfy base instincts, declared the majority of Mikheil Javakhishvili's works, including "Jaqo's Dispossessed", to be pathological, tasteless, ugly, a kind of generalization of individual cases, naked naturalism (Kupreishvili, 2016, 325-332).

Modern critics have discussed the novel "Jaqo's Dispossessed" in a completely new way, in the

context of modern philosophical-aesthetic and public thinking, and noted that the writer deepens the idea of freedom, explores the problem of the relationship between the nation, society and the individual. The primary condition for the self-realization of the individual, his and, consequently, the survival and development of the nation and the country is the perfection of society and public institutions. Obedience, complacency, and passivity are unacceptable; it is necessary to confront the unjust times. In the figurative study of “Jaqo’s Dispossessed”, the model of the desacralized world was revealed in the form of the defiled mysteries of the Orthodox Church. The inverted, or corrupted, representation of the mysteries of the Orthodox Church symbolically reveals the godlessness of the era, and the main inverted model is marriage. Modern literary criticism concludes that in the work of Mikheil Javakhishvili, including in the novel “Jaqo’s Dispossessed”. Such problems significant for the era as: the estate as an economic factor and as a metaphor, the reconciliation of knowledge and faith in the context of secularization, the regularity of the victory of the merchant over the knight, the antinomy of the sword and money, the city and the village – thesis and antithesis, the necessity of stimulating a functional person. Modern literary criticism have tried to read the novel in question, on the one hand, in the context of the anti-utopian genre and on the other hand, in the context of the theory and liminality. The text research revealed a tendency to realize such motivational features characteristic of the dystopian genre as: the motive of collective labor and quasi-nomination, the motive of the leader and pseudo-leader, the motive of scientific progress and suicide. The artistic realization of the mentioned motives in the text acquires an eschatological meaning, the methodological analysis of which is compatible with the theory of liminality or the boarder. Also, the work has been repeatedly discusses in the light of the theory of cultural trauma and the issue of national identity, and the breakdown of consciousness, Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic, modernist-postmodernist and Colonial/postcolonial theories.

1.3. Thus, before discussing the texts of the works themselves, in the process of familiarizing students with the biographical factors presented above, we will analyze the following noteworthy aspects: 1) autobiography is not a set of facts, but a psychological portrait of writers, their worldviews, life experiences, personal interests, priorities and values, individual memory and psychological trauma, one of the factors determining the creative imagination; 2) We show the process of identifying the central artistic theme and thinking model against the background of the unifying and intersecting traumatic memory and experience of a creator born and raised in two different epochal, historical and cultural realities, an author of two different genders, characters and past experiences; 3) We will have students analyze the biased, fragmentary, one-sided, superficial and negative assessment of the work of such authors in critical literature, along with examples of modern interpretations and new

understandings of their works, in-depth analysis and correct assessment. We will highlight the peculiarity of the discussion that it is characteristic of Georgian, German, Austrian and any other nationality scientists, critics and writers to try to overshadow, artificially deny and devalue the essential works of great authors, especially concerning such sensitive topics as national identity, national consciousness, collective memory, cultural trauma, societal vices, historical past, sociopolitical reality, violence, oppression, fascism and totalitarian ideology in the form of sexually motivated and sexually abused female characters.

### ***Historical background of feminism and shadow feminism in literature***

Since we are reading the main female characters of both authors from the perspective of Feminist Theory, before directly applying the theory of "Shadow Feminism" to specific episodes and characters, we introduce students to this theory's main essence and manifestations.

2.1. The history of the development of feminism is divided into several streams, for example, the first wave – liberal feminism – aimed at changing gender asymmetry through changes in laws, attitudes and political courses. It focused on women's rights, that they should have the same rights as men. The goal of liberal feminism was not to implement fundamental changes in society; it only wanted to carry out institutional reforms. The second wave of feminism emphasized that despite the acquisition of political and legal rights, the issue of women still could not be resolved. The goal of the second wave was not only political emancipation, but also "women's liberation", which required radical, revolutionary social changes. The second wave of feminism was based on Marxist and Socialist Feminism and stated that it supported changes that promoted the distributing of household chores and equal participation in raising children in the lives of women and men. The third wave, or radical feminism, believed that gender inequality should be eliminated through fundamental changes and such a change could be achieved either by creating alternatives outside the patriarchal system or by changing the system from within. The radical direction of feminism had a vital value index, since it explored the general and deep-seated foundations of women's oppression. After the emergence of radical feminism in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century, feminism developed into a valuable ideology. Thus, feminism introduced sex and gender aspects as a topical and urgent issue, one of the most critical scientific and discussion issues among academic disciplines. It is worth noting that the primary interest of radical or different feminism was the elimination of the difference between men and women. The demand for equality of women with men was tantamount to the destruction of the feminine origin and nature and the masculinization of women. Therefore, this direction of feminism was also considered utopian. Feminist criticism includes topics such as the history of feminism, the socio-political

foundations of its development, the feminist movement, and feminism in literature (Burton, 2014, 33-40). Feminist aesthetics developed mainly in Western Europe and the United States at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its main goal was the emancipation of women and their liberation from male domination. Feminists aimed to “revise” past texts, which revealed hidden gender discrimination and, together with female authors, demonstrated the need to reassess literature based on the interests and values of female characters. Accordingly, special attention was paid to the faces of women, especially in texts whose authors were men, since, before, in their work, we mainly encountered two types of women: projections of male ideals (Madonna, Beatrice) and demonic creatures (Eva and Pandora, Delilah and Circe). Therefore, critics with a feminist worldview began to deconstruct old, traditional, binary oppositions and dichotomies (dirt/clean; body/soul; bad/good; moral/immoral), which led to a revision of women’s representations (in public and literary space) and highlighted such essential topics as: women as a category of analysis, women as victims of male violence, women as universally subordinate, women and family systems, women and religious ideologies, women and education, the issue of identifying female authors and female characters. Through the work of John Stuart Mill, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and other important authors, psychoanalysts and theorists, feminist criticism has identified the following important factors: 1) the question of the woman as author; 2) the woman as reader; 3) the woman as a style of writing. Feminist literary criticism has been divided into several main branches: 1) women’s literature, which focuses on the gender of the author; 2) women’s reading, which focuses on the gender of the reader; 3) women’s writing, which focuses on the style of text. This division of literature identified three main types of text: 1) “Women’s texts” – created by female authors; 2) “feminine texts”, which were written in a culturally feminine style; 3) “feminist texts”, which challenged the dominant patriarchal methods and goals of the literary canon (Gill & Sellers, 2012, 1-8).

2.3. We would like to emphasize that in the process of analyzing both works discussed within the framework of the study, we read female characters from the perspective of “Shadow Feminism” proposed by an interesting contemporary theorist, author working in the field of gender studies and queer theories – Jack Halberstam. Jack Halberstam was the first to start talking about female masculinity in academia in his book of the same name. Since female masculinity is diverse and differs from each other in terms of body, features, sexuality and other characteristics, the author discussed these diverse masculine gender types in non-male bodies, starting with androgyny and ending with transsexuality. According to the researcher, the study of female masculinity is critical, since it shows us in detail how dominant male masculinity works. From the perspective of “Shadow Feminism”, the author explores a feminist politics that stems not from doing but from inaction, not from being a woman

but from refusing to be a woman. The theorist discusses the broken bonds between mother and daughter, which he examines from the perspective of "anti-Oedipal Feminism", and notes that this feminism, which is based on denial, resistance, defeat, and forgetting, is an alternative feminist project – shadow feminism, and its language is defined by self-destruction, masochism, and anti-socialism. Jack Halberstam discusses texts in which the mother is actively and passively lost, abused, loved, hated, and even destroyed. This process creates a space, theoretical and imaginary, that is "not feminine", or that can only exist through the denial femininity and it raises the question of why women should be expected to fill and transmit from generation to generation the space of castration, insufficiency, and alienation (Halberstam, 2011, 11-19). The author notes that in discussing the texts, he is referring to an antisocial, anti-Oedipal, anti-humanist feminism that originates from queer and postcolonial, black feminism and involves the denial of the subject, the rupture of inheritance rather than its continuation, the dissolution of the "self" rather than its activation. The form of self-expression of this feminism is silence, stubbornness, self-denial, and sacrifice. Ultimately, we find that women are not a feminist subject, but only subjects who cannot speak, refuse to talk, are fragmented, and refuse to be whole (Halberstam, 2011, 123-129). Antisociality implies an attachment to absence, shame, or destruction, and a radical passivity that offers us a way to embody a different femininity. A radical understanding of passivity represents an antisocial solution to the dilemma of becoming a woman, which reinforces the power of men in the gender binary – the female self will not speak, it is a passive voice that belongs to the masochistic fantasy, and can become a transformative voice for feminism. Thus, being the object of public cutting, stripping, and humiliation is a kind of performance of resistance, immobility.

### ***Elfriede Jelinek's "Lust" (Analyzing the Female Character)***

From the very first sentence of the novel, the writer leads the readers to the everyday life, depicting that widespread model of human life in which it isn't easy to distinguish human beans from each other – a gray and uniform world, full of false morality, false ideas, slavish expectations and human beans without faces. "Their hideaways: Their fixed abodes. Where their friendly faces abide, and all that distinguishes them is the one thing that's always the same. In this position, they go to sleep. Indicating their connections with the director, who, breathing, is their eternal father" (Jelinek, 2020, 1). Upon reading this expository preface, we can feel that poverty threatens everything spiritual, sublime, and human whatever may be a constituent part of the good beginning of the human race. It turns out that in the earthly world, every ethnic group, every nation, and any social organism, in the bosom of various historical, political, or cultural circumstances, has its leader as a director, a chief, or a noble. The

second paragraph of the very first page of the work also reveals that indiscriminateness, facelessness, and “collective sameness” are such a large-scale and rapidly spreading disease that the roots of evil go deeper than the consciousness distorted by economic hardship: “The children of the workers at the paper mill: they might well recognize the world for what it is at six in the morning when they go to the cowshed and suddenly become strangers terrible to the animals” (Jelinek, 2020, 3). Perhaps, teaching, reading and analyzing this episode, with just this one sentence, many rhetorical questions can be asked, for example, does the difference between animals and humans disappear in such an environment, or is a person who has become an animal and resembles it the most terrifying animal in the world, or is it even possible for a person, for whom “knowledge of the world” begins and ends with entering the factory, to either forge an original identity in this environment or attempt self-knowledge? Against this background of reality, the author introduces us to novel’s main character, Gerti, whose one-sentence characterization of this and many other such characters is both the greatest tragedy, the irony of fate, the fatal destiny, and the most incredible sadness of life. The narrator informs us that the woman who is part of this environment and walks her child, “she alone is worth more than half the bodies around here taken together” (Jelinek, 2020, 4). It is probably necessary to mark and remember this phrase, because every time we get angry at this woman, get worried, start evaluating or rejecting her actions in the process of reading or discussing the text, every time we try to separate ourselves from her, we should remember that this woman, even taken separately, was more than all the others taken together, those whom she allowed to trample on, and, precisely in such “undefined textual moments”, we should ask the question on the border of the conscious and the unconscious – what is the authors point view, that in such environment, characters like Gerti do not survive?

The woman has fluffy and beautifully combed hair. It turns out that her husband brought her from town, and he heads a paper factory. Thus, the woman is alone in every way, cut off from the natural toponym; here she is entirely alien and “other”. Therefore, she is removed from her natural living space and opportunities for self-development from the moment of marriage. She is deprived of the right to realize her desires or interests and free choice, because now she is a wife and mother, adorned in clothes and underwear bought by her husband, beautifully combed, groomed to match his interests. Her main status as a dignity and advantage, distinguishing her from others, is crowned with a crown of thorns – she is the director’s wife. A woman ensures family well-being and togetherness with her life. A man has prolonged his existence thanks to this woman and gained a foothold in eternity. In turn, a woman, the best material to be found, has continued herself in her child. From the very first pages of the novel, Elfriede Jelinek reminds the world that, as a rule, a woman is a material used to warm others and prolong life, alienated and sold, like a thing with multiple uses and many valuable properties,

someone else's property. From the passages depicting Sunday visits to the monastery church, we see that not only is the institution of the family and the woman's body desacralized and immersed in a whirlpool of falsehood, but also the house of the Lord, because the image of the Savior presented in it in the judgment seat is also an echo of endless obedience. The judgment presented to women is also the road to Golgotha, where, like the crucified Christ, they must forever carry the family's burden. Instead of being a consolation, the face of the Savior is a reminder of the repentance and obedience that women have to learn.

There is no longer a living space for women, because they are entirely alone, not only existentially, in the context of a theological or mythopoetic vision, but also legally, physically. It is a spiritual orphanhood and personal tragedy of all the women and mothers who have made being someone's wife and mother their sole purpose and identity. This is the logical conclusion and visible reality of those women who began to seek peace, happiness, and refuge in others and could not find it in their bodies, which is why they turned into "other". The author describes the completely degraded form of family life, human relationships, and the institution of the family, when a cozy home resembles a fortress with a woman trapped inside, deprived of all rights, and a victim of psychological, physical, and sexual violence. While reading the text, we realize how many types and forms of violence exist. It is essential to understand that behind the horrific, vividly described scenes of violence, the text implies an even more disgusting, total, desperate and dangerous form of violence witnessed by this woman from her family members, from strangers, from the entire society, culture and religion in form of their indifference, rejection and ignorance, and, perhaps, that is why the female body chooses the most deaf and terrifying form of protest or self-preservation – complete silence, passivity, conformity and emasculation. The author throws the female character into such a heavy and atrophied silence that she even loses the right to overcome the liminal space and acquire a new identity, because women brought to such a state, as a rule, can no longer experience metamorphosis. Like a mirror, a woman reflects the behavior of those around her. She has never found comfort or a solution. No one asks a woman about her real problems or situation; no one cares or shows interest. No one recognizes the woman, no one acknowledges her, no one talks to her, the woman is in complete silence and denial – for society she is the director's wife, for her son – she is simply a mother who his father abuses, while for the husband - the wife is only a source of satisfaction of his sexual desire, needs and fantasies, she is a sexual toy, on which the aggressor covers up his complexes, compensates from his eternal shortcomings and demonstrates his insignificant power. Every sexual act depicted in the text is a depiction of animal and savage violence, with crude details, degrading metaphors of male and female genitalia, epithets, and ironic comparisons – biting, choking, slapping, twisting, pulling of hair, and the violence sexual scenes.

The woman's reaction to any form of violence is unchanged – she is speechless, stiff, insensitive, obedient to everything, submissive, without rights, and will. Elfriede Jelinek uses the example of an ordinary family to illustrate the widening chasm in the national and cultural body, which has penetrated every person's home, heart, and mind, spreading darkness and silence everywhere. Moreover, woman is controlled and forbidden to wear tights and even maintain genital hygiene, because a wife's body should belong only to her husband, not only should it be foreign, uninteresting, disgusting and impenetrable to other men, but the woman herself should also lose the right to own her own body, so that, beyond the consumer interests of her husband, a woman's sexuality does not feel and does not gain legitimacy. It is interesting to realize that a woman who walks her child with a graceful hairstyle for others to see refuses to wear erotic lingerie made of expensive fabric, as if she is not missing the only opportunity to avoid and reject an intimate relationship that is hateful to her. When does a woman refuse a means of beautifying her body, especially something as intimate as underwear, only when she is indifferent to the attractiveness of both a man and her own body, when a woman cannot feel the freedom of her body, when a woman's autonomy is not recognized, when she's not comfortable in her own skin? When a woman loses the ability to feel desirable and enjoy the pleasure of sharing, when she is an object, and refuses to own her essence. This is what happens when a husband resembles inevitable death and a wife is a dying flower, when there is nothing in common and shared between two souls.

The writer presents another bitter reality and reminds us that women who are victims of constant violence find it more difficult to leave the role of victim than to give up their lives. Naturally, this is also supported by the fact that these women cannot start an independent life, feed themselves and their children, that, as a rule, they do not find shelter with anyone, and society, trapped in its shell of identical or similar problems, is not interested in or bothered by their acceptance or help. However, along with the above circumstances, it is also worth noting that the victim of violence often still looks for a potential abuser and tries to find salvation, comfort and shelter in him. At the same time, it is important to take into account the fact that people act according to their own life experience and, often, it seems to us to be the only space, an acceptable and natural environment for everyone, in which we have lived for years and beyond which we have not seen anything. The female character has not experienced any other form of love, so it is not surprising that Gerti who has temporarily escaped domestic violence, just to take a few sips of fresh air, who, having endured so many traumatic experiences alone, and seems to be in agony and unconsciousness, willing to run away from her reality, is trying to replace her husband model, in the form of an experienced, handy, carefree, young student – another abuser – who, like her husband, is neither capable of loving this woman, nor of appreciating her, nor of saving

and liberating her, nor of respecting and understanding her. Perhaps, the most painful thing is to admit that a woman who accepts violence as a natural part of her existence loses the ability to feel dignity, true freedom and happiness, and to recognize and appreciate a worthy, honest man with a healthy relationship.

The woman's dream of warmth and love remains unfulfilled. She decides to awaken and open up the feelings suppressed for years with another unworthy man, because she entrusts him with her broken soul, who does not know her value and worth, who does not have any desire or ability to fix her. The scene, when Gerti, who ran away from her home, was sitting in the student's car is a kind of catharsis for the woman, an unfulfilled metamorphosis, when the man, who has gone beyond the limits of normality to talk to her about her feelings, again buries her in the abyss of carnal passions, shackles her, and again suppresses her. The scene in the car shows that a woman is not allowed to be alone, to be free, to be in her own skin, to be more than just an object of sexual desires. Otherwise, is she recognizing her essence, then, she also recognizes the unworthy traitor and will not accept the captive slavery as love. The reader sees a used and abandoned woman, doomed and loneliness, indifference and rejection. The woman who has never felt love and care had difficulty distinguishing between love and extreme arousal, between true, deed feelings and desire to be loved, to be trusted, to be recognized and appreciated. We still see the woman who has been beaten, humiliated, scorned, and used up. By touching the young body, the woman seems to be regaining her youth, trying to stop the flow of time in her own body, and becoming a part of eternity. Beyond the mountains, the woman who had utterly lost the ability to perceive and control her body finally collapsed when a young student and his friends gang-raped her with their hands and tongues. The director's wife, who had run away from home for the third time and was kneeling at the door of a young student, saw no more women around her; the shop assistants, the workers' wives, her acquaintances, and the young student girls who had watched her curiously, giggled, and mocked her the night before had disappeared. No one was by the woman's side; everyone had forgotten her, maybe, because, she was neither the first nor the last. The end for such women, who have nothing left to lose, is killing her child – a complete and utter fall and degeneration, tearing out one's essence, cutting it off, going against the laws of nature, cutting off from everyone and everything, the most cruel sentence, self-punishment, and eternal revenge on abusers and betray men by destroying their offspring.

### ***Mikheil Javakhishvili's Jaqo's Dispossessed***

At first glance, what could be similar or familiar between the character Gerti from Elfriede Jelinek's "Lust" and the character Margo from Mikheil Javakhishvili's "Jaqo's Dispossessed", however, while

reading the texts, we discover that both women are caught between two abusive men, one of whom is the women's husband, and the other a "Lover". The novel's main female character, Margo, meets her future husband by chance in the editorial office. The institution of the family in this case is a committed cohabitation of two people devoid of content, which, although in the case of Mikheil Javakhishvili, is not based on sexual desire and insatiable need, however, it is still undermined, since it is only an attempt to escape from monotony and boredom and unite with others. The young woman is Margarita Kaplanishvili, of noble origin like Teimuraz, and an orphan. The woman looks pure and straightforward, has refined taste, restrained speech, and is characterized by a sly avarice, but only with black almond eyes. She has read Teimuraz's published letters, does not seem stupid, and her reasoning is pleasing to Teimuraz. All of the above was sufficient for the man to fall in love with the woman and agree to marry her. Teimuraz did not physically or sexually abuse Margo; such a thought and desire never even crossed his mind. Still, not all abusers are aggressors. Violence has many forms and faces. Passive abusers, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, often abuse their family members. Teimuraz also abused Margo by indifference, a lack of attention and care. It is true that in Teimuraz's eyes, Margo is not a sexual toy, but Margo is also an addition to him, an integral part of his home. Teimuraz Khevistavi also cannot see and cannot recognize Margo as a woman and as a person; he also makes a woman live in loneliness and silence. Hence, this is also violence, but passive, it's like a moral and psychological poison which makes woman to lose her identity and collapse. That is why Margo tried to replace her husband's indifference with entertainment – she dressed well and often left the house; sometimes she went to visit, usually she hosted, but somehow, she covered up the sadness, boredom, and pain in silence and rejection. Finally, the woman got tired of entertaining herself and, depressed, returned to her reality, accepted it, and came to terms with it. As a form of adaptation, she chose to sleep for 15 hours a day, as if her body refused to wake up and return to reality, as if even through sleep, she tried to distract herself, be silent, and create her own space in another world – she chooses a deep sleep as a form of nonexistence. Margo could not hide herself in everyday affairs; she did not have a child, and three or four caretakers and servants did everything for her, so Margo felt completely empty and useless, and all day long, walked around six rooms idly. Margo sometimes tries to seduce her husband. She dances, sings in front of Teimuraz, hugs and kisses him to feel her existence and to be noticed and loved.

Margo's relationship did not begin with contempt and hatred (unlike Gerti); she loves her husband in her way, and she is used to it because fate has chosen him as her husband, and she should experience happiness with him. Margo tries to please her husband; she wants to be close to him. She demands warmth and love from Teimuraz, because she is not visibly and humiliated, she is not beaten, she is

not forced into sexual intercourse, therefore, she cannot perceive herself as a victim, thus she cannot realize the terrible consequences of silence and indifference, which, sooner or later, will manifest itself with all its might. Times changed, and Teimuraz could not adapt to the new times; he could not get a job or find his place anywhere. Margo, who had been raised in a free environment and knew nothing of hardship, at first endured and got used to the difficulties and poverty, but as time went on, she began to ridicule, scorn, and despise him. At that very moment, Teimuraz's former serf, Jaqo JivaShvili, appeared at their door. His two wives had already died, and now he has a third one. He had so driven Teimuraz out of his ancestral homeland that, having escaped from serfdom, he became the owner of his former master's estate. He deceitfully appropriated all of Teimuraz's property and invited the now impoverished Teimuraz and his wife, Margo, as guests. The husband did not listen to his wife's premonitions, did not consider the danger, and led himself to moral degradation. The husband entrusted his wife to Jaqo and Jaqo raped Margo. "He laid her down like a heavy bear, crushed her... He trampled her mercilessly, breaking her arms and legs" (Javakhishvili, 2023, 66), threatening to strangle her, covering her mouth with one hand and holding her neck with the other, biting her shoulder, tearing her dress. After the first violence, Margo, beaten and soiled, cried loudly and yearned for impossible revenge in her heart. The second time, she could no longer scream and fight, so she moaned pitifully, and the third time, the woman's body felt pleasure.

In the bedroom reserved for Teimuraz and Margo, he sleeps so soundly, so deep, that he doesn't even notice the sexual assault on his wife lying next to him the fall of a woman must be monstrous by her environment, it must be placed between two extremes and two ugliness, so that it becomes difficult for us to distinguish between the uglier and the more guilty. Such an environment should transform a woman into a victim, should corrupt her with false ideas and illusions, so that not only herself, but even the reader should consider the woman guilty, and should begin to discuss the morality or immorality of a woman. Left completely alone with her misfortune, rejected by everyone, trampled by the indifference and inaction of those around her, victimized by the ignorance of her existence, all alternatives must be eliminated in the woman's imagination; no other life must exist for women like her.

There are repetitive actions and situations in the scenes of sexual intercourse and violence. The man (Jaqo) quickly satisfies his animal instinct and greedily takes possession of the woman's body several times (like the director in Elfriede Jelinek's "Lust"). The action always takes place in the dark because the consciousness of a woman in a traumatized state is blurred; her willpower is broken and subdued, as for women in such a state, their essence, value, meaning, and future are uncertain and shrouded in darkness. The narrator tells us that Margo never even considered betraying her husband, but what

should she do, or who would protect her, trapped in the arms of a wild beast, in an animal, and a bear? The woman is embarrassed and ashamed of becoming Jaqo's lover; she feels sorry and heartbroken for her husband. Jaqo treats relatives, servants, peasants, and women as goods, only out of consumer interest. The only difference is that, at the beginning, Margo like a new toy for Jaqo, whom a man will first make queen, promising wealth, love and care, then, like other wives, will treat her as a servant. Teimuraz could not take revenge even when he saw his wife and Jaqo naked in bed, nor did he do anything when Jaqo married Margo as his fourth wife, nor could he kill Jaqo, nor could he leave his homeland and start a new life, nor could he save her wife. Therefore, Teimuraz offered his ex-wife brotherhood and attended her wedding ceremony. This cohabitation could not last long in the woman's life either, because after a few months had passed, Teimuraz, who had supposedly gone searching for a new life, returned and discovered Margo, thin and yellow as a sick person, dressed in a torn dress, beaten on the shoulder, bent over from carrying heavy sacks. Margo had nowhere to go and nobody to return to, because like Elfriede Jelinek's character Gerti, she had lost herself and the meaning of life.

## Conclusion

As a summary of the discussion presented in the paper, we note that in teaching literature and reading literary texts, in the context of modern theoretical models adapted to literature, against the background of the comparative analysis, Within the framework of an attempt to read key episodes and female characters interpretatively, we can apply the main characteristics of one of the interesting versions of feminist theory proposed by Jack Halberstam, "Shadow Feminism," to both Elfriede Jelinek's female character from the novel "Lust" and Mikheil Javakhishvili's female character from the novel "Jaqo's Dispossessed." Both characters exhibit the main characteristics of "Shadow Feminism", such as: denial and forgetting of one's own essence, identity, personal desires and freedom of expression; complete despair; self-destruction (destructive action) and masochism; complete alienation and anti-socialism; silence and obedience; the function of the speechless and frozen female body as a fixation in a closed system of universal obedience and male aggression; anti-sociality as a symbol of absence, shame or attachment to destruction and radical passivity; masochism as an unsuccessful attempt to suppress the death instinct - destabilization of libido energies through the denial of manifested free will and the disintegration of the personality; adaptation and passivity as a result of fascist nationalism and the colonized past (Soviet past) - an allegorical symbol of the rejection of the traumatic past; scenes of violence against women by male characters as an imitation of conscious or unconscious misogyny, fascist ethos and national nihilism; also, misogyny as an extreme form of domestic violence and sexism, marginalization of women, discrimination, their humiliation, devaluation, violation of rights,

consideration as sexual objects, physical, psychological, and sexual violence.

We want to add that in this regard, it would also be interesting to discuss the novel "Soviet Milk" by the modern Latvian writer Nora Ikstena, which, along with the metaphorically depicted rather painful issues of women's faces, women's voices, and women's writing, shows that a mother who refuses to feed her newborn child, with this act, echoes the faces of countless women living in a totalitarian regime and symbolically depicts a woman's desperate attempt to under no circumstances pass on her terrible history, traumatic experience, the toxicity and violence surrounding her to her child and not to poison the child in the still unconscious phase with the legacy of traumatic memory and to leave something inviolable, free and sacred in a completely desacralized, false, hypocritical and filthy reality, in the form of the pure consciousness of the next generation. Also, in the process of reading and teaching such literary texts, it would be interesting to draw parallels with modern cinematic examples, such as, for instance, Halina Reijn's film "Babygirl", in which the crude, naturalistic nudity and erotic scenes depicted are a satire on power, stigmas, double standards and roles created by society or culture, norms and models of moral and immoral behavior. The film parodies the standard image of a strong, prosperous, and, at the same time, a family woman, as well as scopophilia and domination in general. However, this is a topic for discussion at another time and goes beyond the scope of this article.

Thus, in terms of introducing and analyzing topics related to gender, sexual, psychological, and self-identification crises, which are always interesting and relevant for modern students and readers, we consider it critical to provide opportunities for different teaching and diverse interpretive reading of the works of Georgian writers, including comparative analysis of their work with texts by contemporary foreign authors and discussion in the light of the latest theories.

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