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**Tbilisi as a Literary Hero on the Threshold of a New
Century (according to Archil Kikodze's Novel "Southern
Elephant")**

Archil Kikodze's novel "Southern Elephant" was published in 2016 and is the first novel of the author. The main character of the book has no name. He is a former director who did not make more than one film because a stuntman died during the shooting of the second film. This event changed his life to a great extent. The story of the novel covers one day in the summer of 2016, when his childhood friend Tazo asks the narrator to lend his house "to take a woman". The main character leaves the house early in the morning and begins his journey through the streets of Tbilisi from Kiacheli 11.

In the novel, we meet different types of people who are an integral part of the narrator's life, whom he meets every day, both in the present and in his memories of the past. The latter enters the text gradually, together with the simultaneous stories of the action. Through his memories, the narrator takes us back to the recent historical past of Georgia, in the 1990s. It revives the post-totalitarian Tbilisi of the last decade of the 20th century with the stories of that time. In the background of all this, a new understanding of the history of Georgia is offered.

Of course, in addition to the Tbilisi stories of the past, the novel depicts the Tbilisi of 2016, socio-economic changes, as well as the characters of the "old time" who could not adapt to the new era.

Archil Kikodze suggests a metaphorical title for the novel. The metaphor is "unfolded" at the very beginning of the text, and we learn that the skeleton of a southern elephant was an exhibit of the National Museum of Georgia, in front of which the narrator and his best friend Tazo took a photo when they were children. This photo is behind the mirror at Kiacheli 11 during the development of the story. The photo is, as it were, the embodiment of the childhood paradise, which in many episodes of the novel gives the narrator strength and faith in life.

The author himself in one of the interviews, talking about the title of the novel, notes that he does not know exactly what the elephant can symbolize. However, he says that the skeleton of a prehistoric elephant should be understood as a symbol of a city that will never be the same again, and also a symbol of the people living in this city, who are on the verge of extinction, because they have changed together with the city and will never be the same again.

In my opinion, the title of the novel is a metaphor for the pasttime. According to symbolism, in Asia and Africa, the elephant has several symbolic meanings, one of which is the memory. From my point of view, this meaning should be actualized in the case of Archil Kikodze's novel. The southern elephant skeleton "stores" information about the narrator and Tbilisi in general. This "stored" memory is the force that defines the lives of the characters and, at the same time, restores the narrator's life force and faith.