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A National Model of Mnemonic Narrative: Kati Dadeshkeliani's Memoirs "Princess in Uniform"

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Abstract---Literary experts consider memoirs as a subvariety of documentary narrative genre, in which the stories of the past are narrated and the author himself is a participant or eyewitness of these stories (recently, such works are also considered as non-fiction literature). Unlike fictional literature, memoirs, to some extent, have a cognitive function, which is determined by the author's preferences – whether he/she wants to describe personal, autobiographical occasions or narrate matters of public importance. Kati Dadeshkeliani (1890-1977) was a Georgian emigrant, representative of the ruling family of Svaneti, participant of the First World War, knight of the two crosses of St. George. With regards to her memoirs – "A Princess in Uniform" – it can be said that the ratio is maintained; the author, on the one hand, tells us about the important stages of her life and, on the other hand, she reminisces the past (the author collected her notes at the age of 44 and compiled them into one book) and, based on a certain conceptual vision, she gives us an analysis of the events that happened in a considerable period of time. It is worth noting that Kati Dadeshkelian is mentioned in the military encyclopedias published in the West next to such famous writers as William Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, Harry Herbert Crosby, Julian Green, Sydney Howard and others. In addition, references regarding Kati Dadeshkeliani can be found in the books published in the West about women disguised as men/the sisters of Mercy during the World War I; also, about organizers of military hospitals, etc. In general, if we look at the evolution of memoir literature, it becomes noticeable that along with the narration of matters of public importance, they reflect the pulse of the era, the interests of a certain class, and sometimes even the state politics. It can be safely said that while narrating the story of her life, Kati Dadeshkeliani, a Georgian woman who was disguised as a man and participated in the First World War under the name of Lord Jemal, creates a monumental image of that era, in which important historical images and authentic persons of the first quarter of the last century are illustrated in a realistic and unadorned way.

Keywords---Memoir literature, Mnemonic narrative, Georgian Rince's wife in the First World War

Literary scholars consider memoirs a genre subvariation of documentary narrative, recounting events from the past in which the authors themselves were participants or eyewitnesses. We should also note that these types of works have recently been considered non-fiction (Gutkind, 2012). In the process of maintaining a memoir, the leading principle of narration is considered to be the mimesis of *memory and recollections*, which is related to the artistic perception of memories, emphasizing their authenticity, and the narrator's willingness to rethink past events from the perspective of current reality. Hence, a sense of remoteness is created in the narrator's consciousness concerning his/her past experiences (Antofi, 2013; Batcho, 2023).

Unlike fiction, memoirs, to some extent, also have a cognitive function, which is determined by the factors that the author prioritizes: describing personal, autobiographical episodes or conveying events of public importance. In this article, we will analyze the memoirs of a Georgian immigrant woman, a representative of the ruling family of Svaneti, a participant in the First World War, a twice cavalier of the Order of St. George, Kati Dadeshkeliani (1890-1977), "Princess in Uniform," where proportions are meticulously preserved; Meaning that on the one hand, the author, from the perspective of her forty-four years, tells us about the important stages of her life, which were

fatefully connected with the political changes taking place in the Russian Empire and the First World War; and on the other hand, the author takes a perspective look at the past and, based on a certain conceptual vision, provides us with an analysis of the events that took place in a not-so-small period of time (Dadeshkeliani, 2021).

It is noteworthy that Kati Dadeshkeliani is mentioned in military encyclopedias published in the West alongside such famous writers as Somerset Maugham, Ernest Hemingway, Harry Crosby, Julian Green, Sydney Howard, and others (Simkin, 1997). Also, information about Kati Dadeshkeliani can be found in books published in the West about the organizers of military hospitals, about the Sisters of Charity who participated in World War I, and about women disguised as men who participated in World War I. We should also note that the wearing of a man's uniform and participation in combat operations under an inauthentic name, in the case of the Russian Empire, was conditioned by the decree of Nicholas II, according to which women were prohibited from directly engaging in military operations; She could only fulfill the function of a Sister of Mercy. However, there were exceptions; for example, it is known that the legendary Maria Bochkareva (a.k.a. "Yashka"), directly by order of Nicholas II, was involved in the theater of World War I and achieved great success as a warrior.

It should be underlined that the memoirs of Kati (Ekaterine) Dadeshkeliani - "Princess in Uniform" - were written in French, but were not published in France; they were only translated into English in 1934 by Arthur J. Ashton and published in London (Dadeshkeliani, 1934). The memoirs were translated from English into Georgian by writer and translator Ketevan Tomaradze; in the extensive essay accompanying the memoirs - "Brave and Wise, Unlucky and Beautiful Kati" - the translator notes that the lack of publication of Kati Dadeshkeliani's memoirs for decades in the author's homeland, Georgia, was due to the sharply negative assessments of Bolshevism and the Russian revolutions. As for the whereabouts of the French original, a years-long search led Ms. Ketevan to the manuscript collection of the famous literary agent, William Bradley¹.

In general, if we follow the evolution of memoir literature, we will notice that, along with recounting events of public importance, they reflect the pulse of the era, the interests of a certain stratum, and sometimes even state policy. It can be convincingly said that in recounting her life story, Kati Dadeshkeliani, a Georgian woman disguised as a man who fought in World War I under the name of *Lord Jemal*, creates a monumental panel of the era, where important historical images and authentic individuals from the first quarter of the last century are presented realistically and unadorned. In addition, Kati Dadeshkeliani shares her traumatic experiences (both personal and collective). It is worth noting that when discussing the problem of traumatic memory, researchers point to the difficulty of establishing the truth since trauma mainly exists in the subconscious and is often sacrificed by the memory; Thus, one possible option for overcoming trauma is considered to be the *adjustment of self-consciousness*. As noted by Jeffrey Alexander, a well-known researcher in the sociology of culture, "...trauma must be resolved not by arranging things in the world correctly, but by arranging things in self-consciousness correctly." (Alexander, 2004). According to Alexander, collective trauma occurs when members of a certain group (social, national...) believe that they have been beset by a terrible event that has been forever imprinted in their memory and changed their future identity. In Kati Dadeshkeliani's memoirs, we discover both types of trauma: personal and collective, which dramatically changed and defined the future identity of the noblewoman.

The memoirs include several chapters; in the introduction, the author addresses the reader and very briefly (in just two pages) introduces the history of Georgia - from the legendary Targamos to the annexation by the Bolsheviks in 1921. It is noteworthy that this brief introduction ends with an optimistic summary that after the annexation "...three attempts were mentioned to break the power of the Soviet government: Svaneti uprising in 1922, Mtiuleti uprising in 1923, and uprising of all of Georgia in 1924. The last uprisings have taken the lives of more than six hundred Georgian patriots. Since then, Georgia has been waiting for the time to be freed from the hated yoke of Red Russia." (Dadeshkeliani, 2021). The introduction also describes the geographical location of Svaneti, climatic conditions, and legends related to the origin of the small family of the Dadeshkelianis of Lower Svaneti.

The first part of the memoir - *My Turbulent Youth* - combines several chapters; in the first chapter - *A house in Svaneti* - Kati unabashedly tells us about the ruthless confrontation between clans in Svaneti, the so-called family vendetta. She notes that at one point, her family was forced to seek refuge with the Queen of Samegrelo, Ekaterine Chavchavadze; However, after the execution of Konstantine Dadeshkeliani (he killed the Governor-General of Kutaisi, Lord Gagarin), it became possible for the family of her grandfather - Tengiz Dadeshkeliani - to return to Svaneti. The Elders Council of Svaneti recognized his right to the title of "Lord of Sadadeshkeliano"; however, to defuse the situation and prevent unrest, the Russian government took Tengiz's three eldest sons (Tatarkani, Otari, and

¹ Bradley's agency's clients at various times included: Maddox Ford, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Richard Wright, Henry Miller (the scandal surrounding the publication of "Tropic of Cancer" also goes back to this agency), and others.

Jansugi) as hostages until they reached adulthood, to the Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg.² Kati notes that his father, Aleksandre Dadeshkeliani, escaped being sent to Russia due to his young age; He was the only one of his brothers to grow up in Georgia, and it was he who inherited the family relic - a Crusader spear, which a peasant found on their land while digging the foundation of a house. Alexander married Babilina Eristavi at the age of twenty-six. Kati writes that she was born in 1890 and her mother was 16 years old at the time. Since Kati (Ekaterine) was the eldest heiress of the family, her baptism was celebrated on a grand scale: the godfather was the governor of Kutaisi; the baptism ceremony lasted six days and involved about five thousand people.

Kati describes in detail the Etseri estate, whose staff consisted of 120 persons. On the territory of the fortress with a seven-story tower, there was a mill and a distillery of vodka (three floors were demolished in 1902). The details that Kati recalls are interesting; for example; only women baked bread (it was baked twice a day), while slaughtering cattle and preparing meat dishes were the work of men; also, in the tower, in a special room, there were 24 tall carved wooden chests for storing products, etc. In describing her childhood and school years, Kati focuses on the practice of nannying/wet-nursing; She notes that his father financed her nanny's son's school and university education, and he became a successful doctor. Among the gifts she received during her childhood, Kati singles out horses: the first one was gifted to her by her father when she was three years old, and the second one when she was six years old when Kati was sent to the St. Nino Women's School in Kutaisi. Kati fondly and respectfully recalls the festive rituals that were established in Svaneti; she notes that since 1856 (i.e., after the abolition of the institution of serfdom), the peasants were no longer obliged to perform them, but they continued to perform the traditions established by the noble family (greeting with khonchas, festive meals in the castle tower...). Kati's childhood memories include hosting travelers to Svaneti in the tower during the summer (for example, one summer 50 students visited along with their professors). Later, Kati became interested in medicine and, after graduating with honors from the school's general course, continued her specialized studies with an orientation to mathematics, as she wanted to enter university to become a doctor (Palombo et al., 2013; Bellezza, 1996).

After graduating from the St. Nino Women's School in Kutaisi, Kati began working as a volunteer teacher in Bagdati, where her father had been transferred to work as an inspector of treasury forests. Kati notes that these were the two unhappiest years of her life (1908-1909). The last conversation between father and daughter took place in the hospital, where her mother was receiving treatment. Alexander informed her that he had agreed to enroll Kati in the medical faculty and had already sent her documents to St. Petersburg; However, he had one condition: after five years, Kati had to return to Svaneti and use her knowledge for Svaneti in the hospital that Alexander was planning to build. This happy news was overshadowed by the news received the day before about the death of her uncle, Tatarkhani. After that, a cascade of tragic events began that dramatically changed Kati Dadeshkeliani's life: first the murder of her father, then the arrest of her mother on charges that she had assisted in the murder of her husband. Kati found herself in a difficult situation; she realized that she was now the head of the family, that she had to take care of her imprisoned mother, her sisters (Nina and Tamari), and her brothers (Tengizi, Chepkani, and Islami). That black clouds were gathering over Kati's head is also evident from the fact that her uncles - Otari and Jansugi - who had taken Tatarkhani and Aleksandre to Svaneti for burial, did not allow Kati to attend her father's burial, despite her request; This was an open hint that she no longer had anything to do with Svaneti.

In her memoirs, Kati tries to figure out why her father was killed; she very delicately shifts the focus to a certain "distant cousin" who embezzled money from the sale of forest lands in Svaneti and gave testimony to an investigator in Kutaisi, based on which Babilina Eristavi ended up in prison on false charges. Kati respectfully mentions those who sympathized with her and stood by her during her ordeal, and with whose help she was able to free her mother from prison. Babilina Eristavi's full acquittal only occurred in 1914. The court found Babilina Eristavi innocent at the very first hearing; as for Ucha Dadiani³, who was accused of killing his friend - Aleksandre Dadeshkeliani, was defended by the famous lawyer Nikolai Karabchevsky, whose speech at the appeal trial is considered a textbook speech in jurisprudence; in fact, the lawyer proved to the court that Aleksandre Dadeshkeliani had fallen victim to the cunning plot of his brother, Otari Dadeshkeliani. Otari Dadeshkeliani's claim to majority inheritance and maniacal cruelty - these two factors determined him to spread dirty lies regarding the love triangle between Aleksandre, Babilina, and Ucha Dadiani. However, Kati cannot speak directly about this topic because by the time she was

² We note that after returning to their homeland, Tatarkhani and Jansugi Dadeshkeliani actively participated in public life; They were members of a society promoting literacy among Georgians and active participants in other charitable works. Jansugi was married to Aneta Dadiani, Akaki Tsereteli's niece, while Tatarkhani did not have a wife; However, he had many spicy stories connected with women (for example, giving Ushba, the highest peak in Svaneti, to the Innsbruck Count von Ficker, which he confirmed with a special certificate). As for Otari, he spent most of his time in Petrograd or Europe; he rarely visited Svaneti.

³ Ucha (David) Dadiani (1875-1932) - Grand Duke, Colonel, the officer of the personal convoy of Nicholas II, a participant in World War I; fought in the ranks of the 1st Caucasian ("Wild") Cavalry Division. After the October Revolution, he found himself in exile, first in Constantinople, and finally in the USA. He died in New York, buried in the Long Island Cemetery (Dumin, 1998, pp.56-64)

writing her memoirs, Otar Dadashkeliani's descendants were related to her family; Thus, she is careful not to burden her niece - Gulnara Irina and her husband - Nikolas by revealing the name of the instigator of the tragedy that befell her family.

In one of the chapters of her memoirs - *Unhappy Marriage* - Kati tells us about the period of her life in Vladikavkaz, a year after the tragedy, in 1911, in connection with her mother's case. It was here that she met and became close to the family of Tapa Chermoev⁴, who, to some extent, determined her future life. Through Tapa Chermoev, the Estonian baron, Voldemar Ikskul, met Katy; he introduced her to his son and soon asked for her hand in marriage. Kati was against getting married, but with the joint efforts of Tapa and his mother-in-law, Kafar Khanum ("Aren't you, the eldest child, obligated to help the family... A decision made with reason often has a much better ending..."), Kati agreed. Kati's overwhelming sense of duty played a decisive role in this situation. As it turns out later, Kat's intuition is not wrong, and the truth (that her husband is not interested in women) is revealed soon after the marriage. However, Kati coldly judged that if she asked for a divorce, she would be scorned and everyone would gossip about her family (and she had already passed this stage). That is why she decided to officially leave everything as it was (she only officially divorced her husband in 1921).

Unfortunately, Tamar also had an exaggerated sense of duty and responsibility, which is why her life ended tragically; she committed suicide due to a minor incident at university. Kati fulfilled her sister's last wish, buried her in Georgia, and upon returning to St. Petersburg, she locked herself away, never seeing anyone, only maintaining contact with the Chermoevs.

At dinner with Tafa's wife, Katy met Edigh Khagundokov from Kabardino, and then the idea of going to the front occurred to her. Kati clung to this idea like a "little wretched wretch." Khagundakov offered her to serve in his headquarters with the documents of his deceased nephew, Prince Jemal, to which Kati agreed without hesitation. This is how Kati (Ekaterine) Dadashkeliani became Lord Jemal.

The second part of the memoirs - **Lord Jemal** - is dedicated to the theater of World War I; A description of the events that led to the creation of a new world political map, where the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German empires no longer existed. Upon reaching the Austrian front, Kati was attached to the so-called "Wild Division", commanded by Grand Chief Mikheil. Kati positively recalls his simplicity, kindness, and attention to his subordinates. Interestingly, Kati was not bothered by the rumors circulating in the Wild Division that she was Mikheil's illegitimate son; she believed that this rumor only added dignity to her uniform. Kati briefly recounts the history of the creation of the "Wild Division", and the enthusiasm with which the volunteer mountaineers organized the headquarters (as other sources confirm, this is true). Kati unvarnishedly describes what she saw and experienced in the war; stories of loyalty and betrayal, dedication and heroism. Obviously, Kati had to meet different people, including acquaintances. Upon his first departure to the front, Edig Khagundokov gathered the headquarters officers, explained the situation, and made them promise not to reveal the secret. Kati emphasizes that not a single officer has broken his word. Kati also describes how, in the early days, she wanted to test her strength in the trenches, on the front lines. Khagundokov did not resist, but within a week Kati herself realized that there was no place for a woman in the trenches and returned to headquarters at the first opportunity.

In her memoirs, Kati recounts in detail the story of the tasks she performed, for which she was twice awarded the Cross of St. George; she also often includes episodes when many women showed sympathy for the attractive and refined "young man" dressed in a man's uniform and introduced to society under the name of Jemal Dadashkeliani. Indeed, it seems that it was difficult to recognize a woman in her because even her own mother did not recognize her when she arrived in Petrograd for a day from the front and visited her mother for the first time dressed in uniform; Also, she was not recognized by her childhood friend, Datiko Tsereteli, whom she met by chance on the Austrian front; Neither did her nanny's son, who heard that someone from Dadashkeliani family was serving in the neighboring infirmary, and came to meet him; Of course, Kati recognized him immediately, but he didn't; then Kati took him aside and told him who she was.

Kati's memoirs provide interesting insights into the role of the Georgian aristocracy both at the imperial court and on the front lines. She fondly recalls Giorgi Shervashidze, who was Oberhofmeister at the court of Nicholas II's mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, and later hermorganatic husband.⁵ It was he who introduced Kati to the Empress, on whose recommendation Kati was appointed as the senior assistant of the infirmary to General Ivanitsky, head of the Red Cross at the 22nd Field Hospital. Interestingly, their paths later crossed in Constantinople,

⁴ Tapa Chermoev - "Chechen oil king", son of Russian general Artsu Chermoev, ideologist of the creation of the Mountainous Republic. Until 1908, he was an officer in the personal convoy of Nicholas II, and from 1914-1918, he participated in the First World War; He fought in the ranks of the 1st Caucasian ("Wild") Cavalry Division. After the revolution, he emigrated to Paris, where for years he financed the Masonic lodge "Prometheus". (Серков, 2001, p.433).

⁵ Morganate marriage - an unequal marriage where rank privileges do not apply to the spouse and children born in the marriage.

where Ivanitsky extended a helping hand to an unemployed Kati and appointed her as the supervisor of a hostel-type sanatorium.

Kati describes in detail the "Brusilov Breakthrough", which she participated in and which was recorded as one of the most successful operations in the history of war. Indeed, in May 1916, four armies from the South-West, under the command of General A. Brusilov, launched an offensive, as a result of which almost all of Bukovina was captured; The Romanian army was almost destroyed, and the Hungarian army posed a danger. However, in the end, the troops that had penetrated deep into the enemy front line were unable to provide timely support from the flanks and ultimately, the success could not be maintained (Antelava, 2000). By the way, Ucha Dadiani also participated in the "Brusilov Breakthrough" as the commander of one of the detachments of the "Wild Division" (Dumin, 1998), but Kati does not mention this.

The assessment of the pre-revolutionary atmosphere perceived by the author of the book is interesting; Kati recalls that a few months before the February Revolution, she was at a grand gala concert at the Kyiv Theater with her brothers, which was attended by Nicholas II; She notes that if someone had told her that the Romanov Empire would fall in a few months, she would not have believed it. As for the revolution, it is interesting that Kati and her orderly did not learn about it from headquarters, but from the Jewish craftsman, who did not hide his excitement about this fact. Neither the head of the Legion, Colonel Shakro Chavchavadze (grandson of David Chavchavadze), nor the mayor of the city knew anything about the revolution. Only on the third day did the Kerensky government's resolution on the abdication of the tsar from the throne arrive. The memoirs describe the chaos that prevailed in the barracks and headquarters. In those days, Kati met one of the participants in the murder of Grigory Rasputin, Purishkevich, who did not hide his admiration for the loyalty of the Wild Division soldiers, who did not participate in the overthrow of the Romanov House, and in the fall of 1917, the 7,000-strong "Wild" Division was disbanded.

The final chapters of the memoirs describe the episodes of the Austrian attack and the retreat of the imperial army; the chaos and disorder that accompanied the collapse of the empire. After overcoming obstacles, Kati managed to bring the hospital's money - 30,000 rubles hidden in a battery - to Yekaterinburg; then return to Georgia and take off the military uniform. Lord Jemal became Kati Dadeshkeliani again. While in Georgia, another tragedy befell Kati: Chepkan, who was 19 years old at the time, was killed in Tbilisi. Kati spent the years 1918-1920 in Samegrelo with her family; in June 1920, she visited her father's grave in Svaneti for the last time, but the Svans gave her such a warm welcome that she stayed for a month instead of a week. When departing, the Svans gave her 20,000 gold rubles and made her promise to take Nina and Tengizi to Svaneti. However, Kati could not fulfill this promise. In February 1921, Kati's strange dream came true (before that, she had dreamed several times that Russia had occupied Georgia, which her relatives mocked); the family was forced to flee to Constantinople. Another tragedy struck here - her mother died in a car accident, and she had to undergo a long period of treatment to get back on her feet. Eventually, Kati settled in France with the surviving members of her family.

It is noteworthy that the first reader and evaluator of the memoirs was Major General of the "Wild Division" Napoleon Murat (son of Salome Dadiani), to whom Kati's daughter-in-law, Maria Orbeliani, was related⁶. It was he who Kati asked to read her memoirs, as he was well-versed in the events taking place on the Southwestern Front. In a reply letter, Napoleon Murat wrote to Kati, "...what you say is completely true. I have felt those three years of the World War again. Congratulations and I hope your memoirs will be a great success."

In her memoirs, the author is less concerned with presenting her own positive qualities; however, in certain details, Kati Dadeshkeliani's natural, innate qualities are still evident: organizational talent, intelligence, generosity, tolerance (the soldiers in her division celebrated both Christian and Muslim holidays), ability to cooperate and forgiveness towards officers and ordinary soldiers; Perhaps, considering all of the above, after the February Revolution, naive soldiers offered Kati - a "stubborn monarchist" - the chairmanship of the revolutionary committee. Kati Dadeshkeliani passed many of life's toughest tests with dignity; she witnessed the deaths of all five of her siblings and she passed away in 1977, at the age of 87, and was buried in Paris. The book's translator, Ms. Ketevan Tomaradze, regretfully notes the almost established tradition of the authors of biographies of women participants of war focusing on their sexual orientation. In the case of Kati, after her death, pseudo-liberals became active and tried to bring the biography of this worthy woman into the sphere of their interests and to make her memoirs the object of various insinuations. What is interesting and worth researching is entirely something else: namely, today the Bradley Collection, which contains the original of Kati Dadeshkeliani's memoirs in French, is kept in the archives of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin (former president of the university and later its chancellor) and awaits its researchers, as comparing the French original with the English translation will reveal many interesting details and answer many questions (Adinkrah, 2022).

⁶ Maria's father, General Giorgi Orbeliani, was the son of Ilia Orbeliani, and her mother, Mariam Orbeliani, was the daughter of Aleksandre Orbeliani.

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