

## ***POETIC DICTION IN GEORGIAN POETRY***

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To be Georgian in 1912-1915....connoted several things. It meant to be modern ,in the sense that Georgian shared with the most pre-war poets the prevailing spiritual euphoria and the confidence that poetry was being infused with a new, vital release of creative energy it means also to be anti-Victorian ,to write poetry which , in tone ,form and diction, was free from both de fin siecle weariness and Victorian painted adjectives.

(Marsh in Ross,p.33)

As this suggests, the term describes primarily a certain temper, or set of mind, and not (strictly speaking) a poetic movement school. Edward Marsh introduced the first two volumes of *the Georgian poetry which* suggests, in the beginning at least, "Georgianism was not a poetic movement at all" .Through 1915 the Georgian poets were a group rather than a movement. By his brief preface to the first volume of *Georgian poetry* , written in 1912 , Edward Marsh stated that poetry in 1912 was beginning to strike out on new an exciting paths ; moreover he suggested that the new age would be somehow more vital , more stimulating more modern than the Edwardian Era which had preceded it .

The Georgian Movement appeared in 1912. Originally, it applied to the writers of George V but the meaning was then restricted to pastoral poetry. The five volumes of Georgian Poetry appeared between 1912 and 1922. It was very successful but the quality declined in the last volumes. Several poets, including Sassoon and Blunden, objected being called Georgian Poets, although they had published poems in the Georgian Anthology. Nowadays, "Georgian" has a rather pejorative and negative connotation. Many critics made it

impossible to associate "Georgian" and good poetry, especially because of the importance of modernism which marginalized Georgian Poetry.

Georgian Poets were mainly blamed for their traditionalism (imitation of their forefathers), for being escapists (attempting to escape from urban and industrial life) and for cultivating false simplicity. In fact, Georgian Poetry was most interesting than that : the Georgian movement was a reaction against the poetic establishment, embodied by Newbolt. The first two volumes include many poems but fail to include such poets as Owen (who thought himself Georgian). Marsh is responsible for the Georgian anthology, he made it on subjective grounds : "this volume is issued in the belief that English poetry is now once more putting on a new strength and beauty" (Marsh,p.78).

In 1911 , the future of English poetry seemed to rest in the hands of the poets like Stephen Philip and William Watson who carried over into the new century some of the happy aspects of the old : the tone of the diction of Tennyson , the ornateness and sentimentalisms of the Corentry Patmore, and pseudo- Wordsworthian concept of nature . in Twentieth century the verse of the Watson and Philips seemed little more decorated rhetoric, ironically redolent of the past glories of English poetry .Their contribution to poetry could be summed up that they " provide a soothing draught for well-bred, contemplative, unprogressive, peaceable persons who have a regard for the decencies of language and a respect for the limitations of form" (Ross, p31).

In fact, a poetic renaissance did occur in 1911 to about 1915; the public's interest in poetry beginning to reawaken. More important the nature of the poetry itself was undergoing drastic changes; a new, twentieth- century poetic was being created. In 1912, Georgian Poetry was hailed as symbolizing "the new rebellion in English poetry". Poets have in common to challenge the establishment, the current trends in poetry :

- Denial of individualism.
- Virtues of national identity and moral responsibilities.
- "Poetic diction", pompous poetry.

Thus, the poet's attempts to change the nature of the poetry could be called the Georgian revolt.

In this concern, both a revolt and a revival did in fact occur during the second decade of the twentieth century. The Georgian revolt was a pre-war event whereas the revival assumed its most significant proportion only after the First World War had begun. Ultimately, the Georgian poetic revolt of the younger generation against poetic standards which had governed the Romantic Revival was part of a larger intellectual revolt against Humanism (Ross, p. 40 ). The reaction against Humanism among modern artists and thinkers was essentially a revolt against:

that anthropocentric view of life which supplanted theocentric conception of the Middle Ages .The leaders of the revolt maintained that western Europe had taken the wrong turn at the Renaissance , which made man , not God , the measure of all things , and had gone finally and fatally astray at the time of the French Revolution , when Rousseau cast adrift the last anchor that held men to the ancient faith , the doctrine ,namely of the Original Sin "

(Smith, p. 499).

Though a poetic renaissance did in fact occur from 1911 to about 1915 , the Georgian poets had , as Edward Marsh wrote , “ certain points in common , spiritual euphoria , a sense of vitality , anti-victorianism , realism , and freedom of the poetic diction “ (Ross, p 257 ) . Until 1917, at least, the Georgians were in no sense a formal school. The word “Georgian describes primarily a certain temper, or a set of mind, and not strictly speaking a poetic school. The Georgianism, in the beginning, was not a poetic movement. A critic like Herbert Palmer draws up a list of fourteen specific canons by which he believes Georgian poetry can be defined. Among other

Georgian traits he lists : restraint of the diction ; avoidance of archaic diction like ' thee ' and ' thou ' , ' o'er' and ' taen ' ; avoidance of the obscure , bizarre ; or vernacular ; avoidance of symbolism ; avoidance of the national and patriotic themes ; rejection of all verbal cheapness and facility ; and emphasis on nature and country life .

If the term 'Georgian ' is to be defined at all , the term Georgian must be placed in a rigid context for from 1912 to 1915 , it connotes not so much a poetic coterie but as a state of mind held in common by poets of divergent aims and methods ( Simon , p .14 )

The Georgians have several deficiencies of their own which are sometimes more obvious than their virtues. Their shortcomings have also been criticized (which is the hostile criticism of the twenties). In their efforts to avoid seeming rhetorical the Georgian sometimes fell into the opposite trap and banality; in their effort to escape didacticism they often wrote verse which presented the raw materials of the experience but was not an imaginative elucidation of the meaning of experience .Their nature lyrics, the very genre in which they may be allowed to have excelled, frequently demonstrate this characteristic thinner. They attempted to preserve the Wordsworthian tradition divorced from the thoughtful aspects of Wordsworth.

To be ' Georgian ' in 1912 -15 meant to share in the prevailing of anti -Victorianism of the age. The Georgian poets were in rebellion against both Victorian doctrinizing and decadence .During this period a kind of " popular front " or coalition ( not unlike that between liberals and liberties) existed among the opponents of the late Victorian .Robert Ross has properly noted that the common ground of Marsh's Georgians and the modernist poets was their anti-Victorianism .Both Georgian and imagist withdrew from Victorian decorum and solemnity , from turgid and ornate poetical diction , and from enervated sensualism .

They were even accused of being thoroughly dedicated to the achievement of Cacao Phonons effects in their poetry , and thus of doing a profound disservice to poetry by writing a style that suggested contempt for the traditional uses of prosody and rhetoric

Certain of our Georgian singers, and  
even one or two poets whose roots go  
down into late –Victorian antiquity , are so  
haunted by a dread of smotherness  
that they have very nearly erected  
cacophony into a cult. They pursue it  
as an end in itself laudable

(Ibid, p 15)

The Georgian, too, resolved to liberate their poetry from what they considered the two major nineteenth century faults: Victorian lushness – the cult of the decorated adjective and Fin De Siecle enervation. This resolve was reflected in the tone and diction of much Georgian verse.

Another facet of the Georgian revolt against Victorianism is to be discerned not so much in the tone or form as in poetic diction. The Georgians were by no means such extreme innovators as the Imagists or the futurists: but in the diction they showed themselves to be similar to their contemporaries. Not all the young poets in the Georgian Poetry 1 and 2 wrote in the identical style. But many poets like de la Mare, Masfield, Davies or Brooke attempted to achieve truth of diction. They consciously contrived to write in the accent of common speech while at the same time avoiding , for the most part , an unattractive and unpoetic flatness , in spite of the use of few archaic words as “ ere “ and ‘ doth ‘ Davies’s poem “ Days Too short “ reflects simplicity of diction and experience :

When primroses are out inspiring  
And small blue violets come between;  
When merry birds sing on boughs green  
And rills, as soon as born, must sing;  
When butterflies will make side – leaps  
As though escaped from nature's hand  
Ere perfect quiet; and bees will stand  
Upon their heads in fragrant deeps;

When small clouds are so silvery white  
Each seems a broken rimmed moon –  
When such things are, this world too soon,  
For me, doth wear the veil of night

*(Georgian Poetry 1, p. 60)*

Walter de la Mare could not only capture the sense of the strange, touched by the macabre in such poems as “The Listeners” and “The Mocking Fairy” but he was also capable of the almost simplicity of diction:

One night as Dick lay half asleep,  
Into his drowsy eyes  
A great still light began to creep  
From out the silent skies.  
It was the lonely moon’s, for when  
He raised his dreamy head,  
Her surge of silver filled the pane  
And streamed across his bed.  
So, for awhile, each gazed at each  
Dick and the solemn moon.  
Till, climbing slowly on her way,  
She vanished and was gone.

*(Georgian poetry 2, p 82)*

At its worst the characteristics Georgian antipathy towards decorated verse, rhetoric and archaic diction led to poetry which seems banal. But at its best Georgian diction can be “deceptive for its very simplicity may sometimes lull a reader into failing to recognize the high order of technical mastery implied in their diction”. (Ross, p 40) Indeed many of the Georgians were successfully reviving one of the primary articles of the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, that is to say, writing in the manner and accent of the natural speech.

Hostile critics have usually rendered the Georgians` manifest attention to matters of form and technique as an evidence of their traditionalism. But friendlier critics have suggested that the Georgians` single virtue was their effort to update the language of poetry by purging it of "archaism and unnatural syntax " (Ibid, p. 366) It was the Georgians` full conception of what realism entailed, however, their awareness of poetry`s distinctive function, and their consequence of the necessary independence and dedication of the poet that made them conscious of the heavy burden that their medium must bear. Then consciousness drew their attention to the problem of form, to the mechanics of poetic expression. "The Georgians accepted painstaking care in lexical selection, syntactic placement and metrical, practice on the absolute obligation of any true poet, that is of any poet dedicated to the honest communication of aesthetic experience." (Pinto, p.117) Indeed all commentators have remarked that poetic craftsmanship was one of the aspects of Georgian poetry. Poetic craftsmanship was not , however, their end ; it was rather , the means of defining and communicating perception of aesthetic experience with objectivity and clarity .The Georgian poets depended on the full resources of poetic language, on the means of maxmizing both their comprehension of experience and their ability to convey it . Since what poets seek to understand and to communicate is something subtle, complex and elusive; mastery of language becoms an absolute condition of their enterprise. As poets, they must attempt to extend their use of language in the interests of greater experiences and to restrict their use of language in the interest of better communication. In this sense, the Georgians were dedicated to craftsmanship, preoccupied with matters of form and technique, the choice of the right word, words must be formed into the most appropriate structure and lines must be measured for amplifications of meaning.

In their choice of words, the Georgians "set up transparency as the ideal of the poetic craftsman." (Rogers, p.157) They sought to cultivate a diction that did not call attention. "To its self to either its modishness or peculiarity but which unobtrusively helped to form the precise conception that the poet intended to communicate."(Simon, p.2) To the extent that diction achieved this end it was held to be truthful. Thus the Georgian was not opposed to the use of archaic and

heavily figurative language out of any simple concern for artistic verisimilitude; nor did they favor colloquial language because it was more consistent with actual usage. They generally shunned the archaic and inclined toward the latter because they wished to employ a vocabulary within which it was possible to communicate the truths of life. Much of the traditional poetic vocabulary had become commonplace rhetorical gestures. Since poetry is an act of communication, the poet may not invent a substantially new vocabulary; hence, the Georgians regarded colloquial language as most suitable to their purpose in that it seemed to them to offer the greatest experience possibilities. According to Abercrombie " it is the common words that have the finest triumphs in poetry, because they necessarily have the greatest suggestive power behind them".(Ibid,p.7) Yet conscious of the need to exploit every usable resource of language in their effort to achieve both particularity and objectivity in poetry, the Georgian never abandoned archaisms and other traditional poetic locations.

In Rupert Brooke's poem "Channel Passage "he used a sestet of sonnet to describe a young man abroad a channel steamer who suffers from simultaneously from seasickness and lovesickness :

Do I forget you? Retching twist and tie me .  
Old meat, good meals, brown gobbets up I throw.  
Do I remember ? And return and slimy,  
The sobs and slobbers of a last year's woe.  
And still the sick ship rolls; Tis hard, I tell ye ,  
To choose twixt love and nausea , heart and belly.

In this poem , the words are simple and uncomplex as the experience itself in spite of it's unGeorgian ."Tis ,hard ,ye ,twixt " .The special character of the early Georgians' interest in form and craftsmanship inclined them toward narrative and dramatic poetry .Along with that the Georgians had a definite predilection for the ballad , with it's tradition of objective narration and honest colloquial diction .The ballad was to them one of the forms amenable to the communication of poetic truth . In "The Everlasting Mercy" 1911, a ballad by John Masefield recounts in some details the activities of a drunken village poacher. The protagonist ,Saul Kane is allowed to



state the bill of particulars against himself : " I drank ,I fought , I poached " he says . The feature which caught the public eye in the poem was not so much the matter as the manner. It was not only the rapid free meters but also Mansfield's colloquial poetic diction and the mild oath with which his poem was studded that attracted the attention of the public .Such a passage as the one in which Saul Kane encounters a fellow poacher was that certainly new and to some degree, one supposes, "even during in 1911, though a multitude of the shocked voices quickly arose to point out that it was not poetic ". (Ross, p.260)

By Dead man's thorn, while setting wires,  
Who should come up but Bill Myers?  
A friend of mine, who used to be,  
As black a prig of hell as me.  
With whom I'd planned, to save encroach in,  
Which fields and counts each should poach in.

Now when he saw me set my snare,  
He tells me ' Get to hell from there.  
This field is mine, he says, ' by right;  
If you poach here, there will be a fight.  
Out now,' he says, 'and leaves your wires  
It's mine'  
'It aint ' --

**'You cloche put,'**  
**'You bloody liar.'**  
**'This is my field.'**  
**'This is my wire.'**  
**'I'm ruler here.'**  
**'You aint.'**  
**'I am.'**  
**'I'll fight you for it'**  
**'Right, by damn.'**

The revolt against late Victorian tediousness was reflected not only in a Georgian tone but also in a characteristic Georgian form : the dramatic poem handling in some form or other of life and character ;

almost all the Georgians were intent upon restoring drama to poetry .Several also attempted to restore drama poetry to the drama . It was no accident that in the work of such Georgians as Abercrombie and Bottomley the verse drama was revived in the pre-war years, for the Georgian temper was essentially dramatic.

The Georgian's quarrel was not, of course, with the major Victorian poets of the nineties. Fin de Suede verse, as many Georgians' thought, had been written too exclusively for the study; it had been allowed to become too cerebrated, too nearly inert. Poets of the modern world must decide whether " they are writing for the stage or the study ", cried Harold Monroe; they cannot do both .He left little doubt which kind of poetry he preferred: " poets of the modern world write no plays simple, direct, dependent for their beauty, not on outward decoration, but on inward for of the spirit that conceives them ". (Rogers, p.143) Rascals Abercrombie agreed .The verse play gets closer to life than the prosaic drama of ideas currently in fashion, he argued because the prose play seeks primarily to diagnose the disease of life and suggests cures, putting problems – economic, moral, and sociological – into concrete and impressive form. Thus the aim of drama should not be to inform or to preach, but to intoxicate us into a heightened consciousness of spiritual and emotional reality .Only by using poetry can drama asserts its fundamental power.

If poetry is cast in the contemporary idiom, then modern verse can dispense with nobility, for realistic diction is more important than fundamental brain work. The Centrist's first concern was for truth to life, the quality most of a more precise term; one is compelled to call realism. It is the quality most apparent in the verse of Gibson or Masefield, Abercrombie, Bottomeley or Brooke, it resulted in a vigorous poetry ' which avoided as its first enemy the insipid '. The Centrist's interest in poetic diction made him keep his eyes on the matter than on the manner of poetry .One frequently finds him advocating the use of contemporary speech in modern verse.

It was from coalition of parties which formed the artistic left that most of the sound and fury, the bombs and pyrotechnics were erupting in the pre- war years. The factitious, insolent, brash and noisy

coteries which formed the left Wing defy easy classification ; indeed , their liveliness and paradoxically , their strength lay precisely in their splendid devil – may – care diversity .Generically they were a number of small groups loosely bound by a dislike of the Right a scorn of the Centre ; agreeing to rebel , but not agreeing as to the ultimate direction of their rebelliousness .That it was a spirited rebellion , full of scurrilous shouts , insolent laughter ,and derisive sneers , was only to be expected , for to its banners the left attracted such enfant terrible of the Georgian age as Ezra Pound ,Whydah ,Lewis ,Philippi Marinette .

If realism was the informing spirit of centre, precision was watchword of the left. The leftist poet tended to concentrate more on unifying poetic technique than upon truth to life or upon expanding the subject matter of the modern verse. He was more or less single – mindedly devoted to good craftsmanship , and he found the poets of the centre damn worthy not, usually , because they were realist, but because of what considered their sloppy craftsmanship ' I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity " wrote Ezra Pound ; " in law when it is a ascertainable in the trampling down of every conversation that impedes or obscures the determination of the law or the precise rendering of the impulse " ( Quoted in Simon , 145 )

Among the conventions to be trampled were traditional verse forms .A poem has a fluid as well as a solid content .Ezra Pound argued ; some poems may have as a tree has form , some as water poured into a verse . And although the traditional forms can still be said to have a certain uses ... a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely, and therefore, not properly rendered in symmetrical forms.

The leftist shared with the Centrist an authorence of archaic poetic diction. Ezra Pound, again, complained to Harriet Monroe of the poets. She had published in poetry:

Good God! Isn't there one of them that can write  
natural speech without copying clichés out of every  
Eighteenth century poet still in the public libraries .  
God knows I allowed in archaisms in my relish

years , but there imbeciles don't even take the troubles to get an archaism , which might be silly and picturesque , but they get phrases out of just the stupidest and worst –dressed periods (Quoted in Simon, 238)

Perhaps the diverse factions of the left found them most expensive areas of agreement , however , in their common advocacy of free verse which continued throughout the war years. The pre-war leftist poet was frequently doctrinaire, sometimes supercilious and more often than not derisive .But he was no reluctant warrior. "I've got a right to be severe" wrote Pound (p. 50)

In "The Everlasting Mercy" Masefield called a new tune which set the muse dancing, not very classically, in full view of the man in the street for the first time since the days of Tennyson. It was not only the rapid free meters but also Masefield's colloquial poetic direction and the mild Oath with which his poem was studded that attracted the attention of the public.

Upon such a tenuous foundation Marinetti erected the framework of the Futurist poetry. Twentieth – century poetic, he claimed, if it would accurately reflect the realities of twentieth century life, it must embody several futurist percepts: Words at liberty, lyricism has nothing to do with syntax, it is simply the exceptional faculty of intoxicating and being intoxicated with life. The poet must communicate by using essential words only , and those are absolutely at liberty , Marinetti used also the term wireless imagination to refer to the entire freedom of images and analogies expressed by disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax poetry must be an uninterrupted sequence of new images .( Ross, p. 57 )

Hence to be Georgian in 1912 -15 connoted several things ; it meant to be ' modern ' , in the sense that the Georgian shared with most pre-war poets , the prevailing spiritual euphoria and the confidence that the poetry was being infused with a new , vital release of creative energy . It meant also to be ant-Victorian, to write poetry which, in tone, forms and diction was free of both fin de Sickle

weariness and Victorian ' painted adjectives ". But above all Georgianism was synonymous with realism. (Pinto, 140)

Thus, poetic realism, or truth to life, was the one feature which distinguished Georgian poetry. As it was exemplified realism connoted two qualities, the first a state of mind in the poets themselves, and the second a technique of writing verse.

Finally it could be said that the Georgians' virtues appear more debatable than these deficiencies. Accordingly to the standards of their own age and according to the standards of any age *Georgian poetry 1 and 2* contained some excellent verse. In the context of their own age, the Georgians played a part in the revolution in technique which overtook English poetry from 1910 to 1920. With all the new schools of the time the Georgians too shared a common distaste for poetic verbiage; they tried to write without rant, bombast, of rhetorical flourish; they rejected the accepted practices of their days. They tried to react and to follow the lead shown by Wordsworth a century earlier, who wanted to "write in the real language of man".

Therefore, the aim of Georgian Poetry was to give a subjective personal response to personal concern to return to Wordsworth and to use a straightforward and casual language (that is why they were blamed for cultivating simplicity).The Georgian general recommendation was the giving up of complex forms so that more people could read poetry. Georgian Poetry was to be English but not aggressively imperialistic, patheistic rather than atheistic; and as simple as a child's reading book. They were not only reacting again but also trying to introduce some new keys innovations into English poetry.

Georgian poets were said to have ignored the time in which they lived .They wanted to make the poetry reading public, aware of the unpleasant faith of English society. They introduced prostitutes and tramps in their poetry. Far from being escapist, early Georgian Poetry relied on realism (cf Brook). To make poetry relevant, they adopted a close reflection of real life, common and sordid. They attempted to describe the emotional reality. Nature was an obsession for the poets :

it was used to explore other issues and as a means of communication. Georgian Poetry puts a strong emphasis on emotional response. It is an answer to the increasing complexity of dislocation of the modern world. They insisted by and large upon a return to unstilted unpretentious poetic diction centrist though they were , the major Georgians agreed with Ezra Pound : modern poetry must not try to seem forcible by rhetoric din and luxurious riot ; (Quoted in Georgian poetry, p .259) it must have a fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it; it must be austere , direct and free from emotional slither

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