

**ANTHOLOGY
OF
GEORGIAN
POETRY**

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PREFACE

Nature and history have combined to make Georgia a land of poetry. Glistening peaks, majestic forests, sunny valleys, crystalline streams clamouring in deep gorges have a music of their own, which heard by the sensitive ear tends to breed poetic thought; while the incessant struggle of the Georgians against foreign invaders — Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Turks and others — has bred in them a sense of chivalry and a deep patriotism which found expression in many a lay, ballad and poem.

Now the treasures of Georgian literature, both ancient and modern, are accessible to millions of our country's readers for they have been translated into many languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Except for the very few but beautiful translations of the Wardrops almost nothing has been translated from Georgian into English. The published works of Marjory Wardrop are — "Georgian Folk Tales", "The Hermit", a poem by Ilia Chavchavadze (included in this anthology), "Life of St. Nino", "Wisdom and Lies" by Saba Sulkhvan Orbeliani. But her chief work was the word by word translation of the great epic poem "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli. Oliver Wardrop translated "Visramiani".

Now, I have taken the responsibility upon myself to afford the English reader some of the treasures of Georgian poetry. This anthology, without pretending to be complete, aims at including the specimens of the varied poetry of the Georgian people from the beginning of its development till to-day.

I shall not speak of the difficulties of translating into English from Georgian, even though it might serve as an excuse for some of my shortcomings.

If I have been able to give, however faint, a reflection of the beauty of the original and have succeeded in partly expressing the poetical temperament of some of the exquisite jewels of Georgian poetry, I shall be content. And I hope that this anthology may arouse interest and be a contribution to Georgian studies abroad.

Venera Urushadze.

INTRODUCTION

This anthology is a collection of selected poems by outstanding masters of age-old Georgian poetic art. In its present form, the anthology cannot, of course, give the foreign reader a complete idea of the development of Georgian poetry, all the more that works by Georgian poets, except for a few, have unfortunately not yet been translated into foreign languages. This book may, notwithstanding, prove useful to English-speaking people interested in Georgia's history and culture.

During the long ages of its existence, the Georgian nation has traversed a long path; it has known prosperity and misfortune. Centuries ago Georgian tribes inhabited Transcaucasia and part of the Near East. Beginning with the ninth and seventh centuries B. C. that is before the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, the Georgian tribes merged by degrees, and in the course of centuries two principal ethnical and cultural groups were formed: the Iberians in the East and the Colchians in the West. The merging of Georgian tribes was accompanied by the rise of Georgian states.

According to the testimony of Greek authors, two Georgian states arose during that period, Colchis and Iberia. The slave system was prevalent in them in the initial period of their existence; it was subsequently superseded by the feudal system. Antique sources testify to the existence of populous cities and villages both in Colchis and in Iberia. As early as in the sixth century B. O. the Georgians coined their own money, silver coin at first and then gold. Trade with neighbouring states was well developed. The high level of Georgian economy in those days is proved by the fact that the main navigable waterways of the country, the Mtkvari and the Rioni, were spanned by as many as 120 bridges.

The Greek historian Strabo writes that urban economy in Georgia was well developed in his day. Another Greek historian, Herodotus, says that Georgia exported a great variety of valuable goods: raw hides, furs, precious wood, gold, iron, etc. Trade relations were favoured by the fact that Georgia is situated on the main trade route joining East and West. All this makes it comprehensible why the two ancient Georgian states, Colchis and Iberia, always attracted the attention of foreign invaders: the natural wealth of the country was most tempting to them. The myth of the Argonauts who sailed to Colchis to seek the Golden Fleece is universally known. Roman legions repeatedly invaded Georgia, but- in ancient times the Georgian state was so powerful that the Roman emperors were obliged every time to make Georgia their ally. Subsequently, in the course of centuries, the country was time and again attacked and ravaged by foreign invaders who massacred the population, pillaged the cities and reduced them to ashes; however, the Georgian people always fought heroically for the freedom and independence of their country, for the preservation of their tongue and culture.

Vast quantities of wonderful relics of material culture testify to the existence in Georgia of an original and highly developed culture of great antiquity. Grand architectural monuments of heathen times have come down to us. Numerous gold and silver ornaments have been found in tombs dated to the middle of the second millenium B. C. Georgian museums possess rich collections of specimens of antique art — fine objects of gold, silver and enamel not inferior in quality to objects of art created in other well-known cultural centres of the period.

Georgian folklore has preserved many a proof of the antiquity of Georgian culture. The legend of Amirani included in this anthology is particularly eloquent in this respect. It has been demonstrated that this legend originated in the latter half of the second millenium B. C. Amirani (i. e. "the son of the Sun") is an invincible hero. He frees his people of mythical monsters and of mighty demons who oppressed them. He teaches people to work metals, to kindle fire, in this opposing and defying Heaven itself. In punishment for this he is chained by God to a rock in the Caucasus. This ancient Georgian legend subsequently found its way to Greece, where it became known as the legend of Prometheus, so significant in world literature. The Georgian people have created many epic and heroic legends of this kind; a number of them have come down to us and their emotional impact on the modern reader is very great. Georgian folklore is also exceedingly rich in love lyrics, in ritual verses and songs, as well as songs connected with

labour processes. According to the Greek historian Xenophon, in the fourth century B. C the Georgian tribes had musical pieces, laic in character. He states that Georgians going to battle sang heroic songs in chorus. All this serves to indicate that ancient Georgian culture must surely have found expression in letters; however, no works of ancient Georgian literature have reached us, though traces of their existence have been preserved in the Christian ecclesiastical literature of subsequent periods. The most ancient written monuments are dated to the fifth century A. D. This century marks the beginning of ecclesiastical, mostly hagiographical literature, and of Georgian poetry as well. From the fifth to the tenth century Georgian poetry was mostly ecclesiastical. Alongside with translations of Byzantine ecclesiastical poetry, original poetry of the same character appeared. Georgian hymnography flourished in the eighth century, Ioanne Sabanisdze, the author of the "Life of Abo of Tbilisi" was remarkable in this line. Abo of Tbilisi was an Arab who had adopted Christianity; for his apostasy he was beheaded by the Arab conquerors of Georgia, his body was burned and his bones were thrown into the river. The fourth canto of the poem is a panegyric to Abo. Mikel Modrekili who compiled a collection of ecclesiastical poetry was another remarkable hymnographer.

Existing material proves that Georgian poetry stood at a great height in those days. The period from the tenth to the thirteenth century was the Golden Age of classical old Georgian poetry. It coincides with the consolidation of the Georgian state and economy. The once independent Georgian principalities had merged into a single state. This process of consolidation was completed in the twelfth century, in the reign of King David IV (1089 — 1125). King David organized a standing army; he opened higher schools and academies; he built bridges, dug irrigation canals, constructed aqueducts; numerous churches and fortresses were erected in his reign, owing to which he was named David the Builder. The successes achieved in his day were further consolidated in the reign of Queen Tamari (1184 — 1213). In those days Georgia's borders encompassed a territory stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian. Queen Tamari founded the so-called Empire of Trebizond and raised her relative, Alexis Komnenes, to the throne (1204). This consolidation of the Georgian state, its political and economic successes were accompanied by a flourishing of science, art and literature. Numerous scientific treatises dealing with problems of astrology, medicine and law were written at the time. Such centres of learning as the Iqalto and Gelati academies came into being. Similar centres were founded not only on Georgian territory, but in foreign lands as well, in Jerusalem, in Syria, Palestine, Byzantium and Bulgaria. Philosophy flourished, based on traditions of long standing. There was a school of philosophy in Colchis as early as in the fourth century where, besides Georgians, young men thirsting for knowledge came from Byzantium to study rhetorics and philosophy. The great Georgian philosopher Petre Iveri worked at this academy (412 — 488); he is thought to be the author of books formerly ascribed to Dionysus Areopagites. This old school of philosophy flourished anew in the tenth to the thirteenth centuries when the country reached the zenith of its political and economic development. The outstanding Georgian philosophers Ephrem Mtsire, Arsen Iqaltoeli, Ioanne Petritsi and others lived and worked in that age.

Architecture reached a high degree of perfection. The architectural ensemble of Gelati was erected; Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, the Cathedral of King Bagrat, the Oshki, Khakhuli and Allaverdi churches were built. These edifices are ornamented with fine and most elaborate carving in stone. Beautiful frescoes decorated their interior. The scientist Pavle Ingoroqva has recently discovered that large choirs sang surprisingly melodious Georgian hymns in these buildings; the complicated musical notation of these hymns has now been deciphered and through this more than a thousand old Georgian hymns were added to the treasury of Georgian music.

It is evident that literature could not but flourish under conditions of a general cultural renaissance. Indeed, the X — XII centuries were the classical age of old Georgian literature, which gradually freed itself of the shackles of ecclesiastical dogmas and became laic in character. It was in this period that such works as "Amiran-Darejaniani", a heroic fantasy, and "Visramiani", a novel, were written. Georgian poetry attained the peak of its development. Such

brilliant masters as Chakhrukhadze, Shavteli, Tmogveli and others produced fine examples of old Georgian poetry. Chakhrukhadze wrote "Tamariani", a collection of 20 odes dedicated to the Queen and her consort, Prince David Soslani. These odes reflect the poet's ardent patriotism, his pride in the might of his country. Chakhrukhadze's verse is ornamental in style. It is exceedingly rhythmical and musical, being based on internal rhyme, as well as end rhyme; the poet also makes use of alliteration.

Ioanne Shavteli's poem "Abdul Messiah" is also noteworthy; it is a eulogy to David the Builder. Like Chakhrukhadze, Shavteli is a great master of versification, a virtuoso in poetic technique.

The most outstanding representative of old Georgian literature was the great poet Shota Rustaveli, whose immortal poem "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin", is still an unsurpassed masterpiece. This anthology presents a translation of only three cantos of the poem. A complete prose translation of the poem was made by Marjory Wardrop who lived in Georgia for a time. Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" is the summit of classical old Georgian poetry. Its incomparable poetic form, its profound ideas are a summing up of all the previous achievements of Georgian culture. The author expresses the most progressive ideas of his day. He is deeply versed in antique and medieval philosophy; he is familiar with the works of Plato and Aristoteles, with antique Greek materialistic philosophy, with the neo-platonists and with the ideas of Georgian philosophers.

Though the plot of the poem develops over a vast territory, encompassing countries of both East and West, including India, Arabia, China and Venice, Rustaveli's poem is deeply national. The characters are veritable symbols of love, friendship and heroism. With extraordinary force, the author depicts human passions, the inner harmony of Nature, of human society; he extols love and loyalty among men. The world he depicts is the real world in all its variety and colourfulness. In contradistinction to all medieval literature, his poem is free of mysticism and scholasticism. True, Rustaveli frequently mentions the deity, but his deity is the universe in its entity. The cosmos is eternal; the rise and disappearance of phenomena results from the separate existence of the four elements — earth, water, air and fire. The universe is governed by laws and man's sphere of action is limited, but still Rustaveli is no fatalist; on the contrary, he extols man's vigorous efforts. His heroes do not seek to attain celestial bliss, but they strive to make this world better and happier. Harmony and beauty are of this world. Nature with its harmony and perfect order is beautiful in itself.

Patriotism is the main motif of Rustaveli's poem. He eulogises the loftiest and purest love. Love of one's country is, to him, the most sublime kind of love, it is a virtue; so is love, not carnal love, but that which chastens and elevates the human soul, calls it to deeds of valour, to the defence of the mother-country. Such a hero is always victorious, as love leads him forward and reason lights up his path. Indeed, Rustaveli's three great heroes, Tariel, Avtandil and Pridon, gain the crown of victory, which is the apotheosis of their love and friendship. Rustaveli believes that a man who is strong in spirit can always overcome Evil, as Good is the highest objective principle and Evil reveals itself only in human relations. The forces of Evil are powerless against the forces of Virtue, Love and Friendship.

Not only has Rustaveli's poem a forceful, dynamic plot, a style abounding in metaphors and brilliant aphorisms, but it possesses an innate melody and harmony, a remarkable metrical pattern of fluent rhymes and subtle alliterations, making it a masterpiece of unsurpassable perfection, an object of pride for the Georgian people for over eight centuries.

Shota Rustaveli made an epoch in Georgian literature, but after him literature declined. The reason was that from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century Georgia was ravaged by one conqueror after another. The hard times of Mongol rule (XII — XIV c. c) and constant invasions by Turks and Persians (XV — XVIII c. c) destroyed the unity and might of the Georgian state; its economy was ruined and its culture declined.

Of the original works of Georgian literature of the XIII — XVII centuries nothing worthy of note has reached us. A gradual revival of Georgian literature began towards the end of the seventeenth century. Joseph Tbileli (d. 1688) wrote a poem entitled "Did-Mouraviani" in

which he depicted the struggle of the Georgian people and their outstanding leader, Giorgi Saakadze, against foreign invaders, for the independence and unity of their country.

Lyrical poems by Teymuraz I, King of Kakheti, as well as his versions of Oriental motifs, in particular, "Leyla and Majnun", speak eloquently of the new revival of Georgian literature.

Outstanding among the remarkable Georgian poets of the eighteenth century is King Archil II, the initiator of a certain realistic trend. He wrote verses and poems, lyrical, heroic and didactic. A brilliant poet of the time was David Guramishvili. Many of his works, particularly the earlier ones, are lost. In 1871 the poet who was then 69 years of age collected his works into one volume which he copied in 1887 entitling it "Davitiani". The collection contains two long poems and a number of lyrical verses. His principal work is "The Woes of Kartli", in which he describes the misfortunes that Georgia suffered in the eighteenth century at the hands of invading Turks and Persians and raiding parties from the hills. The author also exposes the sinister role played by feudal lords, with their constant feuds and strife and their attempts to rend the country into separate principalities. The poet urges the nation to unite, to fight for national liberation and independence. In his fine pastoral poem, "Katsvia the Shepherd" Guramishvili, making use of a popular theme, shows the moral strength and purity of the common people.

Being compelled to spend the greater part of his life far away from his native land, Guramishvili wrote lyrical poems full of yearning for home and for his fellow-countrymen; they are full of sincere feeling, edifying thoughts and love for his country.

As far as the art of versification is concerned, Bessarion Gabashvili, known as Bessiki, was the most outstanding master in eighteenth century poetry. He was, first and foremost, a lyrical poet. His love lyrics are incomparable for their melody, sincerity and delicacy of feeling. His poetic phrase is laconic, metaphoric and most expressive. Bessiki's poems are fine examples of alliterative verse. Besides lyrical verse, Bessiki wrote some patriotic odes, the best known of which is entitled "Aspindza" (after the place where the Georgians fought a great battle against foreign invaders). This ode is a eulogy to the Georgians who won the victory.

Bessiki is also the author of a satirical poem, "The Daughter-in-Law and her Mother-in-Law" in which he realistically depicts domestic disputes. Quite a number of satirical poems and epigrams deriding some of his haughty compatriotism belong to his pen.

Bessiki was the initiator of a new trend in Georgian poetry. He introduced new poetic forms and rules of versification which greatly influenced the further development of Georgian poetry.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Georgia was incorporated in the Russian Empire. As a result of this, Georgia entered on the path of peaceful development. However, notwithstanding the oppression of the autocratic regime, the country's national economy and her culture revised again. All this had a salutary effect on Georgian literature. The Georgian intellectuals came into contact with Russian progressives and, together with the great Russian public men, the Georgian people took part in the common movement for national and social emancipation.

It was at this time that a mighty school of Georgian romanticists, represented by many talented poets, such as Alexander Chavchavadze, Nikoloz Baratashvili, Grigol Orbeliani, Vakhtang Orbeliani and others, sprang up. Alexander Chavchavadze, who headed this school, was a writer of broad outlook and great scope. He was the first to introduce Western motifs in his poetry.

The main themes of his lyrical poems are patriotism, loyalty to his country, the beauty of Nature, love and friendship among nations. Chavchavadze is a great artist when he depicts Nature. His poetic word-pictures make a strong and lasting impression on the reader. The giant mountains of the Caucasus, so majestic and mighty, rushing torrents, virgin forests and velvety meadows vividly rise before one's eye in his lines. To the poet, they are animated beings very dear to him. He sings the praises of love which is, to his mind, the very soul of Nature and of human society, the essence of existence. Although he was greatly influenced by the melancholy

spirit of romanticism, Chavchavadze is essentially an optimist. He extols the creative forces of man and believes in humanity's happy future. The poet does not shun great social and political issues. He fights against oppression and tyranny, attacking kings and rapacious feudal lords who hold nothing dear but their own selfish interests. Inspired by Voltaire's liberal ideas, Chavchavadze exposed predatory wars and propagated humanistic ideas.

Attention must be drawn to Grigol Orbeliani, a singer of freedom and sunshine, of nature in all its loveliness, of love and the joy of living. His poems inspire the reader with love of their country. In his plastic verse objects and phenomena are fused in harmony and their brighter aspects come alive in Orbeliani's imagination and are crystallized in concrete images. Whatever Orbeliani writes about is historically true and typical. The reader seems to see his characters, to have met and known them personally. They stand before the mind's eye like living men and women. Life appears to Orbeliani as "a lovely garden" in which men and women bloom like flowers. The world is created for love and beauty: that is why it is so bitter to depart this life.

The poetic genius of the Georgian romanticists shines brightest of all in the works of Nikoloz Baratashvili. He is one of those chosen poets whose works are their nation's pride and treasure. His verses are full of profound philosophical thoughts and deep sadness, which may be ascribed to the unfortunate destiny of his country and to his own sad fate. His soul melts in tears in his poems, the vanity of life almost drives him to despair. Still, he is not a pessimist. His unbroken spirit, his faith in a better future stand out clearly in his poems. Baratashvili's "Merani" calls all unfortunates like himself to overstep "the bounds of fate" and, by self-immolation, to pave the way for the future generations. Baratashvili does not seek to escape from life. To him, life is an arena of activity, of strife. Man's first duty is to strive for a better life, to bring happiness to the people. The poet speaks of love and depicts the beauty of Nature with deep feeling. Nature is always in harmony with his own feelings, it is the reflection of his soul; for to him Nature and human feelings are closely knit together.

He also uplifts into poetry his appeal to the brotherhood of men and the destiny of his country. This is beautifully and convincingly expressed in his fine historical poem "The Destiny of Georgia", in which Baratashvili gives a sound analysis of the Georgian people's past and points out the way to the future, which would bring the long-suffering Georgian people to unity with Russia. The poet does not only depict this event, but he asserts its expediency.

Vakhtang Orbeliani is one of the Georgian romantic poets of that period. He is essentially a singer of the romantic past, of the ancient glory of Georgia, a great lover of old fortresses, castles, churches that time had reduced to ruins. In his verses, particularly in "Hope", he revives the tragic fate of Georgia and expresses the hope that his country will arise once more and flourish again. He became the inspirer of many writers of the latter part of the nineteenth century who voiced the same hope. A new trend, realism, comes to replace romanticism and soon becomes predominant. It came as the logical sequel of the radical changes that were taking place in the economic and social life of the country. The development of capitalism in Russia had already drawn Georgia into its orbit. The crisis of the patriarchal and feudal system in Georgia was growing more and more evident.

Such were the circumstances under which Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha Pshavela, Raphael Eristavi and other remarkable representatives of classical Georgian poetry of the XIX century came to the fore in social life.

Ilia Chavchavadze, a great writer and thinker, was the leader and the inspirer of the intellectuals of his time; he laid the foundations of the new Georgian literature and of the modern literary language.

From his very childhood Ilia Chavchavadze felt bitter hatred for the oppressors of his country and of the working people.

Ilia Chavchavadze's varied activities as a writer and as a public man covered a period of 50 years. Ilia Chavchavadze was a man of many gifts which combined to make him one of the most interesting men in literature. He was eminently successful as a brilliant writer of verses, poems, stories, plays, critical essays and voiced his indignation at social injustice in articles on

the burning issues of the day that have left an indelible imprint on Georgian literature as few utterances of man have ever done. He considers it the prime duty of a poet to serve his nation. His best poems, as for example the "Downfall of the Commune" which might be quoted as the most vivid manifestation of the lofty civic spirit of Chavchavadze's poetry, are a reflection of the lofty ideals and sentiments of all progressives of the time which enhanced the moral forces of the people fighting against their oppressors and exploiters. The poet speaks with deep sadness of the fall "of the banner of the oppressed", of the "banner of salvation" trampled underfoot by tyrants who had again triumphed, over "the sacred cause of the people's happiness".

In "Spring", "An Elegy", "To a Georgian Mother" and other fine patriotic lyrical pieces the poet voices the hope that his people will awaken, that they will see a new spring blooming in their land. This optimistic hopefulness pervades Ilia Chavchavadze's best poems.

A number of satirical poems belong to Chavchavadze's pen, as well as love lyrics in which the poet sings the purity and sublimeness of human sentiments.

"The Hermit", a poem of profound philosophy which was translated into English by Marjory Wardrop at the close of the nineteenth century occupies a particular place among Chavchavadze's works. The poet refutes most convincingly and with great artistic power the idea of seeking refuge from life's storms, of escaping from life.

Chavchavadze's works are indeed a brilliant page of classical Georgian literature.

Akaki Tsereteli, a truly popular and national poet, was Ilia Chavchavadze's worthy comrade-in-arms in the Georgian people's national-liberation movement, in the revival of the nation's social life. He is called "the immortal nightingale of the Georgian people". He was a writer as versatile as Chavchavadze and a prominent *public man*. Still, he was, first and foremost, a poet, in popularity second only to Rustaveli. Many of his verses have become folk songs.

Akaki Tsereteli voiced his nation's innermost feelings and aspirations in the sublime language of poetry. He is a great master of patriotic lyrics. Each of his verses, inspired by patriotism, found a ready response in the hearts of the people and was a factor of great force in the growth of the national-liberation movement. In many of his poems Akaki Tsereteli revived heroic pages of Georgia's history. He loved the working folk and was their singer exposing and branding their oppressors.

Akaki Tsereteli translated the "Internationale", the revolutionary hymn of the proletarians, into his mother-tongue. He greeted the 1905 uprising in Georgia with militant slogans.

Vazha Pshavela was another outstanding poet of that period. In his ideological aspirations he carried on and developed the traditions of I. Chavchavadze and A. Tsereteli; he was, however, quite original in the choice of his subjects and poetic form. Vazha Pshavela spent the greater part of his life in a small village in the mountains. The majestic mountain scenery, the ways and customs of the hillmen, their virile spirit and the rich folklore of the mountain tribes were factors that determined the originality of Vazha Pshavela's poetry. Progressive humanistic ideas of the time, the idea of national liberation found expression in his imagery, and were reflected in his description of the life and customs of the hillmen. The poet represented his native land, oppressed but fighting against the oppressor, as a wounded eagle torn at by ravens and kites, but valiantly battling against the rapacious foes.

A fine lyrical poet and author of many lovely stories, Vazha Pshavela revealed his mighty poetic genius most vividly in epic poetry. In these poems he depicts human characters of titanic force; clashes between them determine the dramatic development of the plots. The poet treats .of the most complicated social, philosophical and ethical problems.

Most significant moral and philosophical problems were raised and solved by Vazha Pshavela in the light of his humanistic world-outlook, e. g., relations between the individual and society, a man's loyalty to his people and his convictions, the individual's duty to his family, to his country, etc.

Vazha Pshavela made use of the popular language and the rhythm of folk poetry with the skill of a true master. All this lends peculiar colourfulness and inimitable charm to his poetry.

Raphael Eristavi, fabulist and public man, occupies a particular place among Georgian poets of the latter half of the nineteenth century. His love and sympathy for the ruthlessly oppressed peasant, the hero of his poems, are reflected in his works simply, yet emotionally and powerfully.

The boundary between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was marked, for the Georgian people, by social changes of great historic significance. The ever-deepening and growing conflict between labour and capital had become the fundamental issue in the country's social life and economy. The working class had launched a decisive attack on capital in defence of their own class interests and a wave of strikes and political demonstrations swept the country. These events determined the spirit of Georgian poetry of the period. The revolution and the working class attracted the attention of poets as a new theme. Verses by workingmen-poets appeared in print. The poets Irodion Evdoshvili and Noah Chkhikvadze gave vivid expression to the upsurge of the people's revolutionary enthusiasm. Later on a number of young writers, G. Kuchishvili, S. Euli, S. Tavadze, L. Lissashvili and others wrote in the same strain.

The defeat of the 1905 Revolution and the ruthless reaction that set in after it brought some poets to pessimism and decadence. For a time such well-known poets as A. Abasheli, S. Shanshiashvili, G. Tabidze, J. Grishashvili and others were influenced by this pessimistic spirit. However, they soon threw off this decadent mood and after Soviet rule was established in Georgia they became foremost Soviet poets.

1921 marks the beginning of a veritable renaissance of Georgian poetry. The policy of the Communist Party, the realistic and democratic traditions of classical Georgian literature, contacts with the culture of the fraternal peoples of the USSR proved most beneficial to the growth and development of Soviet Georgian literature.

The first period (1921 — 1925) when Soviet Georgian poetry was coming into being was a period of literary controversy which reflected the class contradictions of the time in Georgia of the pre-revolutionary generation of poets — G. Tabidze, S. Shanshiashvili, J. Grishashvili, A. Abasheli and others took up their stand with the victorious Soviet power. In verses written in those days G. Tabidze urged men to disinterestedly serve their people. He wrote about the historic significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Even those who belonged to the extreme right-wing group of Georgian writers, the so-called "Academic Group", the "Blue Horns", a symbolist school, and futurists finally accepted the ideas of Soviet socialist literature. Such gifted Georgian poets as G. Leonidze, S. Chikovani, V. Gaprindashvili, T. Tabidze, P. Yashvili, K. Chichinadze, Sh. Apkhaidze, I. Mossashvili and others sing of the great achievements of Soviet Georgia with remarkable feeling and force.

The elder generation of proletarian poets who entered on their literary career prior to the Revolution founded the Association of Proletarian Writers. Young proletarian poets, such as A. Mirtskhulava, K. Lortkipanidze, K. Kaladze and others joined this association.

The first Congress of Georgian writers was convened in 1926. This Congress did a lot to rally the writers to the cause of socialist construction. The heroic spirit of the socialist era, the inspired labour and patriotic sentiments of Georgian poets found expression in the works of Georgian poets.

After a special decision adopted by the Central Committee of the C. P. S. U. "On the Reorganisation of Writers' and Artists' Associations" all men of letters became members of the Soviet Writers' Union, a fact of great importance which furthered the development of Soviet literature and which brought about a mighty upswing of Georgian Soviet literature. In the pre-war period the Georgian poets wrote a number of remarkable poems in which they vividly and colourfully depicted the Soviet Socialist Revolution. A new generation of gifted poets came to the fore — I. Abashidze, R. Margiani, G. Abashidze, A. Gomiashvili, J. Noneshvili, V. Gabeskiria, D. Gachechiladze, M. Mrevlishvili, M. Baratashvili, A. Assatiani, K. Berulava and others.

During the Great Patriotic War the ties of kinship between literature and the vital interests of the people grew still closer. All the Georgian writers raised their voices in the defence of their socialist land. Their patriotic poems inspired the brave men in the Soviet Army and the tireless toilers in the rear to fight against the fascist invaders. Many young writers died in battle. Verses by the best Georgian poets crowned with glory the heroes who fell on the field for the liberty and independence of their country.

Georgian poetry has achieved signal successes since the war. The young poets M. Machavariani, A. Kalandadze, N. Kilassonia and a number of others are doing credit to the great traditions of Georgian poetry. They have created fine poems full of love for their socialist country.

Their voices rise in a mighty choir to glorify friendship among nations, the cause of peace throughout the world and the building up of communist society.

Mikheil Kvesselava

SHOTA RUSTAVELI

Shota Rustaveli was the greatest Georgian poet of the XII century. There are no written records of his life. The only authentic record we possess of him is his great epic poem, "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin", in the introduction to which the poet, incidentally, remarks that he is a contemporary of Queen Tamari. It was the epoch of the greatest consolidation of the might of the Georgian realm and the renaissance of its cultural life. Subsequently, during the course of three centuries, as a result of devastating invasions of Eastern conquerors, the cultural life of Georgia fell into a decline. These centuries have left but very few works of literature. But the renaissance of the intellectual life of the country which began in the XVI century brought to the fore a number of poets whose works permit us to form a conception of the immense popularity of Rustaveli at that time. Nearly all the poets of that period mention his name address themselves to him as to their Muse and beg his permission to write verse. The influence of Rustaveli on their works bore a semblance of almost despotic authority. It was only by the end of the XVII century that Rustaveli's poem, having crystallized into an unsurpassable model and having ceased to be an object of imitation, liberated Georgian literature from the captivity in which it had been held by it, while the general course of its development was still illumined by the great poem.

It would be difficult to name another poet in whose works both intellectual and emotional forces are revealed simultaneously and so powerfully as we observe it in Rustaveli's poem. He loves to ponder on various phenomena of life, to draw conclusions and to make generalizations. Along with this, the whole poem is permeated with lyricism and elevate I pathos, sometimes attaining the height of veritable exaltation.

Rustaveli does not trouble himself with the common things of everyday life. He is interested exclusively in the general interrelations among men and in the character of the principal human emotions. Resorting to hyperbole and overcolouring, he constantly strives to grasp the main essence of the phenomena he depicts and to raise it to the height of a principle. Speaking of poetry, Rustaveli says that it is "one of the oldest branches of wisdom". He considers it the duty of a poet and a proof of his talent to be able to evoke great emotions, inflaming the heart with the words of his poems.

According to a popular tradition, Rustaveli journeyed to Jerusalem when well advanced in years and died there in one of the Georgian monasteries, having attained a venerable age.

THE TESTAMENT OF AVTANDIL TO KING ROSTEVAN WHEN HE STOLE AWAY

He sat to write the will inditing: "King, in quest of him I go;
I steal away to seek the knight who makes our hearts with wonder glow;
The kindler of my bosom's fires, to be away from him is woe.
Be merciful to me as God, and let thy blessings o'er me flow.

"Yet, in the end thou wilt not blame this act of mine, O king, I know;
A man who loves his friend will never leave the loved one to the foe.
Let me remind thee of the wisdom taught by Plato long ago:
'The man is injured by deceit; his soul is flung to hell below.

"Since lying is the source of all our troubles and misfortunes dire,
Then why should I forsake a friend and let him burn in endless fire?
Philosophy should not be words that only in the air expire,
For deeds of honour and of truth to immortality aspire.

"Thou knowest well how the apostles of true love and passion write;

Exalted is it to the skies... so let thy soul with love unite.
"True love exalteth us!" we hear in melodies that tinkle light.
If thou conceive this not, my king, can I the ignorant enlight?

"The Lord hath given me the power to overcome the enemy.
He fixeth bounds of the finite; glorified by all is He.
Infinite truth and love in every deed of His we ever see;
We owe to Him immortal thanks for happiness that is to be.

"He sits Immortal God as God, and what He wills not will not be.
The violets fade, the roses die if they the sunbeams cannot see.
The eyes towards beauty always turn, from ugliness and darkness flee.
So, how can I bear life without him, him who is the sun to me!

"Forgive me that I went from thee and thy command did not obey;
No power had I to do thy will; enthralled, from thee I stole away.
The going soothed my aching heart that midst hot coals in torture lay.
It matters not where'er I go, as long as freedom leads the way.

"Thy sadness will avail thee naught, so do not mourn for me or cry...
That what is destined and decreed one cannot shun or from it fly.
It is the law of life that men must suffer woes before they die;
No mortal hath the power to thwart or turn the course of destiny.

"Whatever is decreed for me, O let it be fulfilled, O king!
Let not my heart to ashes burn; let me return on victory's wing,
And see thy majesty in joy and hear thy fame in anthems ring;
To serve Taniel is my desire; suffice the glory it will bring.

"If my decision be condemned by thee or thine, O woe is me!
Then slay me! better let me die than I should bring more grief to thee.
I cannot do a cowardly deed, be false to him who trusteth me;
I would not that before our God he shame me for eternity.

"Detested is the cringing knave, whose truth and pride have fallen low;
I hate deceit, I cannot lie, ev'n for a mighty king, although
I love thee, — yet, I hasten now to him who needs me in his woe,
For how can I a dastard be, forgetful of my given vow.

"Despised is he who thinks of death, and shuns with fear a manly fight,
Whose craven heart and trembling limbs are ready for ignominious flight.
A coward scarce is better than a woman weaving webs at night;
Far better than all gold and wealth is glory based on honour bright.

"None can resist the hand of Death, and all are levelled in the grave;
The strong, the weak, the rich, the poor, all fall beneath its sceptre's wave.
And in the end the earth unites and makes as one the king and slave;
Far better than a shameful life is gloried death within a grave.

"I fear, O king, to make this plea, yet humbly of thee I entreat:
Mistaken is he and unwise who sudden death thinks not to meet;
For what unites us comes alike by day or night with stealthy feet;
If I see thee no more alive, then Death with gladness will I greet.

"If far from home on foreign land by fate I am ordained to die,
Unmourned by parents, friends and kin, with only strangers standing by,
No trusting friend to shroud me with a loving hand and streaming eye,
Then thou, O king, wilt pity me and for me grieve and bitter cry.

"Possessions have I, wealth and gold, that none can count, so manifold.
Enrich the orphan, aid the poor, free all who are in bondage sold,
Help all who are in dire distress, give freely of my hoarded gold;
Remembered will I be by all, beloved and blessed by young and old.

"From this day forth, O mighty king, no tidings of me shalt thou hear.
My soul to thee I now commit; the thought my saddened heart will cheer.
The devil shall not lure my soul, nor will I yield to him in fear.
Forgive me, king, be merciful, and bless me with thy soothing tear.

"For Shermadin, who is my slave, for him who loves me I implore:
The year will bring him sorrows deep for he shall see my face no more;
His heart will bleed and pine for me who wanders on a distant shore;
So o'er his bleeding heart the balm of sympathy and comfort pour.

"My testament is ended now; I send it to thee with my heart;
Behold, my more than father dear, how I with maddened soul depart.
O wear not mourning black for me, ev'n though 'tis fated we should part.
Be feared by foes, be loved by friends, for thou a powerful sovereign art."

He gave the will to Shermadin, and said as tears flowed from his eyes:
"Convey this to the king with care for it may stun him with surprise.
Thou wilt fulfil this task, I know, for thou art sensitive and wise."
And then embracing him he wept with blood-hued tears and heaving sighs.

OF THE GOING OF AVTANDIL TO PRIDON'S WHEN HE MET HIM AT MULGHAZANZAR

Alas! O world, what troubles thee? Why dost thou whirl us round and round?
All who trust thee weep ceaselessly and in thy sea of ills are drowned.
What ails thee, world; why all this whirl? O whence and whither are we bound?
Yet, God abandons not the man on whom thou hast in anger frowned.

From Tariel did Avtandil with cries that reached the heavens go.
Quoth he: "The stream of burning blood which flowed now once again doth flow.
Alas! it is as hard to meet in heaven as it is below.
Men are not equal, nor the same, in this vast world of endless woe."

The beasts that wandered o'er the field drank of the burning tears he shed.
He could not quench the furnace hot, he burned with flames that through him spread;
Again the thought of Tinatin the furnace with more fuel fed.
The coral-rooted crystal shines upon the lips of rose and red.

The rose is faded; low it droops; the aloe quivers fearfully;
The ruby and the crystal fine are changed to lapis lazuli;
He nerved his heart to combat death, then said he weeping bitterly:
"Why wonder at this darkness, since, O sun, thou hast abandoned me!

"O sun, the cheeks of Tinatin are like thy glow of radiance bright;
Thou art like her, and she like thee; ye mountain, plain and valley light;
And I, unwearied, gaze on thee and maddened am I by the sight.
But why have you both left my heart unwarmed and darkened as the night?

"Without one sun ev'n for a month the winter leaves us sad and cold;
So can my heart without two suns feel warmth and gladness as of old?
A rock perceives not, cannot feel, no joy or sorrow doth it hold;
A knife can never cure a wound; it makes but cowards of the bold."

Then Avtandil addressed the sky as he went on his weary way:
"Thou mighty of the mightiest mights, O sun, to thee I fervent pray;
Thou givest power to humblest slaves, great happiness and conqu'ring sway;
So, part me not from my beloved; turn not to night, O sun, my day.

"O Zual, add anguish to my grief; add woe to woe and tear to tear,
Enshroud my lonely heart in black, and place it on a dismal bier.
Heap on me as upon an ass a load of grief too large to bear,
And say to her: "Forsake him not! He weeps for thee and knows no cheer."

"O Mushtar, ever just and right, a wise and perfect judge thou art;
Come, do thy justice and thy will; the heart takes counsel with the heart;
Destroy not justice, wrong it not, let not thy soul from it depart;
O righteous am I, true to her, why make my wounds afresh to smart.

"O Marikh, come, be merciless, and pierce me with thy peerless spear;
Then stain me red with flowing blood, and tell her of the pain I bear,
Tell her of how I weep and mourn, of all my sufferings let her hear;
Thou knowest what I am become; my soul's a joyless desert drear.

"O Aspiroz, I beg of thee, help me to overcome my woe,
For she who is as good as fair, consumes me with her beauty's glow.
The fair thou makest fairer still, and from thee splendours o'er her flow,
Forsaken by thee, maddened too, — yet, humbly to thee do I bow.

"O Otamid! I see, save thee none other's fate is like to mine;
The sun whirls me and holds me fast, unites me with her fires divine.
Sit down to write my woes, O moon, for ink I shed a lake of brine,
For pen I give my aloe form, a form as slender and as fine.

"O moon, I faint for weariness; see how I sicken, pity me.
The sun fills me and empties too, but now I shrink and wane like thee.
Tell her of tortures I endure, how I for her weep ceaselessly.
Go, say to her: 'Forsake him not! for thee he suffers dreadfully.'

"Behold, the planets and the stars confirm my words and witness bear;
The sun, Otamid, Mushtar, Zual, — all faint to see me in despair.
O moon, Aspiroz and Marikh, come, bear me witness, make her hear
What fires consume me sundered thus, what joys without her I foreswear."

"O heart", he said, "why slay thyself; the tear dries not and o'er thee flows;
With Satan hast thou fraternized and writhest now in hellish throes.
And she who maddened me has locks that shroud my anguish and my woes.
Joy has no merit, for in grief the suffering heart its value shows.

"If I remain upon this earth, perchance my sun once more I'll see.
I shall not mourn my lot, and cry fore'er, 'Alas! O woe is me!'"
He sang yet did not check the tears that filled and overfilled the sea;
The bulbul's voice compared to his was like an owl's, so sweet sang he.

The beasts that heard came near to hear; the sleepless all were lulled to sleep;
The very sweetness of his voice made stones come forth from waters deep.
They hearkened, marvelled, wept to see the knight his eyes with crystal steep;
His tears flowed like a spouting fount; his song by grief was taught to weep.

All living creatures, great and small, came forth to listen and to see;
The beasts, the birds and fishes came from forest, mount and distant sea.
From all the quarters of the world men wished with Avtandil to be,
Arabians, Persians, Russians, Franks, from India, Greece and Misreti.

THE LETTER WRITTEN BY NESTAN-DAREJAN TO HER BELOVED

She wrote to her beloved with sorrowing, tearful eye;
The tears will soothe and quench the fires that in his bosom lie.
Her letter pierced the hearts of all who heard her anguished cry.
She split the rose, and there appeared the crystal of her sigh.

"This letter is the issue of my hand and of my fall;
For pen I have my slender form, a pen besteepled in gall;
For paper do I glue thy heart to mine, my cherished all,
Thou'rt bound, be bound, ne'er lose thyself, O heart in sorrow's thrall!

"What evil deeds the world can do, my dear, thou well canst see!
However bright may shine the light, it is but dark for me;
The wise well know this world of grief, and hate its vanity;
I live without thee, woe is me! My life is agony!

"Thou seest, mine own, how cursed time and fate our lives did part.
No longer do I see thee glad; we live in grief apart.
So can my heart feel any joy when distant thus thou art?
Before thee let me lay the passions gnawing at my heart.

"Now, by thy sun! I thought thee dead, and loud was my lament;
Whereas methought my painful life of all its powers was spent.
But now I magnify the Lord, my erstwhile plaint repent,
And weigh as joy the grief that had my heart in pieces rent.

"Thou art the hope that lights my heart, a heart now fallen low.
Consumed am I by racking pain, oppressed by tortures slow!
Remember me e'er lost to thee; my tears like torrents flow.
In solitude I nurse the love that in my heart doth glow.

"I scarce can write my story, for the words but fear inspire,
And none that hear it will believe, howe'er my tongue may tire.
May God e'er shield the life of her, who freed me from the ire
Of sorcerers! Yet fate, alas, hath hurled me back in fire!

"The world hath added woe on woe, upon my many woes;
And fate was not appeased to seize from me my heart's repose;
And once again delivered me into the hands of foes.
To fate we owe this sea of woes that o'er us ceaseless flows.

"Confined am I in a castle high, eyes scarce can see the ground,
And sentries guard the passage-ways in never ceasing round.
None dare confront the Kajis wild, nor cross the guarded bound
For those who do see fires from hell and hear death's cry resound.

"O think not that the Kajis fierce like other warriors are!
O slay me not with tortures worse than those my life now mar!
To see thee dead would be the dropping of a radiant star!
Renounce me with a heart of rock; grieve not that I am far.

"O yield not to thy sorrow great, though every hope hath flown!
Thou knowest well thou art the only joy I have, mine own.
Without thee, life for me is nought; henceforth I should but moan,
Or slay myself or fall on rocks below without a groan.

"I vow thy moon will yield her life and love to none save thee,
Though triple suns of splendours great were glorified for me.
Great rocks are nigh; and thus my life from troubles I could free;
And if my soul with wings were blessed, then I would fly to thee.

"Entreat the Lord that He deliver me from troubles dire,
From earth and water, fire and air, beyond all worldly ire,
To give me wings that I may fly away from all this mire,
And day and night to gaze upon the sun's life-giving fire.

"The sun without thee cannot be, thou art its vital part;
A fragment of the splendid whole — its zodiac thou art.
There shall I see thy image; it will light my darkened heart.
Let death be sweet, for bitter is my life from thee apart!

"I fear not death since 'tis to thee my soul I have resigned.
Thy love is cherished in my heart and in its depths confined.
The thought that we must part fore'er flings madness in my mind,
Yet, do not weep for me, whose soul with thine is intertwined.

"Betake thyself to India, and serve my father well,
For he, assailed by many foes, in solitude doth dwell.
O comfort him who mourns for me, whose life is now but hell;
Remember me who weeps for thee with tears that smiles dispel.

"Whate'er complaint I may have made, suffice it for the day.
Know justice true from heart to heart doth always find its way.
For thee I die and soon I'll be the ravens' helpless prey.
To suffer for me is enough to make thee pine away.

"Lo, mark the token of our pledge, the veil thou gavest me;
With flowing tears and trembling hands I cut one end for thee,
The only relic left to me of joy we hoped to see...
The heav'ns in wrath have turned on us the wheel of destiny!"

Thus Nestan wrote; then cut one end from off the cherished lace;
Her head was bare and tresses long adorned her radiant face.
The scent is blown from her who is an aloe tree of grace;
The sighs breathed through the raven's wings the lovely maid embrace.

A slave departed, and in haste to Gulansharo went;
And soon before Patman he stood and low before her bent.
The tidings of the maid brought joy, and Avtandil nigh wept;
With hands upraised to God above a prayer of thanks he sent.

Addressed he Patman and announced: "'Tis time for me to go.
I ne'er can recompense the zeal thy noble heart did show.

A year hath passed, my leisure's o'er, and now with heart aglow
I go to lead into Kajeti him who'll crush the foe."

The lady said: "O mighty lion, the fire now hotter grows;
And sundered from thee will my life be dark and full of woes.
O hasten! for the madman's heart with madness overflows.
Should Kajis block your way, then you can ne'er their strength oppose."

The knight now said to Pridon's slaves: "Thank God we are alive!
Though hitherto we corpses were, now once again we live!
The tidings bring great joy to us and hearts once dead revive;
The foe will fall beneath our steel however hard he strive.

"Tell Pridon all and let him hear this real yet wondrous tale.
Inform him that I hasten, for Tariel I cannot fail.
Let Pridon's voice sound louder far than e'en the thunder's wail.
O warriors brave! to you I give this wealth before I sail.

"O great and priceless is the debt that you on me did lay;
My gratitude I will display to you another day.
This treasure reft from pirates fierce, I beg you take away,
Though I may seem thus niggardly, refuse me not, I pray.

"My home is far; I have no power to offer presents more."
And then a splendid ship he gave to them with gifts galore.
"Take all this with you, friends," he said, "to Pridon go once more
And give this letter and my love to him whom I adore."

TEYMURAZ I (1589 — 1663)

Teymuraz I was a famous Georgian king and poet. He lived and worked at a period when the political situation of Georgia was extremely strained. He was brought up in Iran, at the court of the great Shah Abbas. Despite this, Teymuraz kept his Christian faith pure and intact and devoted all his long life to the struggle for the independence of his country against Persian aggression. Many who were dear to him perished in this struggle, among them — Queen Ketevan, the poet's mother, who was executed by the Shah's command in 1624, after being subjected to excruciating torture. Catholic fathers have given a detailed account of the torture suffered by Queen Ketevan. The martyrdom of the Georgian queen has attracted the attention of many European writers. Two of Teymuraz's sons were also tortured to death by Shah Abbas. Nevertheless, Teymuraz bore all these ordeals stoically, without giving way to despair or bowing his head before the foe. Teymuraz kept up a lively diplomatic intercourse with European states and with Muscovy. In the year 1658 the aged Teymuraz arrived in Moscow to visit Tzar Alexey Mikhailovich; but he did not succeed in getting assistance from anybody. Falling into the hands of the Shah of Iran he died a captive in distant Khorasan, in 1663.

The poetic works of Teymuraz vividly reflect the deep sorrow and affliction felt by the poet for the sufferings of his native land. In many an impressive poem, he wrote of the vanity of this world. His love poems are deeply emotional.

Teymuraz has given original renderings into Georgian of several romantic plots widespread in the East, for instance, "Joseph and Zuleika", "Leyla and Majnun", "The Candle and the Moth".

THE FRESCO PORTRAIT OF QUEEN TAMARI IN THE HERMITAGE OF ST. DAVID GAREJA

Enslaved by thy radiant face
All kings will come to worship thee;
Thou art so bright that stars grow dim
And faint, yet thrill in ecstasy.

Unto thee, peerless queen divine,
Adoring kings will bend the knee;
The glory shed by thee will ope
The door of immortality.

O Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The union of the sacred Three,
O Sovereign of the Universe!
Great Lord of all, I beg of Thee,
Thou bounteous giver of all good,
O God! be merciful to me!

When Thou, O Lord, dost on the Day
Of Judgment come and judge the dead
And living, who if they had sinned
Will quake with horror and with dread,
Thou'lt doom the guilty, and receive
The faithful into happiness.
O God, be merciful to me,

Give me to Paradise access.

O Mother of the Word of God,
Thou blessed Mother of our Lord,
Pray in behalf of me that I
May stand before our God adored,
Absolved of all my sins, and fill
Me with the knowledge of the Word.

When God shall judge both saints and men,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
I, Teymuraz, the king, implore,
O Holy Virgin, be my stay.

Amen.

JOSEPH TBILELI

"Did-Mouravi" is a poem about the life of George Saakadze famous Georgian military leader and politician of the XVII century, who bore the title of "Mouravi of Kartli". History has named him "The Great Ruler". George Saakadze sprang from the middle ranks of the nobility. He aspired to achieve the political unity of Georgia, to establish a powerful autocracy, to check all tendencies towards the feudal disruption of the country and to curtail the prerogatives of the higher nobility. He championed the improvement of the social status of the peasantry. Owing to his sane policy, his progressive social ideas and remarkable military talents, he earned fame, came to the fore and was soon at the head of the state. He was the scourge of both internal and foreign enemies. The high aristocracy resented the rise of the "lowborn" Saakadze. Informing against him and resorting to calumny, they succeeded in embittering King Luarsab II against him. George was forced to emigrate to Persia and seek refuge at the court of Shah Abbas. George thought to make Shah Abbas an instrument of his policy. Failing in this, he sacrificed his son, leaving him as hostage in the hands of Abbas, and fell away from the Persians. Returning to his native country, he fought many a famous battle against them. Finally, becoming again involved in internecine strife, he was defeated and was forced to flee to Turkey, where he perished.

George is a tragical figure — a great general and renowned patriot. His life and activities were described by his nephew, Joseph Tbileli, in a fine poem, "Did-Mouravi" written between 1683 and 1688.

DIDMOURAVIANI

(extract)

Thus ends my life! Oppressing clouds of blackest sorrow shroud my soul.
Tormented was I, tortured, martyred for my country's creed although
I served my kings, and guarded them with matchless worth and loyalty.
I go, farewell! and never more will I return to thee, Noste!

I leave the home that was to me a joy as well as misery.
The worm of woe gnaws at my heart, tears flow that naught but death can dry.
I held the reigns of government leading the way to justice, truth;
All ills have I endured, yet now, more woe is added to my life!

Distracting care and bitterness, corroding, eat into my soul;
The burden laid upon me is a heavier load than I can bear.
Far from my loved ones will I be; no friendly voice will speak to me;
No gentle hand will close my eyes, nor friend, nor kin will mourn for me.

Who will keep back the enemy from throwing down the forts I built?
He who sits in my place will strive to harm me even more; and though
Time will unfold his serpent heart and vile corruption of his soul,
The king will hear his honied words, believing all his plaited lies.

Truth may be vexing, yet there's none who e'er can find an easy road.
Now all seem blind to what I've done, of how I saved the land from ruin
With glorious actions claiming laurels and immortal gratitude,
And in return I am rewarded with eternal suffering.

Beware, the foe hangs o'er your heads, and like a murky storm will burst,
Pouring disaster o'er the land that once possessed great wealth and might,
That I had with my sword gained for it in unexhausted stores. Farewell!
I leave thee with a heavy heart, deploring, fearing for thy fate!

DAVID GURAMISHVILI

(1705 — 1792)

David Guramishvili, a well-known Georgian poet, was born in 1705, in an obscure village near Tbilisi. Owing to constant invasions of Turks and Persians, he was forced to leave his native village and seek refuge in the hills. There he was captured by a robber band of Lazghins and carried off into Daghestan. He was later able to escape from captivity, and found his way to Russia. In Moscow he joined the suite of Vakhtang VI, King of Kartli, who had emigrated to Russia. After Vakhtang's death, in the year 1738, he settled in the Ukraine, in the small town of Mirgorod and enlisted in the Georgian Hussars regiment. He saw service in numerous campaigns in Europe. During the Seven Years' War, in 1758, he was taken prisoner by the Prussians and was imprisoned in the citadel of Magdeburg. He was released in 1762, after which he returned to the Ukraine, to his new estate, and devoted his attention to agriculture and literature. In 1792 he died a lonely old man, in a foreign land.

Guramishvili has left us a large collection of poems which he called "Davitiani". The fatherland is the principal theme of this work. The noble feeling of patriotism is the foundation of all Guramishvili's work. The title of his historical poem, "The Woes of Kartli", deserves attention. Guramishvili has depicted, with artistic impartiality, the tragical events which took place in Georgia in the XVIII century. In fine musical verse, the poet has expressed his boundless sorrow caused by the ordeals which fell to the lot of his country. He has also written a charming bucolic poem, "Katsvia the Shepherd".

Guramishvili was a bold reformer of Georgian prosody; he introduced notes of folklore into his poems. At the same time, he initiated the democratization of the Georgian literary language.

ODE TO THE SUN

O radiant sun of light,
A soul-inspiring sight.
I Unrivalled king of kings,
Thy praise through ages rings.
Thou'rt wisest of the wise,
Exalted to the skies.
The mightiest of all might,
The brightest of the bright.
To thee, O sun, I pray,
Turn not from me away.
Reduced to slavery,
Oppressed by misery,
A captive held in thrall,
From here to thee I call
To guide me on my way,
With thy far-reaching ray.

A LAMENT

My heart doth weep in sorrow deep,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

One mad despair of woe and care,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

One hopeless strife is my whole life,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

My spirit flies, my body dies.
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

Why was I born to live in scorn,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

O cursed world, by frenzy whirled,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

O woe, to death I yield my breath,
O fleeting world!
O treach'rous world!

MAN

1

The mortal flesh must rot
In a life-forgotten spot.
The soul in freedom flies,
Unbodied in the skies.

2

The flesh by the fleeting world
Beneath time's feet is hurled,
Gradations of decay
To be kneaded into clay.
The flesh is withered grass,
A rancid stinking mass.
The soul, wrought in the dark,
Is a bright life-kindling spark,
That flies on wings of might —
A never-quenching light.

3

Denied of clothes and food
The flesh by death's subdued.
Thus flesh more flesh doth crave
To feed the greedy grave.
The soul no matter needs,
On love and freedom feeds.

4

To feed the flesh you dine
On choicest meats and wine.
You grudge not cost or care
Rich tables to prepare;
Yet you pity not your soul,
Nor strive to make it whole,
But leave it starved and cold
In a narrow, empty mould.
The flesh you clothe with skill,
With gold the pockets fill,
But keep the spirit bare
With not a rag to wear.
Your flesh smells sweet and fine
Like fragrant muscadine;
Your soul like burnt straw stinks,
To infernal darkness sinks;
At last it perishes
And for ever vanishes.

ZUBOVKA

1. Once on my way from Zubovka
 I met a maid with face
And form — a miracle of beauty,
 Of elegance and grace.
So black were her eyes, her lips so red
 That in a moment's space
My heart stopped beating, and I stood —
 Rooted to the place.
2. I started up as from a trance;
 Then whispered as she frowned
"O sun, who may you be? Say, whence
 And whither are you bound?
My heart has turned to red hot coal;
 My soul love's fires surround;
In waters flowing from your eyes
 I would with joy be drowned.
3. With knitted brows, rebellious eyes,
 She drew herself up proudly;
A sight to make the very face
 Of beauty green with envy.
But when she said: "How dare you speak,
 O sir, of love to me!"
Grief filled my breast, hot tears — my eyes
 To overflow a sea.
4. Then angrily she turned around,
 Her face now pale of hue,
"Betrothed am I to one who's wiser,
 Handsome than you."
Her every word, hot stabs of fire,
 Like arrows towards me flew,
Pierced through my heart and from its depths
 Woe-stricken sobbings drew.
5. She raised her hand, then struck me down.
 I fell — a lover slain.
Prostrated, crushed and helpless, faint,
 Upon that woodland lane.
Then anger vanished from her eyes,
 Pride fled without restrain;
And on her features could be seen
 A lurking touch of pain.
6. She bent o'er me and placed her hand
 Upon my heaving chest.
Then gently helped me rise and asked:
 "Why act like one possessed?"
I answered: "Unrequited love
 Has brought me dire unrest;

It stirred an all-consuming fire
That burst forth from my breast.

7. Her eyes met mine. Blood in my ears
Like deafening thunder beat.
"Please go," she whispered, "cruel tongues
May embitter what is sweet,
And curious eyes that scandal leads
May think us indiscreet.
Now go, but if you come this way,
I promise, we shall meet."
8. She turned and left me... Long I sought her.
My quest, alas, in vain.
Eh gone! but from her promise rose
A spark that keeps me sane —
A kindling spark that brings to life
All hopes of joy again,
And like a star in dusky skies
Guides me through nights of pain.
9. Her promise in my heart I cherish,
And though with hope aglow,
Yet loud I weep, for her lament,
Hot tears in torrents flow.
She will not let me suffer long
In solitude, I know,
But to my prayers will lend an ear
When I am fallen low.
10. To guard my loved one with my life
Is all that I desire.
I know no rest, sleep flies from me,
My days in pain expire.
She'll feed me with the Bread of Life,
And on a flaming pyre
Pour tears to cool my tortured heart,
Love cast in raging fire.
11. God, part me not from her who is
The only maid for me;
No joy on earth, no love of man
Could ever brighter be.
Perhaps for loving me they bound
And beat her cruelly.
Her tortured face, besmeared in blood,
In every dream I see.
12. O where are you? Where have you gone?
What shuts you from my view?
Alone I languish, ever seeking, —
Never finding you.
Perhaps you left me in this world

Of hell for heavens blue,
Then, love, have pity on me here,
For I would come to you!

13. Perhaps you left me in this world
Of hell for heavens blue,
Then, love, have pity on me here,
For I would come to you!
O love, have pity on me here,
For I would come to you!

ADVICE TO SCHOLARS

Know all, who search for knowledge deep —
Hear David's words and wisdom's call —
If you seek happiness and good,
First taste the bitterness of gall,
For bitter roots yield sweetest fruits,
And honest labour blesses all.
On him whose joy is wrought from woe
The blows of life like mercy fall.

The moment woman bears a son,
Of love and suffering begot,
Her heart swells forth in joy and pride,
And every griping pang's forgot.
The gardener is glad to see
Grapes clustered in his garden-plot.
Thus wisdom to the wise brings calm
And makes him master of his lot.

Know, wisdom leaves you not till death,
Is your companion true fore'er.
No man can steal it or destroy,
Divide or carry off a share.
All else can artful tricks beguile,
And in a deep-laid trap ensnare.
Devoid of wisdom, the fleeting world
Makes life a chaos of despair.

True wisdom guides his followers
On life's perplexing thorny way,
Possesses treasures, wealth galore,
That none can find or on it prey.
No hand can soil its purity,
Nor lead it captive 'neath its sway.
'Tis worthless in the hands of fools,
For knowledge helps find wisdom's ray.

A warrior deprived of arms
Joined in a fierce and strenuous fight,
A tiger rushing on its prey
With clawless paws to kill and smite
Are doomed to fall, in vain their strife,
In vain their eagerness for might.
Thus blind is he who knowledge lacks,
For learning gives to wisdom sight.

Unrivalled is true wisdom's worth,
Its power is beyond compare.
The wise have yearned the right to live
Through every triumph or despair.
Deep-bedded in the lofty mind
Is wisdom's magic lore fore'er.

The wise for bread to none will kneel,
But I must cringe to get my share.

Words are the weapons of the wise;
The worker's skill is in his hand;
The churchman's merit is his prayers,
The merchant's — when on distant strand;
The brave shed blood, the ploughman — sweat
For love and honour of his land;
The beggar begs from door to door.
Which would you have at your command?

Above were named the seven ways
Of getting money for one's bread.
The eighth — to be a mighty king
With jewelled crown upon his head.
The ninth — a shepherd on the hills
With grazing sheep before him spread;
The tenth — a sighing, love-sick swain
Who by the chain of love is led.

A lover and a scholar wise,
A soldier eager for a fight,
A priest, a beggar seeking alms,
A merchant and a king of might;
Let me present to you, my friends,
Each of the ten in his true light.
Then choose the one you wish to be
And make of it your life's delight!

a.

A lover must his loved one love,
Be faithful, true and constant e'er,
A gallant, ever by the side
Of his beloved lady fair.
Without her every throb of joy
Should be a pang of dark despair.
To die for her should be but bliss
And sweet the pangs of death to bear.

b.

A shepherd, be it frost or heat,
Must be alert and open-eyed,
And where the grass is rich and sweet,
His fleecy flocks with care must guide
And follow in the steps of those
Who for their sheep when needed died.
Let God Almighty shield us both
From teeth of beasts that lurking hide.

c.

The king must be, the wise have writ,
God-fearing, bountiful and just,
Severe, yet merciful and wise,
In whom his subjects build their trust.
With patience, wisdom, fortitude
He must dispel all sin and lust,
And with his sceptre guard their right
And all wrong level to the dust.

d.

A beggar must be soft of speech;
From him humility must flow;
Pray for the penitent and proud,
Bless all wherever he may go.
God loves him who with patience bears
All woes like Job of long ago,
Detests the haughty, and still more,
The beggar humbled but for show.

e.

He who ploughs, sows or plants must toil
From early morn till late at night.

My counsel is for you, sweet youth,
Not for the old or worldly-wise.
If waters deep you wish to cross,
Know, he who swims all depths defies.
The child who knows no rod when small
From fires of hell will never rise.

WOES OF GEORGIA

The Turks, Ossetians, Lekis, Persians,
Cherkez, Ghlighvis, Didos and Kists
Were ever Georgia's enemies,
Assaulting her with blood-smeared fists.
But soon at home domestic broils,
Quarrels and feuds arose like mists.
Brothers with brothers grappled. Thus
Did trifles cause mighty contests.

And as a cock that flies upon
Another cock, they turned to fight,
Strutted and glared and frowning sprang
On each other, and then in spite,
With unsheathed swords, they savagely
Dealt blows that fell to left and right.
Thus Georgia weakened and soon felt
The sting of Turkey's, Leki's bite.

What I have now to tell will make
Those who love us sad and the foe
Glad, for vile deeds will be disclosed,
Deeds that have brought our country woe.
Truth is a narrow road, yet I
Despise all flattery; and though
Many may be averse, I'll not
To canker-worms my honour throw.

Truth is eternal, yet its tongue
Wounds deeper than a sword; and who
E'er speaks the truth has oft to bear
The world's reproach and hatred too.
To stifle truth, or wrong conceal
With honied words of praise undue
Corrupts the world, and then do vice
And crime the steps of man pursue.

Woe was that day when the Osmanli
With swords that to the hilts were hued
With blood, ravaged the land, and o'er it
Cold-slaughtered human corpses strewed,
When crushing tyranny and havoc
Their deadly trampling feet pursued,
And black disaster like hot lava
Flowed over valley, hill and wood.

That day the wheel of fortune turned:
The foe defiled fair Georgia's throne;
By the foul might of infidels
Was Kartl-Kakheti downwards thrown.
The fox had eaten up the cocks.
The hens were left to weep alone.

The carrion crows that croaked above
Made them lament and loudly groan.

The wounded fall; the whole are seized
By foes and into bondage led.
The hearts that once to valour thrilled
Now like a woman's shake in dread.
Enfeebled are they and afraid,
For manhood true from them has fled,
And powers that befit a man
Sink in the mire and now are dead.

THE KIDNAPPING OF DAVID GURAMISHVILI
BY THE LEKIS
(extract)

Let me relate to you how I
Was taken captive by the foe.
Alas! my country's downfall was
The cause of my thus sinking low.

One early morn I went to watch
Over the men who were to mow
The fields now ready to be cut
Above the Ksani river's flow.
With two men did I hurry on
Bearing with me some food and wine,
That in the harvest heat and toil
The labourers could amply dine.

It was hot, so to cool ourselves
We hurried down the steep decline,
When suddenly we were attacked
By Lekis hidden midst the pine.
Fifteen were they, we but three.
They seized and threw me to the ground.
Ungraciously and violently
With ropes my hands and feet they bound.
O'er hundred mounts, nine hundred plains,
Through forests dense our way was bound.

.....

The food and drink they gave to me
Repugnant to my taste I found.
I ate it though my stomach turned
And with cold fat my lips were bound.
Far worse than death it is to be
A wretch subdued and fetter-bound.
O woe! why was I left to live
Enslaved and levelled to the ground.
Henceforth I weep and in a sea
Of tears my every joy is drowned.

.....

DAVID GURAMISHVILI TO THE FLEETING WORLD

1

Trust not this fleeting, hectic world,
Its words are false, delusive bright.
In vain is every strife to stop
Its endless, ceaseless, whirling flight.
The happy hours we pass to-day
To-morrow vanish swift as light.
Deny the flesh, pray for thy soul,
All else is only vain delight.

2

The world embracing time and space
Whirls into spans of dark and light,
Where murmuring breezes, crooning soft,
With violent, storm-racked winds unite.
Its joys are harbingers of woe,
Its visions fair — illusions bright.
Remorseless time blots out fore'er
All glory, happiness and might.

3

Alas! too well I know this world
That is so lovely to one's eyes.
Such happiness embraced my soul
That life to me seemed paradise,
But now behold me humbled low,
A captive in a world of lies.
Tears sought my heart for its abode
And heaped on it deep smothering sighs.

4

Short-lived and fleeting is this world;
What joy it gives is but a dream,
And all that has been known and loved
Floats from us down life's hellish stream.
The happiness it promised me
Was vain delusion's flashing gleam,
The hopes now all to ashes turned
Can naught on earth to life redeem.

5

O cursed demon! thou traitor false!
Thou art the harbinger of woe.
Thy promised pledges, every word
Is but a false, deceiving show.
Alas! I placed my trust in thee,

But with an unexpected blow
Thou conquered me and down I fell
In spirit crushed and humbled low.

6

Thus I bewail this cursed world,
Deploring bitterly my life.
O whence and whither are we bound,
And why this maddening, futile strife?
No child have I to soothe my age,
Deprived am I of kin or wife,
Forgotten and alone I die!
Alas, O world! O woe my life!

7

The world drew forth its bow and sent
An arrow flying in the air.
It quickly sought my heart and found
Abode within its lonesome lair.
Surrounded am I by the foe
Instead of son or daughter fair.
So down I sit to write a poem
To be my offspring and my heir.

8

— Lonesome! Yes, lonesome is my life.
Misfortune bows me down with care,
And like a wind-tossed leaf I'm flung
To earth where grief is but my share.
A plaything am I, yoked to woe,
Enduring more than flesh can bear.
While others fate blessed lavishly
For me no heir it had to spare.

9

Devoid of issue, barren-doomed,
Like an empty wooden cage am I.
Within the fastness of my heart
Tears flow that naught but death can dry.
Thus like a bird shut in a cage,
That gazes wistfully on high,
O'erwhelmed by tears in solitude,
Within my narrow world I lie.

10

Fate guides us through long pathless ways,
While swift as light the hours go by.
Short hours of joy, long hours of woe

Pass from us with a yearning sigh.
By fate, like winds we're buffeted,
First lifting us to soar on high,
Then thud us back to earth that gave
Us birth wherein we're doomed to die.

11

Eh! one by one our days and years
Like sands of ruthless time run low,
A moment's span of light from gloom,
Then into dark once more we go.
Time tears the threads we leave behind,
Gives place to death who with a plow
Erases, levels to the dust
All that we were with a quick blow.

12

Before the mockeries of life
The mortal being is made to stray,
A transient guest in a transient world,
A sombre urn of human clay.
Time makes one step behind which ages
From memory pass quick away,
And all that seemed so breathless bright
Is but an eye-deceiving ray.

13

Sorrow has shortened all my days,
Like ashes on my head they fall.
The sweetness of the draught I drank
Was turned to bitterness and gall.
The wild beasts keep a wary eye,
And drawing closer, stealthy crawl
To pounce upon my carcass foul
Now wrapped within a funeral pall.

14

So down I sit to write a poem
To be my offspring and my heir.
It is a song wrought in a heart
That knew but misery and care.
It overflows my soul with hope
That hitherto knew but despair.
Then let it swell and for the good
Of Georgia flourish on fore'er!

DAVID GURAMISHVILI'S EPITAPH

Saint John of Zedadzen in Kakheti
Made walls shed tears and echo forth his cries.
In Kartli Shio wrought miracles with bones,
Such miracles that to the heavens rise.

And near each monastery old was built
An ancient sepulchre of lime and stones
Beneath the covert of scent-laden shades,
An everlasting dwelling for my bones.

Come, passer-by, behold the lowly grave
Where in decay my body lies instead,
A lonely grave, so distant and remote,
From whence to realms unknown my soul has fled.

The fleeting world has only woe for man;
Its every joy is a bright delusive lie.
Stay, stranger, let thy tear fall on my dust,
And God will show you mercy from on high.

BESSIKI
(BESSARION GABASHVILI)
(1751 — 1791)

Bessiki is the nom-de-plume of Bessarion Gabashvili, a talented Georgian poet of the second half of the XVIII century. He spent his childhood and youth in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, where he also earned fame as a poet. As a result of a conflict with Irakli II king of Kartli and Kakheti (1744 — 1798), he fled into Imereti (Western Georgia). Here he soon came to the fore and became a leader in the political life of the country. He made frequent journeys to foreign countries on diplomatic missions. Finally he went to Petersburg to the court of the emperor of Russia. He died on January 23, 1791 in the camp of Fieldmarshal Potemkin, in the town of Jassy (Rumania), where he was buried.

In his works, Bessiki reveals himself primarily as a lyrical poet, although poems of other genres also belong to his pen. The main theme of his poems is love, passionate erotic love. To this overwhelming passion Bessiki has dedicated his fine masterpieces, "I Entered a Garden of Melancholy", "O Lovely Maid!" "The Blackbirds" etc. Bessiki's patriotic ode "On the Battle of Aspindza" (in this battle, fought in 1770, a small Georgian force inflicted a smashing defeat on a great Turkish army which had invaded Georgia), and his satirical poem of manners "The Mother-in-Law and the Daughter-in-Law" are no less famous.

Bessiki is an outstanding master of poetry, his poems, are characterized by great technical perfection.

O LOVELY MAID!

O lovely maid, all splendours fade before thy grace!
I Soft ringlets deck thy ivory neck and godlike face.
In dreams I kiss thy lips, and bliss my bosom sways.
O radiant eyes, sweet heaven lies beneath your gaze!
Forget me ne'er, O maiden fair of sunlike rays!

Thy eyes of blue, so soft in hue, my soul inspire.
They sparkle bright with flashing light in liquid fire.
Midst joyous tears and anxious fears I now expire.
To melt in thee, O ecstasy, is my desire...
Eh! my poor heart feels but the smart of thorn and briar!

My beauteous queen, none e'er has seen such charms as thine!
So let me press in sweet excess thy form to mine,
And kiss and kiss in endless bliss those lips of thine,
And from thy lip my own will sip soul-melting wine.
O love! O fires! O sweet desires! be ever mine!

Thy graceful frame that praises claim enslaves the eye;
Thy snow-white arms with luring charms make bosoms sigh;
On thy warm breast with graces blest I long to die.
I knew but mirth upon this earth beneath the sky,
But now I know love's pain and smart, and ceaseless cry.

Like the pale moon I wane and swoon and longing sigh.
My vital breath I yield to death and agony.
O lovers all, to ye I call, do not deny
Me your hot tear to deck the bier on which I lie.

O life, farewell! I welcome hell and burning die!

TWO BLACKBIRDS

Two blackbirds sitting in a cage chant melody
With soothing sounds that tremble on the fragrant air
In numbers soft that swell in music sweet and sad,
Filling the bower with love and purest harmony.

Their song welcomes the coming of the verdant spring,
Floats o'er the field and sighs among the blossoming trees,
Tells of the flowers that bloom in other lands and of
The love and hopes that to the soul sweet longings bring.

Through the soft silence of the cloister the glossy
Plumed blackbirds with their drooping heads and hanging wings,
Sit watchful in their covert and together sing
With rival notes that fill the soul with ecstasy.

O come and see the two that shining black adorns,
Who gently tune their voices to complaints of love.
Their musical, most melancholy lays dissolve
The heart of him who hopeless weeps and ever mourns.

ALEXANDER CHAVCHAVADZE

(1787 — 1846)

Alexander Chavchavadze is a well-known Georgian poet, the founder of Georgian romanticism. His father Garsevan Chavchavadze, was Georgian ambassador to the Emperor of Russia. The future poet was the godson of Catherine II, which circumstance promised him a brilliant career. Notwithstanding this, the eighteen-year-old poet took part in the revolt of 1804 against the Russian autocratic government in Georgia, for which he was exiled. Shortly after his term of exile was over, he was admitted to the St. Petersburg Corps of Pages. In 1813 — 1814, as an officer in the Russian Army he took part in the Napoleonic wars and entered Paris with the Allied forces. After his return to Georgia, he occupied responsible posts in the military and civil administration. In 1841 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenantgeneral.

Alexander Chavchavadze's house in Tbilisi was a veritable literary salon, a cultural centre where all Georgian writers and progressive representatives of Russian and European society used to come together. A. S. Griboyedov, the famous Russian playwright, who married one of A. Chavchavadze's daughters, was a frequent guest in this salon.

In 1846 A. Chavchavadze fell a victim to an accident: while driving out and the horses having got out of hand, he fell out of the carriage and was killed on the spot.

O LOVE DIVINE!

O love! O mighty love! your power enslaves and holds the heart in thrall.
Even monarchs bend their knees to you, and on your shrine prostrating fall.
Exquisite pain, exquisite bliss and passions sweet the heart o'erflows,
So, can you blame the nightingale that pours love's essence o'er the rose?

O love! your fires inspire the souls of all created 'neath the sky;
Adored are you by great and small, by gallants, kings and gods on high;
Where'er you go a throne awaits you decked with tears and sweet delight;
You are the lord of hearts impassioned; all fall 'neath your conquering might.

Has ever slave thus bound to you, thus fettered down, for freedom pined
Though wild desires invade the heart and madness penetrates the mind?
Though passions make me nigh expire, let ecstasy of love be mine;
And let me live or die for you, your willing slave, O love divine!

GRIGOL ORBELIANI

(1800 — 1883)

Grigol Orbeliani's father, a prince, was in favour at the court of the last Georgian kings. His mother was a granddaughter of King Irakli II. Grigol Orbeliani first attended the school for the children of the nobility in Tbilisi; then he entered a military school, after which, in the quality of an officer, he took part in a number of expeditions against the Persians, the Turks, and the Lazghis (1822 — 1833).

He was arrested in 1833 for participation in the conspiracy of Georgian feudal aristocracy (1832). For participation in the conspiracy, G. Orbeliani was forbidden to reside in Georgia. He returned to his country only in 1837.

Very soon, G. Orbeliani made a brilliant military career. He distinguished himself particularly in the expeditions into Daghestan, against the famous Imam Shamil of Daghestan. In 1843 G. Orbeliani was appointed ruler of Avaria; in 1852 he became commander-in chief of the forces and militia stationed in the Caspian region. The poet attained the rank of general-adjutant. In the fifties he fulfilled the duties of Governor of the Caucasus several times.

BEFORE THE FRESCO PAINTING OF QUEEN TAMARI IN THE CHURCH OF BETANIA

Thy saintly face
In beauteous grace
Doth shine with virgin beauty sweet.
I humbly pray
And homage pay,
O'erwhelmed by sorrow at thy feet.
In joy I gaze,
In grief I gaze,
Oh, let me gaze thus e'er on thee.
Oh, let me sleep
In slumber deep,
My country's downfall not to see!
A bower sublime,
This realm of thine;
Thy glory o'er it shines no more!
No splendour bright
Doth pierce with light
The gloom that shrouds its fame of yore!
Though like a dream,
A flashing gleam
A glorious sunset hid by night,
Thy past inspires
And kindles fires
In souls devoid of joy and light!
Though grieved and mute,
In solitude,
Hear thou my prayer of deep distress...
Thy land restore
To joy once more,
And once again thy country bless.
Let valour grand
Inspire thy land

And make it as of yore renowned
 With faith divine
 And language fine,
With knowledge deep and wisdom crowned!
 Let victory's cry,
 Resounding high,
Redeem thy might of former time!
 With eager ear
 We crave to hear
Great Rustaveli's word sublime!
 We beg of thee
 To make us free
And lead us on to liberty...
 But woe, thy eyes
 See but the skies
And not thy son in slavery!
 Thus humbled low,
 Thy son below,
A wretch unmanned, is stricken mute!
 All hopes have fled,
 All joy is dead:
By cruel despair I stand subdued!
 Woe if thy name
 And gloried fame
Will never rise again to bloom...
 Perchance what fell
 Was hurled to hell
By ravens black to death and doom!
 A world of lies
 Where honour dies,
And all that fades ne'er revives...
 Of glory's flame
 That crowned thy name
Is this the relic that survives?
 Midst grass and weeds
 And tangled reeds
The temple's ruins stand grim and tall,
 Where Tamari's face
 In hallowed grace
Is traced upon a crumbling wall!

WHEN I WAKE

Thy features every vision of my sleep adorn,
And when I wake the eyelash of my eyes adorn.

Thy willing slave, devoted am I e'er to thee,
Thou mayest slay me, yet such death is life to me.
Thou art the sweetest flower that ever grew for me.
Thy breath the fragrance of the rose does seem to me.
Thou art the gleaming star that lights the dark for me.

Thy features every vision of my sleep adorn,
And when I wake the eyelash of my eyes adorn.

Thy slender waist's a graceful aloe branch to me.
The girdle round it twined a rainbow seems to me.
Thy sparkling eyes dark flashing lightning seem to me.
Thy snow-white bosom is a realm of bliss to me!
The echo of thy voice is music sweet to me.

Thy features every vision of my sleep adorn,
And when I wake the eyelash of my eyes adorn.

My ways in life so manifold all lead to thee!
Before my every thought and dream thy face I see!
What makes my heart a flaming ball? O it is thee!
Let me in one long kiss draw thy whole soul to me!
The very essence of my joy thou art to me.

Thy features every vision of my sleep adorn,
And when I wake the eyelash of my eyes adorn.

In Ortachala thou canst see, dear, what I am:
A gallant knight of wondrous strength and might I am;
The champion in every contest fair I am.
With bowl in hand a tamada of skill I am.
O wouldst thou come and see but once how brave I am
And then perhaps thou'lt say how bold and dear I am-

Thy features every vision of my sleep adorn,
And when I wake the eyelash of my eyes adorn.

NICOLOZ BARATASHVILI

(1817 — 1845)

Nicoloz Baratashvili, a poet of genius, came of a noble family. On his mother's side, the poet was a descendant of the illustrious King Irakli II who was nicknamed "The Lion of Asia".

The future poet's mother, a great connoisseur of ancient Georgian literature, inspired him with a love for literature. At the same time, the poet's intellectual development was influenced by the circle of friends who frequented their house — famous Georgian writers and public men. In 1835 the poet finished the school for children of the nobility in Tbilisi and entered service as an official in the Law Courts. In 1845 he was transferred to Ganja as deputy governor of that province. He fell ill and died there, far from his home and kin. His remains were brought back to Georgia in 1893. His funeral turned into a great national demonstration. N. Baratashvili is buried in Tbilisi, in the cemetery of Georgian writers on Mtatsminda, on the slope of the mount he loved so dearly.

In his poems, Baratashvili sings of high moral ideals and seeks his own path — the path of the human being whose duty is to contribute to the welfare of his country. The poet's mighty struggle against the powers of darkness finds expression in his poem "Merani", a symbol of progress and eternal movement onwards.

TWILIGHT OVER MTATSMINDA

O Mtatsminda! thou Holy Mount! the sight invites
The soul to thought – a place that wilderness has wrought.
Like drops of limpid pearls the dew adorns the site
And trembling, mingles in delight with soft twilight.

Both solitude and silence rule the place in proud and haughty state!
From there my eyes behold a scene that only rapture can create!
Below the plain with 'mbrosial flowers is like a heavenly altar spread;
The fragrance like the incense sweet its blessings on the Mount does shed.

I still recall that lovely eve when full of grief
Thy paths I trod, O dusky Mount, to seek relief;
My lonely soul in longing clung to twilight fair,
Which sorrow veiled with heaving sighs and beauty rare!

Ah! Nature wove a gentle dream of loveliness and sadness there.
O sky! O sky! thou hast engraved thy image on my heart fore'er!
And when I gaze upon thy blue my thoughts enraptured towards thee fly.
Alas, they cannot reach thy heights and in the air dissolve and die.

Thy radiance conceals this fleeting world of woes!
Beyond thy realm my soul takes wing to seek repose
From dreary haunts where every cherished hope expires...
But woe! the gods shun man and all his heart's desires.

In pensive thought entranced I viewed the waning of the heaven's glow;
Soft twilight wrapt me in her arms and filled with dusk the glens below,
Where rivulets hummed in low response to gentle winds that haunting sighed;
My soul to nature seemed to cleave and in her bosom wished to hide.

O glowing Mount! whose smiles and tears enthrall the breast,

A sight that cheers the heavy heart by cares oppressed.
My grieving soul now with your gladness seems to blend,
And yet, O Mount, thou silent mourn'st, my gentle friend.

Deep silence quivered in delight as twilight dimmed the heaven's dome,
And eve's sweet star of love and dreams pursued the moon throughout the gloam.
O hast thou seen a virgin soul, aweary with excess of prayer?
Thus pale and languid, the moon came floating through the misty air.

Remembrance brings to mind again that eve in May
When twilight veiled the Holy Mount in purple gray,
When over-burdened and distressed, the soul in pain
Found vent in thoughts that ever in my heart remain.

O eve! thy solitude and silence soothe the soul by sorrow prest!
To thee I haste when anguish floods the frenzied brain and burning breast!
The sorrowed heart, the saddened heart, will find its balm and hope in thee,
For morn will break, and sunshine's beam will make the shades of darkness flee.

MEDITATIONS BY THE RIVER MTKVARI

On sadness wrapped, I strolled along where the waters hum and fret;
I longed to rest in solitude and all my cares forget.
And there beside the flowing stream, in utter weariness,
I sank upon the soft green grass and wept in bitterness.

Borne on the sigh that silence heaves, the Mtkvari's murmur rose,
And in its lucid beds the azure skies found sweet repose.
And here beyond the strife of life, beyond all sordid noise,
The mountains brooded o'er the land in calm unvarying poise.

I listened to the river's hum; I saw the heavens bend
And kiss the mounts that with my soul and sorrow seemed to blend.
What means thy purl, O Mtkvari old, forebodes it joy or woe?
Thou'rt witness true of bygone days, yet hum in speechless flow.

But why this life of maddening strife, if all its visions fair
Are bubbles light, illusions bright, that burst and fade fore'er?
Our life is but a passing dream in a fleeting hectic world.
A never-filling boundless chaos, wherein our hopes are hurled.

The mortal heart, though sate and full, is a slave of surging fires,
That blast the soul and steep the heart in avariced desires.
Ev'n sovereigns great whose wealth and power are the wonder of the day
Feel greed and envy stir their breasts for realms that others sway.

They crave and strive for more and more, and their impassioned lust
Is for that earth wherein they're doomed to mingle with its dust.
Or does the king whose deeds are worthy of esteem and praise
Know peace amid the storms or cares that darken all his days?

The welfare of his native land and heirs brings him delight;
His aim in life's to keep the honour of his country bright...
If death holds glory in its power and the world to void is whirled,
Then on whose lips will lie the sin and glory of the world?

If mortals of this world we are and bear the form of man,
Our duty is to serve our land and walk the ways of man.
Unworthy is the one who's but a mass of worthless clay,
Who dares to shun all mortal cares, yet in this world does stay!

TO A CHONGURI

Thy strains of woe — a mournful flow —
At times they groan, at times they moan;
Each throb recalls the vanished hour and bids the soul to thought!

Oh! Chonguri! if e'er thy voice
Would flood my ear with murmuring joys,
And soothe the heart that sorrow sways and turn its tears away!

Where can I find thy smile so fair,
Adorned with joy and beauty rare?
I hear but sobs that anguish feeds hurled from a heart that bleeds!

AN EARRING

A butterfly gay
Like a wing-spread fay
Sways a flower in white array;
Thus fairy light
Two earrings bright
With curtsyng shadows play.

O happy the mind
That calm may find
And solace in that shade.
The earring's sway
Like winds in May
Makes cares and troubles fade.

O earring fair,
That passions snare,
Whose lips thy shade will kiss?
Who'll quaff fore'er
Gods' nectar rare?
Who'll cling to thee in bliss?

A SOUL FORLORN

Let none bewail the bitterness of orphancy,
Nor weep if destitute of friend or kin is he,
But pity him whose soul's bereaved by ruthless fate;
Once lost — 'tis hard to find again a worthy mate.

Deprived of kin and friend the heart seems lone and dead,
Yet soon it finds another one to love instead;
But if the soul is left alone, then it must bear
The curse of yielding all its hopes to black despair.

His faith is lost, he trusts no more this world of woe;
Distraught and wild, he shuns mankind, and does not know
To whom to trust the secrets of his troubled breast,
Afraid to feel again the faith it once possessed.

'Tis hard to bear the anguish of a soul forlorn,
To shun all worldly joys and smiles or pleasures scorn;
The lonely soul forever mourns its friend and mate,
And heavy sighs bring calm to him thus doomed by fate.

MERANI

It runs; it flies; it bears me on; it heeds no trail nor spoor;
A raven black behind me croaks with ominous eyes of doom.
Speed thee on and onward fly with a gallop that knows no bound,
Fling to the winds my stormy thoughts in raging darkness found.

Go onward! onward! cleaving through roaring wind and rain
O'er many a mount and many a plain, short'ning my days of pain.
Seek not shelter, my flying steed, from scorching skies or storm;
Pity not thy rider sad, by self-immolation worn.

I bid farewell to parents, kin, to friends and sweet-heart dear
Whose gentle voice did soothe my hopes to a hot and bitter tear.
Where the night falls, there let it dawn, there let my country be;
Only the heavenly stars above my open heart will see.

The sighs that burn, that rend the heart to violent waves I hurl;
To thy inspired, wild maddened flight love's waning passions whirl.
Speed thee on, and onward fly with a gallop that knows no bound,
Fling to the winds my stormy thoughts, in raging darkness found.

In foreign lands thou lay me low, not where my fathers sleep,
Nor shed thou tears, nor grieve, my love, nor o'er my body weep;
Ravens grim will dig my grave and whirlwinds wind a shroud
There, on desert plains where winds will howl in wailings loud.

No lover's tears but only dew will moist my bed of gloom;
No dirge but vultures' shrieks will sound above my lowly tomb.
Bear me far beyond the bounds of fate, my Merani,
Fate whose slave I never was, and henceforth — ne'er shall be!

By fate repulsed, oh bury me in a dark and lonely grave.
My bloody foe, I fear thee not — thy flashing sword I brave.
Speed thee on and onward fly with a gallop that knows no bound,
Fling to the winds my stormy thoughts in raging darkness found.

The yearnings of my restless soul will not in vain have glowed,
For, dashing on, my steed has paved a new untrodden road.
He who follows in our wake, a smoother path will find;
Daring all, his fateful steed shall leave dark fate behind.

It runs; it flies; it bears me on; it heeds no trail nor spoor;
A raven black behind me croaks with ominous eyes of doom.
Speed thee on and onward fly with a gallop that knows no bound,
Fling to the winds my stormy thoughts, in raging darkness found.

O EVIL SPIRIT!

O evil spirit! thou fiend of hell! who bade thee be my guide,
To storm my life, to burn my brain and every joy to hide?
Why didst thou steal my peace and calm, my soul besteept in grief?
Why didst thou crush my youthful heart and kill its faith, belief?

Is this the pledge, the promised bliss you had in store for me,
My soul to wing in fancied joy to realms of liberty?
Midst burning tears and woe-rent fears bright smiles I thought to find;
In hell I sought a paradise-to truth my eyes were blind.

Thy words so false, though wondrous bright, where have they gone or fled?
Why didst thou tempt my wishes true — to be by furies led?
Reply! thou fiend! thou'rt silent now? 'tis late to slink away;
Thy power to charm, to lure, to blind, why has it lost its sway?

O curst be that day when I blindly placed my faith and trust in thee,
And yielded up my fondest hopes and let them martyred be!
Henceforth my soul is agitated; its peace I flung away;
Its raging fires, its hopes, desires, no passion's flame can slay!

A vaunt! Begone! O demon false! Thou harbinger of woe!
At random driven, my tortured soul no safe retreat doth know.
My mind lacks faith, my heart mistrusts, my soul in pain sinks low!
O woe to him who feels the sting of thy deadly smiting blow!

CHINNARI

An aloe stands in solitude upon a lofty precipice.
The sunbeams mingling with the shade the myriad boughs caress and kiss.
'Tis joy to dream beneath her shade — a refuge from this world of woe —
Where rustling leaves give soft response to murmurings of the stream below.

The aloe bends before the wind; the river hums in harmony.
And all these sounds sweet slumber lure, where dreams expire in melody
'Midst nature's things there is a tongue — the essence of a flow divine;
In vain can mortal lips express a sound more eloquent and fine!

In hopeless love the Mtkvari heaves; the rushing waters swish and hiss;
It cannot reach its loved one's feet and beats with wrath the precipice.
The fair chinnari from its height in proud and haughty dignity
Inclines its head and sadly sighs as Mtkvari groans in agony.

As gentle breezes sway the tree, the waters, whirled from passions deep,
By jealous frenzy rendered white, burst on and lash the rocky steep...
The heart must suffer endless pain if love sincere within it hides,
And if the love thus cherished dear in scorching fires of passion bides!

SKY-BLUE

The azure blue, the heavenly hue,
The first created realm of blue;
And o'er its radiance divine
My soul does pour its love sublime.

My heart that once with laughter glowed
Of grief, now bears a heavy load.
But yet it thrills and loves anew
To view again the sapphire blue.

I love to gaze on lovely eyes
That swim in azure from the skies;
The heavens lend this colour fair,
And leave a dream of gladness there.

Enamoured of the limpid sky,
My thoughts take wing to regions high,
And in that blue of liquid fire
In raptured ecstasy expire.

When I am dead no tears will flow
Upon my lonely grave below,
But from above the aerial blue
Will scatter o'er me tears of dew.

The mists about my tomb will wind
A veil of pearl with shadows twined,
But lured by sunbeams from on high
'Twill melt into the azure sky.

VAKHTANG ORBELIANI

(1812 — 1890)

Vakhtang Orbeliani was born in a great family of princes. The poet's mother, princess Teclé, the youngest daughter of Irakli II, was well known for her intelligence and keen mind. The literary traditions of the Georgian court were preserved in the poet's family. The poet's parents were both well versed in literature and they even wrote poetry. The poet was taught the rudiments of knowledge by his mother; then he continued his education at the school for children of the nobility in Tbilisi, which he left in 1827. In the following year he entered the St. Petersburg Corps of Pages. Two years later, as a result of an illness, the future poet was obliged to leave St. Petersburg and return home. For participation in the conspiracy of Georgian nobility against Tzarist autocracy in 1832, Orbeliani was exiled to the town of Kaluga (1833), where he spent four years. After his return to Georgia, he served in the army for a number of years.

MY KAKHETI

When shall I, Kakheti, climb thy green mount and gaze
Down on thy sun-kissed vales and winding forest ways,
Descend thy steeps, and wander in thy gardens, where
The pendant shades will bring repose and banish care?
O when shall I behold thy sons with voices clear
Burst forth in songs that flow like balm upon my ear,
Or see thy daughters dance and smile in happiness,
The sweetest blossoms of thy bower of loveliness?
Their voices bring to mind the joys of bygone years,
The sad remembrance of departed smiles and tears.
Woe, if I die before my eyes see thee again,
Thy flowery valleys, chattering brooks and boundless plain,
O land of mine, though I am far, my heart's with thee,
And Alazani's emerald waves I ever see.
In visions sweet I sit upon Gombori hill
Above a scene that makes my yearning bosom thrill.
With a bowl of thy sparkling wine I drink to thee,
"Here's to thy future days of joy, my Kakheti!"

MY HEART BELONGS TO DMANISSI

My heart belongs to Dmanissi, and naught on earth
Can ever tear me from the land that gave me birth,
Nor break the bond that ties me to those mountains high,
The only paradise for me beneath the sky.
Thy rocky sides with furrows deep no plough can seam;
No gardens cool are there to rest in and to dream;
No clinging vines with luscious bursting grapes are seen,
Nor spurting springs, nor winding streams on meadows green.
Though desolate and stern thou art, yet love for thee
Is deeply rooted in my heart, my Dmanissi!
But tell me, why that ancient fort stands on that hill?
Or why that crumbling castle makes my bosom thrill?
I see the panorama of the years unfold,
And lo! the history of my country shines in gold.
With pride I greet thy past and glory, land of mine!
With pride I greet your deeds of fame, O fathers mine!
But why do I recall the scenes of long ago?
In vain I long for what is dead and fallen low.
Alas! the glory of the past is gone fore'er,
For like a dream it passed away into the air!
I bend my head absorbed in thoughts that gripe the brain,
And make me groan as my soul writhes in racking pain.
O Dmanissi! if from my sight thou wouldst but hide...
But woe! I'm doomed to gaze upon thy fallen pride!

ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE

(1837 — 1907)

Ilia Chavchavadze was a noted Georgian writer and thinker, "The Ruler of Thoughts" of the Georgian people in the XIX century. After finishing school in Tbilisi, he studied law at Petersburg University. He left the university in 1861, being then in his fourth year. Returning home, the writer placed himself at the head of the brilliant galaxy of Georgian writers of the sixties.

In 1863 Ilia Chavchavadze founded a journal of a progressive trend, "Sakartvelos Moambe" ("Georgian Courier") which survived for one year. In 1867 Ilia Chavchavadze began to publish the newspaper "Iveria", the publication of which continued almost to the end of the century. This paper, all the time edited by I. Chavchavadze, was the most popular periodical in Georgia throughout the XIX century—Besides this, I. Chavchavadze, directed a number of cultural and public institutions. His influence may be traced in nearly every sphere of the social and intellectual life of Georgia. In 1907 I. Chavchavadze was treacherously murdered by bravos of tsarism.

I. Chavchavadze is the author of a great number of articles, critical essays and literary works, forming 10 volumes of the complete edition published by the publishing house "Kartuli Tsigni".

LINES TO A GEORGIAN MOTHER

O Georgian mother! Thou gavest sons
To home and land in days of yore.
The future braves were lulled to sleep
With lullabies and mountain lore.
Alas! those days are past, and now
By sorrow is thy country swayed.
Thy very breath of life is fled.
Thy warrior son is now a shade.
Where is the courage of our sires,
The dagger and the crushing blow,
The honour and the pride of old,
The fearless struggle with the foe?
But why should we shed idle tears
For glory that is past and gone;
Another star, O Georgians, must
We find to guide and lead us on.
It is our duty to prepare
The future for the people, and —
Ah here, O mother, is thy task,
Thy sacred duty to thy land:
Endow thy sons with spirits strong,
With strength of heart and honour bright,
Inspire them with fraternal love,
To strive for freedom and for right;
Infuse in them God's Gospel wise,
Give them true courage for the fight,
And thus enrich our land with sons
Who'll change this darkness into light.
O mother! hear thy country's plea:
Nurture thy sons with spirits strong

Led by the torch of truth whose flame
Will banish ignorance and wrong.

ELEGY

The full-orbed moon her lustre sheds
And floods the land with lambent light.
The snowy ridge of distant mounts
Dissolves into the heavens bright.

Deep quiet holds the breath of night;
My mother-land in silence lies,
Yet oft is heard an anguished moan
As Georgia in her slumber sighs.

I stand alone... The mountains, shades,
The slumber of my land caress.
O God! O God! when will we wake
And rise again to happiness?

SPRING

The wood is decked in light green leaf.
The swallow twitters in delight.
The lonely vine sheds joyous tears
Of interwoven dew and light.

Spring weaves a gown of green to clad
The mountain height and wide-spread field.
O when wilt thou, my native land,
In all thy glory stand revealed?

BAZALETI LAKE

Beneath the lake of Bazaleti
A golden cradle gleams;
Around it blooms a wondrous garden —
A paradise it seems.

This hidden bower, thus veiled by waters,
Dwells in eternity;
It knows no time, nor sun, nor moonlight,
No withered mortality.

No biting frosts, no scorching sun
Wither its bloom away,
For in this realm of golden shade
Eternal spring holds sway.

Within the bosom of that lake
A golden cradle lies;
No mortal yet has ever dared
To reach this paradise.

With streaming hair, the sirens fair
About this cradle throng;
They sweetly hum and weave love's snare
In soft delusive song.

'Tis said that glorious Queen Tamari
Had placed the cradle so,
And o'er it poured the tears a nation
Had shed in anguished woe.

But none can say what nameless babe
Is cradled there below,
Or why a nation's tears conceal
It there in endless flow...

Perhaps it holds and cradles one
Whose name none dares to speak —
A nation's hope, whom Georgians all
In silent longing seek,

If it be so, then happy he,
Whose fame will ever glow,
Whose puissant hand will be the first
To grasp that crib below!

If it be so, then happy she,
The mother blest, sublime,
Whose hallowed breast will be the first
To feed that babe divine!

THE HERMIT (A Legend)

I

There, where Mount Kazbek rears his noble brow,
Where eagle cannot soar, nor vulture fly,
Where, never melted by the sun's warm rays,
The frozen rain and snow eternal lie;
Far from the world's wild uproar set apart,
There, in the awful solitude and calm,
Where thunder's mighty roar rules o'er these realms,
Where frost doth dwell and winds sing forth their psalm;
There stood in former days, a house of God,
Built by devout and holy men, the fame
Of that old temple still the folk hold dear,
And Bethlehem is still, to-day, its name.
The ice-bound wall of that secluded shrine
Was hollowed out from craggy, massive block,
And, like an eagle's eyrie on the cliff,
The door stood carved in the solid rock.
Straight downward from this gate unto the path
There hung descending a rough iron chain,
And save by that strange ladder's aid alone
Man could in no wise thereto entrance gain.

II

In days of old, monks left this world of woe.
And there they dwelt devoted unto God,
In that wild wilderness they sang their songs
Of praise, and in the path of saints they trod.
There they withdrew to seek God's solitude,
There they abandoned all earth's vanity,
And, in that everlasting dwelling sought
To fit themselves for God's eternity.
Those holy fathers sacrificed this world,
And, for the pain they suffered in that shrine,
The mountaineers revered them, and they sang
The praise of good deeds, and grace divine.
And by the people still that place is held
So holy, even now, that in the chase
A refuge there the wounded beast may seek,
For there no huntsman dares to leave his trace;
None save the man whose life is given to God
Can rest within that ruin's sacred shade,
And he who breaks this law must perish there
By swift, avenging lightning's trenchant blade.

III

And there, in yon forsaken hermitage,
An anchorite took up his lone abode,

He left the fleeting world and, set apart,
Gave up the present for the life with God.
Far from the dwelling of the sinful man,
Far from the realm where wickedness holds sway,
Where e'en the just man scarcely can escape
From Satan's tempting power; where, night and day,
Man is pursued by evil, like a thief
Which tries to seize upon him unaware;
Where, e'en if right be known by its true name,
The hand of sin will still all evil dare;
Where faithlessness, corruption, rapine dwell,
And brother for his brother's blood doth lust,
Where discord turns the purest love of friends,
By scandal's breath, to hatred and mistrust...
He left that fleeting world where every gift
Is as a snare, and beauty but a lure;
The devil uses even virtues there
To wile th'unwary, and his prey secure.

IV

Alone the hermit dwelt, amid this ice,
A solitary anchorite, his mind
He troubled not henceforth with painful thoughts
Of all the sinful cares of human kind.
He banished from his heart each worldly grief,
Each thought, concern and wish that was profane,
That he might stand before the judgment seat
Of God, with spirit pure and free from stain.
Both day and night, with lamentation, prayer,
And scourging martyred he, for his soul's sake,
His flesh, and, like a vessel wash'd clean,
With tears he strove his spirit pure to make;
Both day and night, with sighing and complaint,
The icy rocks re-echoed forth his groans,
And his fast-flowing, suppliant tears ceased not
In that lone home of weeping and of moans.
Far from this transitory earth apart,
His spirit like a flower there did bloom;
Each worldly wish was calmed and laid to rest,
And all desire was buried in the tomb.

V

He was not old — upon his saint-like face
His soul's nobility was pictured fair,
It could be seen his spirit was the home
Of other thoughts than those of worldly care.
His features melancholy, thin and sad,
Yet beamed with loveliness of grace divine,
Which from his deeply wrinkled, lofty brow,
Like bright encircling halo, forth did shine.
So gentle and so sweet was the deep thought

Expressed in his clear, meditative eyes,
It seemed as if in them was mirrored forth
Virtue herself, arrayed in modest guise;
As if, with gently gladness, they rejoiced
At Paradise's open entrance gate,
Together with his soul, to meet their Lord,
And hastened on, with faith secure, elate.
In fasting and prayer, with body weak,
He lived like holy martyrs who attain,
By many roads of suffering and of woe,
To glory, conquering heroes over pain.

VI

His witness was accepted of the Lord,
Who hearkened to His Humble servant's sighs
And, as a token of His grace, vouchsafed
A miracle in answer to his cries.
In the dark cell wherein the monk did pray
The window faced the dawning day's first gleam,
And downward, in a flood of lustrous light,
The rays of sun and moon did through it stream.
And o'er yon solitary mountain peak
When rose the sun's glad rays of morning light,
Through that small window in his lonely cell
The beam shone down, a column broad and bright.
Lo! when the hermit prayed, it was ordained
That on the ray his book of prayers should stand,
And on that solid sunbeam did it rest
Secure and safe, by God's divine command...
Thus passed his days, and thus rolled on the years,
And as a sign that God approved the way
Wherein he walked, thus pure and without sin,
This wonder was performed day by day.

VII

One evening, from long vigils weary, worn,
Forth through the door he dragged his limbs, and fixed
His meditative gaze upon the plain
Stretched, verdant-carpeted, the hills betwixt.
The setting sun had not yet sunk to rest,
Behind the mountain's summit still he beamed,
And round the peak, like fan of flaming fire,
The heav'ns with a broad-stretching glory gleamed,
Like to a brazier, burned the bright blue sky,
And sparks of yellow and deep crimson-hued,
Glittered among the clouds; bent back by them,
They trembled with a thousand tints imbued.
The hermit was entranced, and raptured gazed —
So wondrous fair, so glorious was the sight —
Upon the splendour of the glowing sun
As on a living picture of God's might...

But suddenly the wind arose; o'er rocks,
Ravines and caverns blew the stormy blast,
And, like a serpent, over Kazbek's peak
A dark low'ring cloud, swift gliding, passed.

VIII

It crept along, tyrannical, immense,
And stretched across the heav'ns' expansive vault,
Then burst the thunderclap, and roared with rage,
As one who doth his deadly foe assault.
The heaven and earth were straight with trembling seized
At that loud noise, that terrible uproar —
Then sudden darkness overspread the sky,
And hissing hail forth from the clouds did pour.
Upon the earth, all intermingled, burst,
With furious din, the thunder, lightning, hail,
The raging wind blew fiercely 'mong the rocks,
With angry whirl, a wild, strong, howling gale;
All these together strove, so that it seemed
As if God oped his vials of wrath, and hurled
An awful judgment down from heaven that day
As retribution on His erring world...
But now the monk took refuge in his cell,
He prayed, with fervently upraised hand,
Before the Virgin's image, that the Lord
From sin and ruin would redeem the land.

IX

Then suddenly, he heard a human voice,
And, startled at this unaccustomed sound,
Again he listened, and he heard beneath
As if one called from out the mirk profound.
Quickly unto the door the hermit ran,
Against the ladder saw a bending form,
And lo! a childish voice cried out aloud
And begged a shelt'ring roof in that wild storm.
Say, can it be a son of man who roams
In this fierce deluge, on this awesome night?
The wild beasts e'en lie cow'ring in their lairs,
In fear they flee the fury of God's sight!
Who art thou?" said the monk, "Art thou a man?
Or evil sprite sent by the devil here?"
"Human am I — I pray thee shelter me!
For God's love, save me now from death's dire fear!
Dost thou not see that heaven is well-nigh rent
And, overwhelming, on the earth doth press?
Is this a time for words! Oh, pity me!
Refuse me not a refuge in distress!"

X

"Thou sayest well. If thou be son of man
 'Twere sin to leave thee to the storm a prey;
If thou be spirit ill, then God must wish
 To make a trial of His poor monk this day.
Come up who'er thou art! God's will be done!
 Hold fast this iron chain, and have no fear
It is a ladder safe, footholds there are
 By which a man can mount securely here!"
At last he reached the monastery door;
 Climbing the steep ascent of that rough chain.
The hermit met him "What or who is this?"
 In the deep gloom he asked himself in vain.
"Come in, who'er thou art. I'll shelter thee,
 Take refuge here, kneel down and pray,
This is my cell, and lo! it is God's house;
 Here many a knee hath bent before this day."
He led the way; into the cell they came;
 Here was the darkness deeper, e'en despite
The ashes of the almost burnt-out fire
 Which in the gloom gleamed with a feeble light.

XI

Now, when God's Mother let this new-come guest
 Into the cell, and showed of wrath no sign,
The monk said in his heart: "'Tis son of man,
 And not a spirit harmful and malign!"
The stranger sank down quickly, numbed and wet,
 And stirred the cinders, then recumbent lay
Upon the hearth, with both cold hands outstretched,
 Over the dying embers' fading ray.
"How cold it is!" exclaimed the shiv'ring guest,
 "Ugh! Ugh! I'm frozen into stone!"
The hermit started at the sound, 'twas like
 A maiden's voice, he trembled at her moan.
Could it then be that fate had hither sent
 This shape in woman's guise to be a test!
And, like a flash of lightning, came this thought
 Into the horror-stricken hermit's breast.
But e'en if fate had sent this for a trial,
 It must have been by God's own self designed;
Therefore he took it from the Lord in faith,
 In confidence and peace of heart resigned.

XII

"Hast thou no firewood?" asked the visitor,
 "Go, bring some here and light a fire! A load
Upon my back, to-morrow, will I fetch;
 But let me warm myself, for love of God!"
The hermit, from the corner, brought some wood
 To light the fire anew; the blaze that beamed
When it was kindled, fast dispersed the gloom,

And through the darksome cell it brightly streamed.
But when the ray, cast from the lighted fire,
Upon the stranger guest, there seated, glowed,
A picture of enchanting loveliness
Unto the hermit's wond'ring eyes it showed.
Full of bewitching beauty, full of life,
A youthful maiden by the fire reclined,
Of noble mien, yet meek, she seemed; her neck
Was bare, and graceful as the timid hind.
The beauty shed abroad from her black eyes
Disputed with the warmth cast by the glow
Of firelight, and beneath that conquering gaze
It yielded up to her, and flickered low.

XIII

The grace of Love herself, if she desired
To picture forth the beauties of her mind,
And if she dwelt incarnate on the earth,
A fairer semblance could not wish to find.
One could not say if grace adorned her form
Or if her form was ornament to grace;
E'en envy, hatred's self, could naught descry —
In that fair maid, of fault there was no trace.
Who would not tremble 'fore her glorious eyes,
Her brilliant cheeks, and bosom heaving high?
Look at her lips!... It seems that Love has left
A kiss imprinted on them tenderly...
Who is not drawn and captivated held
By mighty Beauty's all-enchanting power?...
'Tis said that by its influence subdued
The savage beasts are tamed, and gentle cower.
And e'en that hermit stern, severe and sad,
Grew gentler and more mild, by beauty swayed;
With sorrow in his guileless heart, he gazed,
His eyes held captive by the lovely maid.

XIV

At length he asked her: "Who art thou, my child?
What can have brought thee to this desert drear,
In such rough weather, when the tempest wild
Has almost flooded earth, afar and near?"
"A shepherd lass am I. Down in the lap
Of Kazbek's mount my father's flocks I fed;
Deceived were the sheep by the fresh grass,
I followed them, and on they still were led.
Fair was the evening, when the setting sun
Was glowing, and upon the sky I gazed
Until I could see naught but heaven's vault,
For in its brilliant light my eyes were dazed.
The great sun shone, surrounded with bright rays,
Behind the mountain peak, and heart and eye

Were ravished with the beauty of the sight —
'Twas like God's face that beamed so fair on high.
I quite forgot to heed my father's words:
'My child, trust ne'er yon mountains, for I've seen
The stormy blast sweep suddenly from heav'n,
Although the sun rose glorious and serene'.

XV

"It matters naught! Come," said my eager heart,
'Dost thou not wish this wondrous scene to view?
Intent I gazed... but Kazbek suddenly
Frowned fierce, and clouds o'erspread the heavens blue.
In one brief moment all was darkness drear,
And from the mountain blew a chilly wind.
I wish'd to take the sheep home ere nightfall,
But 'twas too late, the way I could not find.
For suddenly the storm came sweeping on,
Like drops of lead the hail began to shower;
I trembled for the sheep, but could do naught —
In that deep gloom fear robbed me of all power.
Indeed this mountain treacherous is, and false;
For sudden darkness had obscured the day,
The smiling heaven had changed to sudden hell.
And all my joy was turned into dismay.
Ah! why did I not heed my father's words!
What will befall me! Woe is me! They say,
I've heard it oft, that those who disobey
Their father ne'er can prosper in their way.

XVI

"I, disobedient to my father's words,
Had lost the sheep. I only was to blame.
But (canst thou tell me?) how can one avoid
The law that fate inexorable doth frame?
It was not for the flocks I grieved alone,
'Twas that my father dear would be alarmed —
I am his only child, he loves me much —
Ah! sorely would he grieve if I were harmed.
The sheep were gone — they were his sole support,
His only means of livelihood and gain —
Yet, were I only safe at home once more
He would not frown, lest he should cause me pain.
I stood in that wild storm on yon hillside;
Upon the land, from heaven, the deluge poured,
The mountain shook and trembled to its base
Beneath my feet, while loud the thunder roared. —
What could I do! Where could I hope to find
A shelter from the tempest's raging blast?
Shall I be bold, and strive to reach my home,
Or trust to fate until the storm be past?

XVII

"But if I stay — who knows if I am safe
From this dark night's impending, awful doom!
If I go forth — in some deep, rocky glen
I may be dashed to pieces in the gloom...
Yet I resolved to take the homeward path;
And said: Whatever comes to pass is good!...
Nor canst thou say that I mistook my way;
For here in safety presently I stood.
I felt the chain, and then I knew that this
Must be Mount Kazbek's far-famed, saintly shrine;
Full often had I from my father heard
That here a monk lived for the life divine.
With joy I called aloud, and called again;
My voice was powerless 'gainst the raging wind.
'Woe unto me', I cried, 'if none can hear,
If on this night no shelter I shall find!'
But God had mercy on me, and at last
My cry He carried through the storm to thee —
I need not tell thee more — thou know'st the rest —
May God save thee, e'en as thou hast saved me."

XVIII

"Thanks are not due to me that thou art safe,
For God alone can save the child He made;
He ever stretches forth a helping hand
That He may all His chosen creatures aid..."
"It seems thou thoughtest me a spirit ill!"
"Be not amazed nor troubled in thy mind,
What being in the world would visit me,
A lonely monk forgotten by mankind!"
"Hast thou no ties upon the earth, no friend,
No brother, sister, kin dear to thy heart?"
"These had I once; to all I said farewell.
To serve the Lord, from yon world did I part."
"Hast thou lived here for long?" "I cannot tell."
"Thou canst not tell!" "My child, from all the fears
Of yon fast-fleeting world apart I dwell.
What reck I of the flight of passing years?"
"And dost thou live without a human friend?"
"To me God's holy will was thus revealed."
"But why should God desire that man should stay
Alone amid these icy rocks concealed?"

XIX

"May God not be displeased, nor thou, O monk!
For I am very ignorant in speech...
When in yon vale below I watched my flocks,
And looked up here, as far as sight could reach,
I often pondered o'er my father's words:

'That there a monk dwelt, in those realms of ice,
Who for his soul's sake suffered solitude',
And of his body made a sacrifice.
This tale surprised me, for I could not think
How this should be a pleasing deed to God;
He surely could not be displeased that man
Should love the world where He Himself had trod!
I said within myself: 'How can this be?
'Why did God deck the earth and make it fair
'If man should look upon it as a curse,
'And leave the world and all its beauties rare?
'Should I abandon all, all earthly ties?
'From all my friends, and home, should I depart?
'O God, forgive me! 'tis too hard a task!
'I could not with such ease crush my poor heart!'

XX

"How canst thou bear to leave the world of joy?
Its pleasures sweet thou surely knowest well!
Death sways all here, but there is gladsome life:
Here grief abides, but there delight doth dwell.
Hast thou from thy crushed heart torn ev'ry tie?
Does love no longer linger in thy breast?
Hadst thou not brought grief hither with thee too?
Do care and sorrow ne'er disturb thy rest?
Do dreams of home ne'er haunt the weary hours?
Dost thou ne'er for thy friends and parents pine,
Was there no heart to make thee happy there —
No heart which throbbed in harmony with thine?
How couldst thou leave all love?"... "Hear me, my child!
The soul is dearer than all vain delight;
It is a captive in yon fleeting world,
These joys are chains that stay its upward flight."
"Are all who dwell within the world then doomed?
Must we all hopes of safety then forego?"
"Salvation's road lies open unto all;
This is life's way for me—a way of woe!"

XXI

"A way of woe!" These words he scarce had said
When chilling horror seized the hermit's heart.
Such words betokened bitter discontent —
How could complaint in his calm life find part?
"A way of woe!" 'Twas cry of suffering soul
Sunk 'neath the load of sadness and distress —
'Twas like a sobbing sigh, a mournful moan
For joy departed and lost happiness...
What had he lost? Should he not gladsome feel
That from the weary world he had withdrawn,
And all its fleeting fancies flung aside
That for his soul a day of rest might dawn?

It cannot be that still he casts behind
A longing look on life and its delights,
When upward, e'en to God's most holy throne,
Sweet immortality his soul invites.
What had come o'er him? What had moved him thus?
It could not be that now he mourned his fate,
And felt regret that he had yielded all
To Him, who every being did create!

XXII

He dares not own himself displeas'd with God;
The soul that trusts Him He will never leave.
Was not God's blessing generously given?
He could not wish for more — why did he grieve?
Yea! Yea! His grace was all he could desire...
Then, whence had come those words of deep despair?
Around his cell he glanced, oppress'd by fear,
As if perchance some lurking fiend hid there.
But none was there... none save the wearied maid,
Who, sunk in slumbers soft, in silence lay,
While lovingly on her the firelight glowed
And flicker'd o'er her face, glad and gay.
Bewitching was she as she lay asleep,
Adorn'd in beauty and all charms of love,
As if, seeking to make her fair and good,
Both love and happiness together strove.
Beauty divine seem'd to have shed on her
All the rich treasures of its boundless store,
And, as the nightingale's upon the rose,
So beauty's soul upon her cheek did pour.

XXIII

And when the hermit gaz'd upon that face
The stormy waves that toss'd his heart were still.
Surely some secret force held him enslav'd
That he must look on her against his will!
What power is this that o'er him casts its spell?
Is it delight, or sorcery's fell snare?
His eyes were traitors to his mind's command;
He tried to turn away, but still stood there.
Long time he look'd... then into his cold heart
At last there stream'd a ray, so tender, warm —
He trembl'd, yet he felt the trembling sweet...
What gape it such a strange and subtle charm?
His agitated heart heav'd with quick throbs,
Ne'er had he felt it thus before this day,
He heard the melody of silver strings;
As on a lyre, love on his heart did play-
What meant this sweetness hitherto unknown?
He could not tell this tender feeling's name;
If it was sinful, why was it so like

Immortal life, his soul's incessant aim?

XXIV

A step he took — himself he knew not why —
Calm and serene still slept the wearied maid,
And pleasing thoughts pursued her in her dreams,
While round her parted lips a proud smile played.
And that seducing smile so sweetly hired
Th'enchanted gazer to a fatal kiss,
None could deny those soul-enticing lips,
Not e'en an angel fresh from realms of bliss.
Now, lo! the unhappy monk bent down his head
To kiss her face... but seized with swift alarm
He started back... 'Twas death's delusive snare
That sought to draw him by the maiden's charm.
He was not vanquished? Nay, it could not be
That now his faith had lost its former power —
The thirst for holiness that filled his soul
Would surely last until life's latest hour!
He could not cast away God's holy gifts,
The welfare of his soul and grace divine.
To change them for this earth's harassing cares?
For passing worldly pleasures dared he pine?

XXV

But who is this that calls reproachfully,
"Hast thou not fallen into fatal fault!"
Who cries, triumphant o'er his wounded heart:
"Art thou not vanquished by my first assault?"
Whence comes this sound of noisy, mocking laugh?
What merriment is this that greets his ear?
No one was there; and yet, it could not be
That this loud laugh was born of naught but fear!
And tremblingly, with terror, he looked round;
He was alone... still slept the unconscious maid.
In haste he rose, and, filled with wild alarm,
Before the Holy Virgin bent and prayed.
Is there no help? E'en looking on that face
The same dismay the hermit's heart assails,
'Gainst that curst laughter, fraught with deep reproach,
His erstwhile potent prayer naught avails!
His soul entreats his erring heart to pray,
But all its earnest efforts are in vain;
E'en kneeling 'neath the Virgin's sheltering gaze
He cannot his rebellious will restrain!

XXVI

He looks upon the holy Virgin's face,
His supplicating eyes entreat her aid —
But, woe! her gracious smile beams not on him,

Before him still he sees the shepherd maid.
 What brings that form again before his eyes?
 Is it of flesh, or but a phantom pale?
 Or has the image of God's Mother changed
 Into the likeness of a mortal frail?
 Since he has fall'n, does God not deem him fit
 To look upon the Virgin's holy face?
 Has He performed a miracle divine
 To bring His erring servant back to grace?
 He tries to cross himself, but lo! his hands
 Refuse to move; he seeks to breathe a prayer,
 His tongue is mute; he, thirsting for God's smile,
 Can see naught save the cursed maiden there.
 "Now, canst thou still resist?" and in his cell
 The mocking laughter re-echoed forth once more.
 No longer could the unhappy monk remain;
 But, like a madman, rushed forth thro' the door...

XXVII

...The day was dawning, fair the morning broke,
 And from the heav'ns the clouds were chased away,
 While o'er the tranquil earth a zephyr breathed
 And everywhere peace held her potent sway...
 But who is this with wildly waving hair
 That runs among the rocks with trembling dread?
 It cannot be the monk!... 'Tis he indeed!
 O'er his pale face a death-like hue is spread.
 See how he stands upon the very brink,
 And gazes longingly on yonder peaks,
 As if he on those lofty mountain heights
 His last and only consolation seeks.
 He watches for the sun's first rising ray;
 Why doth it tarry? Why doth it delay?
 Until this day e'en Time itself was naught,
 Why doth a moment now cause him dismay?
 — The sun arose! Into his cell in haste
 The monk returned, by dawning hope consoled;
 For through his window streamed the sun's bright beam,
 And stood there like a pillar, massy gold.

XXVIII

His heart was calmed... Once more with timid trust,
 His eyes he turned towards the Blessed Maid;
 Once more the image smiled upon the monk,
 Looking with favour on him as he prayed,
 "O God! Thine anger then is turned away!"
 And thankful tears forth from his eyes did well.
 He laid his book of prayers upon the ray;
 But, woe! the unhappy man! alas!... it fell.
 Before the hermit's eyes the light grew dim;
 Fear seized his fainting heart, and hopeless dread;

With a wild, Availing shriek of woe he fell,
In that bright beam, from earth his spirit fled.

* * *

And there where saints once sang their grateful hymns,
And glorified God's wondrous works and ways,
There where they offered daily sacrifice
Of lamentation, love, and prayer, and praise,
There, midst the landslips and the broken stones,
Only the wind moves to and fro, and sighs
While, fearful of the mighty thunder-clap,
Within its lonesome lair the wild beast cries.

AKAKI TSERETELI

(1846 — 1915)

Akaki Tsereteli, an outstanding Georgian poet received his education at Petersburg University) where he studied philology. He appeared on the literary scene in the sixties and in a short time became the most popular poet of Georgia. He was nicknamed "The Uncrowned King of Georgia".

A. Tsereteli was a poet by profession and never occupied any official post. In the nineties he edited his own journal, "Akaki's Tviuri Krebuli" ("Akaki's Monthly"). The fiftieth jubilee of the poet's literary activities was observed as a national holiday.

Akaki was a writer of unusual fecundity and manysidedness. Besides having written a great number of poems, he is the author of several long poems ("Bagrat the Great," "Tornike Eristavi" "Natela," etc), tragedies ("Patara Kakhi," "Medea", etc), stories ("Bashi Achuki", "The Story of my Life"), stories for children and articles written in a keen and vivid journalistic style.

In his works, A. Tsereteli responds keenly to all the signal events in the social and political life of his people. His lyrical masterpieces ("The Firefly", "Suliko", etc.) became popular at once and were sung throughout Georgia. Now some of them have flown beyond the boundaries of their native land and have become the favourite songs of all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

SALAMURI

O where art thou, my sylvan reed,
Whose notes of sadness sweetly ring
And o'er the heart of Georgia's son
'Neath northern skies their music fling?

When shepherds play on thee and send
Thy crystal song o'er vale and hill,
Thy smiles aspire to heavens blue,
In blackest hell thy sobbings thrill.

As soul to soul my thoughts entwine
About thy voice and ringing song,
My Georgia's grief and bitter fate
Thy sighs recall in grievous throng.

At times the Turks and Tartar hordes
Made Georgia weep and wail in woe,
And e'en the Scythians, wild and fierce,
Profaned its peace with savage blow.

My pipe of slender reed, thy voice
Bids my lone heart sob. Then why
Have I the wish to hear thy song
And for my native land to cry?

At times thy clear and soothing notes
To rest and peace my soul compel,
Or all my maddening thoughts and dreams
Thou flingest down to burn in hell.

In gallant strife against the foe
The Georgians true I then behold;
I hear his cry: "Advance and strike!"
I see his charge, so swift and bold.

Thy soothing voice, my sylvan reed,
So murmuring sad, so joyous sweet,
O'erfloods my soul with longings wild,
And makes my heart with gladness beat.

The Georgian soul in thee doth moan,
Thy strains the Georgian bosom warm,
And deeds and glories of our past
In fond remembrance round thee swarm.

But ah, alas, my pipe of reed,
That whistles sweet o'er dell and lea,
Let shepherds only hear thy sighs,
For now there's none to list to thee.

SPRING

The swallow twittered, shrill and gay,
Arriving from across the main.
"Tis spring! 'Tis spring!" it called to me;
My heart with hope was filled again.

I flung my window open wide.
How changed and fair was all the world!
And cleaving to my throbbing breast,
Delight its rosy wings unfurled.

Spring's fragrance filled the air, and I
Inhaled the sweetness, and was glad.
The future seemed so rosy that
I cried with joy: "O why be sad!"

I will attain my heart's desire
By wintry frosts made cold and drear.
In wedlock will all nature smile,
And Hymen's anthem will I hear.

Sweet is the essence of the rose,
The violet droops before my eye,
The nightingale her lays of love
Pours forth in thrilling melody.

DAWN

The Holy Mount in dignity
Gazed lovingly up at the star
Of morn which o'er the hero's grave
Shed soft and misty rays from far.

Here solemn silence reigns save that
The Mtkvari breathes in murmurings light.
The Mountain listens to the stream
As it hums to the sleeping knight.

Mtatsminda to its bosom folds
That tomb illustrious and grand,
And sends St. David fervent prayers
To shield fore'er his native laud.

O azure sky, O emerald earth,
I hasten to thee, native strand,
I come, afflicted, ease my heart
That inly bleeds, O mother-land.

I stand entranced upon the Mount,
And feel once more revived and whole.
My bosom swells, and then in song
I pour the worship of my soul.

Exiled from home I wandered on
And wept to live from thee apart;
I yearned for thee, to thee made haste
With ardent soul and eager heart.

As I drew near, thy sun and moon
Bid me glad welcome from on high;
The stars seemed conscious of my joy,
And shone the brighter in the sky.

O land of beauty and of song,
Thy blossoms droop and withering sigh;
Restore them once again to life,
And dry the tears that blind the eye.

O azure sky, O emerald earth,
My one and only cherished land,
For thee I live, for thee I die,
For thee I mourn, O native strand.

Protect and bless me — living, dead;
Refuse me not thy sheltering care;
And when I die, of thee I beg,
To heed and listen to my prayer:

Let me be buried in a grave

Upon thy bosom, native strand,
With thy green turf above my breast,
Beneath thy skies, O motherland.

SULIKO

In vain I sought my loved one's grave;
Despair plunged me in deepest woe.
Scarce holding back the sobs I cried:
"O where art thou, my Suliko?"

In solitude upon a bush
A dew-decked rose swayed to and fro.
With downcast eyes I softly asked:
"Perchance 'tis thou, O Suliko?"

The flower trembled in assent
As low it bent its lovely head;
Upon its blushing cheek there shone
Dew that the morning skies had shed.

Midst rustling leaves a nightingale
Was singing to the rose below;
I hailed the bird and gently asked:
"Perchance 'tis thou, O Suliko?"

The songster fluttered nearer to
The rose, and on it pressed a kiss,
Disburdening its soul in song
That breathed of ecstasy and bliss.

A twinkling star shed shimm'ring light
Upon me in a silver glow;
I turned to it and whispered low;
"Perchance 'tis thou, O Suliko?"

As I gazed on the star that shone
In light that glimmered bright and clear,
A passing breeze came blowing by
And stopped to whisper in my ear.

"What thou seekest is found at last;
Henceforth thy heart but calm will know;
The night will bring thee sweet repose,
And day will chase away thy woe.

"Thy Suliko was changed into
A nightingale, a star and rose;
Your souls that true love bound as one
To realms divine in heavens rose."

I seek no more my loved one's grave,
No more do I in sorrow weep;
The world no longer hears me sigh
Nor sees me drowned in anguish deep.

None can express the joy I feel

To hear the nightingale from far,
To breathe the fragrance of the rose
And gaze upon the shining star.

O happy am I once again;
No more am I oppressed by woe
I seek no tomb, for now I see
Thy dwellings three, my Suliko!"

WHO CAN COUNT THE SAND IN OCEANS?

Who can count the sand in oceans,
Or the stars in skies at night?
Who can praise the sons of Georgia,
Men who fought for Georgia's right?
Wonder speaks of deeds exalted
In a loud and ringing cry,
Of the grace of God and blessings
Shed upon our land from high.
Gone is all that former glory;
Relics of it ever glow
In the colours of the rainbow,
Pouring light on us below,
A symbol chaste of Kingdoms seven,
Shining forth in colours bright, —
Whispering: "Georgia still is sleeping,
For it waits the dawn of light!"

SONG OF NATELA

I gently strung my chonguri,
And tuned its chords with music low,
Till every string rang harmony...
Odela-dela-delao!

It hums; then swells. O chonguri,
Thy sounds delightful o'er me flow
In unison of melody...
Odela dela-delao!

But if a chord were rent in twain,
Its song would sink to hummings low,
So, quickly string the chord again...
Odela-dela-delao!

The chonguri is Georgia fair;
The chords whose strains to anthems grow
Are we — her sons, her love and care...
Odela-dela-delao!

The broken chords turned glory bright
To darkness and to endless woe!
Alas! can we sing in the night?
Odela-dela-delao!

The tiny ants together cling
In unity through weal or woe;
Then why do we divided sing
Odela-dela-delao?

A throne for us is unity,
A hangman's halter for the foe! —
And while he sings: "O woe is me!"
We'll sing: "Odela-delao".

I bend my head as solitude
And sorrow bid my tears to flow;
My song is done; the chords are mute.
Odela-dela-delao!

"GAMZRDELI"

A tiny hut that seems to be
From far away a swallow's nest
Stands high upon a mountain steep
And nestles closely to its breast.

Though frosts may bite and sunbeams scorch,
And thunders roar or lightnings flash,
The hut stands sheltered midst the clouds
Above the tempests' rage and crash.

But when the moon sheds all her silver,
Or morning stains the skies in rose,
The hut looks down on fields and valleys
That lie below in sweet repose.

The little hut was made of twigs,
That hand and love had rudely tied;
Though simple was its modest guise,
With palaces of gold it vied.

Before the rustic little bower
A steep and winding pathway lay;
And only one who knows no fear
Would dare to tread that narrow way,

Or one who rides a sprightly horse,
A well-breathed one of mountain breed,
As hot as fire, as light as wind,
Unmatched for strength and lightning speed.

Who dwells within that distant hut?
Whose heart thrills there in happiness?
Perhaps that heart but anguish knows
Midst nature's wondrous loveliness.

A handsome youth, courageous true,
A mountaineer, Abkhazi's son;
Content with what life gave to him,
All worldly wealth and pomp he shunned.

A trusty gun and sword he had,
A sprightly horse and nabadi;
Can man desire for more when bred
A mountaineer, and brave, and free?...

One thing there is, and that is love,
The balm that soothes all wounds of life.
It is the light that guides us in
This world of troubles and of strife.

Ev'n this did fate bestow on him,

And made him burn in gentle fires.
Love filled his soul with ecstasy,
And thrilled his heart with sweet desires.

'Twas but a month that to a maiden
In happy wedlock he was tied.
His bride he deemed in worth the equal
To all beneath the heavens wide.

His mate was Nazibrola called;
Samegrelo's sweetest flower;
She was a star rent from the skies,
An aloe fair from Eden's bower.

As radiant as a rose was she,
As gentle as a violet blue;
Her bosom thrilled to feel the glow
Of virgin love, sincere and true.

To Nazibrola was her mate
The sun that o'er the world did shine.
Her heart and soul with his entwined
Like clinging tendrils round a vine.

O happy they whose lives are linked
In sympathy or mutual love,
Whose hearts and thoughts and beings blend,
Whose pledge on earth is sealed above.

Yet in this world who e'er has known
But joy and lasting happiness?
Gall mixed with honey, tears with smiles
Is all man knows of happiness...

II

The slumb'ring world is wrapt in darkness;
Deep lowering hang the wrathful skies.
So dreadful is the raging tempest
That ev'n the beast in terror cries.

The winds in whistling fury blow;
The rain in hissing deluge pours;
The lightning glares; in chasms dark
The thunder bursts and deaf'ning roars.

Hell flings its madness from below;
And all the world in terror groans;
Even the devil seeks a place
Of shelter as he shiv'ring moans.

The tempest rages wilder still;
Upon the world its fury wreaks...

But lo! before the Abkhazi's door
A stranger stands and refuge seeks.

He knocked upon the door and called:
"Is none within to shelter here
My horse and me, a God-sent guest,
From such a night of hell-wrought fear?"

The Abkhazi thought: "Who can it be?
Who dared to come in this downpour?"
He stirred and lit anew the fire,
Then opened wide the locked door.

Pie led the guest into the room,
Bedrenched and tired, with welcome meet,
And there before a cheerful fire
He offered him a, three-legged seat.

As he his nabadi untied,
The stranger uttered not a word;
His face a kabalakhi hid,
And chuckling laughter soft was hoard.

He placed his cloak in a comer dark;
In movements slow removed his hood,
Then turning suddenly about
Before the youth he smiling stood.

"O honoured host!" he laughing said,
"In vain I tried in sport to jest.
You know me not, or aye, perchance,
My visit late has vexed your breast."

"Ah, Sapar-beg, I welcome you,
And glad am I to see you here.
One mother's breast nourished us both,
So welcome, welcome, brother dear."

He clasped him in a warm embrace
And kissed him with affection true;
Then went to wake his wife that she
Might welcome Sapar as was due.

He begged her rise and tend the guest,
Who tired before the fire lay,
To do the honours of their home,
And every courtesy to pay.

"I thank you, Batu," Sapar said,
"No food nor rest of you
I crave-I feel but hunger of the mind,
And madd'ning wishes make me rave.

"Allow me, Batu, to relate
The cause of all my agony,
And why in spite of storms I roam
With tempests for my company.

"You know the youth named Almaskhiti;
Courageous is he, bold and gay;
And priceless is the value of
His gun, his sword or steed of gray.

"A brave and handsome youth is he,
Of stately mould and manly mien;
When riding on his matchless steed
He flies like lightning o'er the green.

"By all is Almaskhiti praised.
Where'er he goes — a welcome guest.
His manly beauty kindles love
In every maiden's timorous breast.

"But one there is, Zia-Khanoum named;
Indifferent to his charms is she;
Yet well she knows that Almaskhiti
Will never to her bend his knee.

"Admired by all is Zia-Khanoum,
Renowned for loveliness and grace.
And many a Heart is captive held
By her sweet form and beauteous face.

"But like the moon Zia-Khanoum sheds
A cold though splendid silvery light
That lures all souls and makes them writhe
In thralls of anguish and delight.

"She said to me: 'If in your heart
There is of love a single ray,
Then bring to me within three days
Almaskhiti's dappled gray'.

"His horse will Almaskhiti yield
To none beneath the spacious skies;
And who e'er tries to steal the horse
In deadly combat he defies.

"But I must take the horse from him,
And with it to my lady ride,
Ev'n though I know this paltry act
Befits no honest man of pride."

In silence Batu heard the tale;
And long he sat in troubled thought,
For Sapar's words distressed his soul

And to his mind misgivings brought.

"To hear your words brings pain," he said,
This deed I deem an act of shame,
Yet if the love you feel is true
And all your thoughts and feelings claim,

"Then you must serve your lady love,
And every wish of hers fulfil;
To do the utmost that you can,
And show both valour, and good will.

"All this, my Sapar, you know well,
True dignity is yours by right.
As hard as rock and fearless e'er
You never yielded in a fight.

"And vict'ry ne'er can be attained
With but a fearless arm and heart.
The truest valour, I esteem,
Is needfulness and wisdom's art.

"But why this haste, now, Sapar mine?
It's true your eyes are sharp, yet stay,
You are a stranger to this place
And in the dark may lose your way.

"Entrust me to keep firm your pledge,
And in your stead fulfil the deed.
In token of our friendship dear,
I'd rather die than lose the steed.

"So rest a bit while I am gone.
Sleep peacefully before the fire.
And if by fate I'm not betrayed,
A payment from you I'll require."

He dressed and opened wide the door,
Then rushed where rain like torrents poured.
The flashing lightning lit his way,
As whirling winds with thunders roared.

III

The dawn has chased away the storm.
Serene and lovely is the morn.
Lo! Batu leads the stolen horse
To Sapar-beg, his brother sworn.

He ties the steed and hurries in
The hut with stealthy footsteps light.
The guest wrapped in a cloak is seen
Asleep before the embers bright.

He passes Sapar by and goes
To his beloved slumb'ring wife
Whom he loves more than all the world,
For whom he'd gladly yield his life.

He thought: "O let me gaze but once
On Nazibrola in her sleep,
Ev'n though I know her beauty will
Like fires through all my body sweep."

He stepped into the inner room.
What made him start confusedly?
He saw his Nazibrola weep.
And moan in silent agony!

She beat her head against the wall
And tore her cheeks and loosened hair.
Astonished was he to behold
A wild disorder everywhere!

His glance divined the awful truth,
And thunderstruck he seemed by woe.
O'ercome, bestunned, and rendered mute,
He sank beneath the crushing blow.

God knows how long he speechless stared
Upon his loved one's anguish dire...
At length his passions he allayed,
And reason overcame his ire.

Then towards his bride he nearer drew
And whispered: "Dearest, do not weep.
Forget, my love, what you have seen.
'Twas but a nightmare in your sleep.

"The hand of fate is ever o'er us.
No destined ill can mortal shun.
None can avoid the wrath of heaven,
So why complain? God's will be done!

"Cast from your mind this phantasy,
This evil dream, O dearest mine!
Our love gleams bright, a torch on high,
Unchanging source of light divine."

He pressed her closely to his breast,
And kissed away each falling tear.
With soft caresses, gentle words
He soothed her agony and fear.

With heavy steps he went once more
Into the room where Sapar lay.

"You've had enough of rest," he called.
"Awake, it's time to go away."

The guest sprang up and trembling stood
Before his host, abashed and pale.
But when he saw a gentle smile
The handsome face of Batu veil,

He wond'ring thought "O thanked be God!
It seems he knows not of the deed,
Or else his sword or bullet would
Have pierced my guilty heart indeed.

"And she whom I have sinned against
Forebears to tell my grievous shame,
So who can judge or e'er condemn
The act that secrecy does claim?"

Then to his kinsman turned and said:
"You smile and seem to be content.
Have you fulfilled the promised pledge
That nigh my pride in pieces rent?"

"The errand's done. The steed is here,
And time to leave, my Sapar, too.
Forgive me if the cheer I give
Befits not such a man as you."

They whiled away the time in talk,
While Batu served his kinsman, lest
He turn aside from honour and
Forget the reverence due a guest.

He saddled for the guest his horse
And for himself the dappled gray;
Then spurring on the steeds, they dashed
Like lightning down the mountain way.

With crackling whips and tramlings loud
They bounded down the narrow path,
With unabated speed and zeal,
And gallop breathing fire and wrath.

As near a field the riders came
The Abkhazi sudden drew his rein.
His lowering eyes with fire were filled,
His voice with bitterness and pain.

"Sapar-beg! You traitor black!
Perfidious is your friendship sworn!
From this day forth let hatred build
Between us mounts of briar and thorn!

"Be silent, wretch! There are some sins
Which speechless awe can best give tongue,
So black that even law forbears
To pardon or forgive the wrong.

"Begone! but know if e'er you cross
My way when in a bitter mood,
That passion-tossed I may forget
Myself and spill your dirty blood."

The sudden words made Sapar start,
And from his bosom burst a groan.
O'erwhelmed by shame and pale as death,
He seemed to stiffen into stone.

"I stand before you, shamed, disgraced.
At your disposal is my life.
Destroy me! slay me! do your will!
My breast is ready for your knife.

"My sin is great; my life accursed;
So let me find relief in death,
And hide within a traitor's grave
A wretch's foul and stinking breath".

"Alas, my bullet will not pierce
Your heart unworthy and defiled,
For by my mother were you nursed,
By her who loved you as her child.

"That what was pure and chaste you've killed,
The blessing sent from heavens high;
The thought will torture and torment;
So more than this you cannot die-

"Now go! farewell! but stay, give heed!
And listen to me ere you go.
One thing you must fulfil for me
That when you come to Khabardo:

"Go straight to him who reared and loved you,
Confess your sin and let him know
How you have brought oar happy friendship
Eternal doom and lasting woe."

Down from the dappled steed he sprang,
And to the other gave the rein.
Then bent his head and turned about,
And staggered up the mount again.

IV

Not for his noble name or rank,

Nor for his wealth, nor deeds of might,
But Haji-Isub was renowned
For knowledge great and wisdom bright.

A wished-for guest where'er he went,
He shared the people's joy or woe.
A Mohammedan true, whose faith
Like heaven's balm from him did flow.

He knew of lands beyond the seas,
Of all the wonders 'neath the sky.
Though aged he had a stately form,
An arm of iron and eagle's eye.

'Twas he who taught the youth to walk
The path of justice and of fame,
To love and serve their native land,
To cherish e'er an honoured name.

Thus Sapar was by Haji-Isub
Taught wisdom deep and honour's worth.
But say, can training mould the being,
By nature base, though high of birth?

Thus he who had God's law profaned,
And stained the purity of truth,
Sought Haji-Isub, his trusty guide,
The wise instructor of his youth.

As Sapar-beg told Haji-Isub
The story of his infamy,
His head was bent in shame and grief,
And tears streamed from his downcast eye.

Stone-still did Haji-Isub sit,
Astonished at the shameful tale.
The words that fell from Sapar's lips
Were piercing pangs that left him pale.

With sorrowing eyes and heaving sighs,
He asked: "What did the husband say?"
"He willingly forgave the wrong,
And bade me go from him away;

"Howe'er he said before I came:
'To him who brought you up relate
How you have broken honour's ties,
And say his prompt response I wait!"

"Distressed am I to hear your words,
And humbled low I am by fate.
For honour's sake I must revenge
The wrong done Batu and his mate."

Then slowly on one upraised knee
He placed with care his loaded gun,
Then aimed at Sapar-beg whom he
Had reared, and loved more than a son.

"O Sapar-beg," he gravely said,
"Unworthy ev'n for death are you.
'Tis I who am unfit to live
For bringing up a man like you."

A sudden flash...a bursting shot...
A bullet pierced through temples gray...
And on the ground in wreaths of smoke
Haji-Iusub lifeless lay.

RAPHAEL ERISTAYI

(1824-1901)

The well-known Georgian poet Raphael Eristavi was born in Kakheti. In 1845 he finished the school for children of the nobility in Tbilisi. A year later he became a civil servant. Raphael Eristavi has described his observations on the life and manners in different parts of Georgia not only in his poetic works but in a number of ethnographical essays. R. Eristavi was also a lexicographer. He tried his pen in several genres. He wrote poetry, stories, plays, etc; but it is his poetry that made him popular. In 1895, the fiftieth jubilee of his activities was observed as a day of national celebration. Among the numerous greetings that expressed the people's whole-hearted appreciation of R. Eristavi, we wish to make particular note of the many enthusiastic poems dedicated to the venerable poet.

THE LAND OF THE KHEVSURIS

The land where I was born and reared on lullabies and loving care,
Where I with youthful hand and heart flung flashing arrows in the air,
Where now my parents' bones repose, is my dear motherland so fair.
Not for all the trees in Eden would I these rugged cliffs exchange,
Nor for paradise undreamed of would I my native land exchange!

I love the mounts that rear their heads adorned with never-melting snow,
The crags where eagles dare not perch, where mighty torrents deafening flow,
And there to banquet on deer's flesh as did my fathers long ago.
Not for all the trees in Eden would I these rugged cliffs exchange,
Nor for paradise undreamed of would I my native land exchange!

Though beautiful are flowery vales where silver brooklets winding sigh,
Yet towards Khevsuri's rocky mounts my heart and soul with yearning fly,
Life in the valleys I'd renounce for death midst native mountains high.
Not for all the trees in Eden would I these rugged cliffs exchange,
Nor for paradise undreamed of would I my native land exchange!

I never longed for wealth or fame that fortune lavishly can pour,
Nor dreamed of golden palaces with warriors and slaves galore;
My wish is but to live and die for the highlands I adore!
Not for all the trees in Eden would I these rugged cliffs exchange,
Nor for paradise undreamed of would I my native land exchange!

Can anything be dearer, sweeter than my mother's smile or hand,
Or gem as precious as the rocks and mountains of my native strand?
The lives of men are swayed by love for one God and one 'motherland.
Not for all the trees in Eden would I these rugged cliffs exchange
Nor for paradise undreamed of would I my native land exchange!

SESSIA'S THOUGHTS

Dust am I, to dust I cling;
A rustic born, my life is one
Eternal strife and endless toil,
And endless woe... till life is gone.
I plough, I sow, I labour on,
With muscles strained, in sun and rain.
I scarce can live on what I earn,
And tired and hungry I remain.
The owner of the land torments me;
Even the tiny ant's my foe.
For townsfolk, priests and native country
In blood-like sweat I plough and sow...
How long, O God, this endless grind,
This life of sorrow and of toil?
Alas! I fear that death alone
Will bring me rest within this soil!

VAZHA PSHAVELA

(1861 — 1915)

In Georgian poetry, the outstanding and exceedingly original Georgian poet Vazha Pshavela, is called "The Mountain Eagle". He was born in Pshavi a mountain region, into a peasant family, in which the traditions of Pshav poetry were reverently conserved. In 1882 Vazha Pshavela graduated from the teachers' Seminary in Gori. A year later he entered Petersburg University, where he studied law. However, through a lack of means, the poet soon left the university and returned to his native country, where he made teaching his chief pursuit, at the same time assiduously pursuing his own studies. He made a deep study of the classics of world literature and became familiar with philosophic and social doctrines. Despite the fact that the poet was greatly interested in the cultural and intellectual movement of his time, he voluntarily left Tbilisi, Georgia's cultural centre, and returned forever to his native hills, to his village of Pshavi, to the life of a peasant. The poet often wrote his poems by the light of the fire on his hearth, in his primitive hut.

Vazha Pshavela, together with the well-known Georgian novelist Alexander Qazbegi, were the first to introduce a fresh theme into Georgian literature — the mountains of Georgia.

The poetic world of Vazha Pshavela is one of exceeding breadth, originality and variety. The life of the Georgian hillmen (Pshav-Khevsurs), their legendary exploits in battles for the defence of their native land, as well as their great mythology, are depicted in his works. The poet's world outlook finds expression not only in Vazha Pshavela's lyrical pieces, but also in his most interesting poems, "The Snake-Eater", "The Guest and the Host", "Bakhtrioni" and others. Vazha Pshavela is known as an outstanding master of poetry.

A FEAST

Pour me the wine of liquid flame,
And steep my soul in rubied flow;
Perhaps twill banish cares away,
And tinge with rose this world of woe
Perchance 'twill drown the pangs of life
In Bacchus' horn of nectared fire,
And Fancy find for me a maid
Upon whose bosom I'll expire.
On whirlwind's wing my steed and I
Will cleave the waves of oceans wide.
We'll fly the haunts of mortal man
Where every joy of mine has died.
For death on high is sweeter far
Than life upon the earth below
Which is an urn of buried hopes,
Floating on a sea of woe.

THE SHEPHERD-MAID

On quiet sleep you lie, fair maid,
With curly locks that lure the eye.
What visions, thoughts invade your dreams
As you rest here beneath the sky?
With beating heart and hurrying feet
You pass this forest every day.
Woe if you meet the tiger fierce,
The wolf or bear upon your way!

* * *

A light worn garment hid her form.
Her feet in slippers soft were clad.
The beauty of her arms on which
Her head reposed nigh made me mad.
A sheep-skin sack hung on her back,
A shepherd's rod beside her lay.
She slumbered on and sleep brought her
A short respite from toils of day.
Oblivious of any fear,
No troubled dreams disturbed her sleep,
Yet, for that angel of the woods
I feared, and prayed to God to keep
Her safe from every future pain.
Though I, by fate, am doomed to wander
With dire misfortune all my life,
God, may Thy blessings fall upon her,
For if those eyes are closed by death,
And no more will they brightly glow,
What other fires can warm my heart
Or on it equal joys bestow?
O mounts! O trees! O flowing streams!
On ye I call in humble prayer,
This lass, the angel of my dreams,
From pain and sorrow shield fore'er!

A SOLITARY WORD

I breathed a word that grief had wrought.
It winged its flight into the air,
Then pierced the haunts and souls of men,
And left its tears and laughter there.
It was a word flung from a heart
That knew but misery and tears, —
A word that knew its lowly birth
In throes of agony and fears.
Though nursed by suffering and trial,
It spread and flourished in its flight,
And wondering I beheld it glow,
Adorned in sparkling jewels bright.
And soon upon a throne of gold
It ruled in radiance and might, —
The hope and faith of sunless hearts,
The darkened bosom's torch of light.
I marvelled at that vision fair,
The offspring of my passion's fires;
Resistless was its beauty as
It filled men's souls with strange desires.
I wondered much, and smiled to see
How over souls of men it reigned,
How it had sprung from misery
That birth with tears of blood had stained —
A solitary word of woe,
Abused, objected and profaned.

A SONG

Beyond the river dark thou art.
Between us rushing waters flow.
There is no bridge, no boat have we,
Nor wings to cross the river, so,
I gaze upon thy smiling face
And long to press my lips to thine,
Though well I know I ne'er will hold
Thee in my arms, O dearest mine!
No hope relieves our hopelessness,
Nor lights the brooding darkening sky.
Delusion makes us bitter smile
Through tears that blind the aching eye.
Over the rushing waters wild
My voice takes wing and towards thee flies,
But mingling with the deafening roar
In raging depths it swoons and dies.
It's heart-corroding to behold
The years pass like the stream in sighs...

THE EAGLE

In haughty pride, though wounded sore,
An eagle fought the raven-crow.
The bird in desperation strove
To rise but fell in frenzied woe.
His right wing swept the blood-stained ground;
His bosom shone in crimson glow.
"Alas! you smite, O ravens wild,
When I am wounded, fallen low.
Were I not struck, your feathers black
Would surely deck the plains below!"

DESPAIR

Beneath the shade of a beech tree high
In solitude a violet grew.
It wished to woo the sunbeams gold
And lure them to its realm of blue.
The flower in breathless eagerness
Waits for the sun-rays from on high
And gazes on the sunny world
With wistful sighs and tearful eye.
The violet longs to curtsy low
And dance amidst the sunbeams bright,
To have its pretty head adorned
With rays of shimmering golden light.
The lovely flower droops and weeps;
It heaves a piteous, hopeless sigh,
For to this realm of shadows soft
No rays of sunlight ever fly.
The violet's heart in sorrow breaks
As on the ground it withering lies.
Near by, its dying eyes behold
Sun-lighted flowers dance 'neath the skies.

A SONG

Once there bloomed upon a meadow
Roses, violets, flow'rs of grace.
The gods from urns poured nectared beauty
On the meadow's up-turned face.
Hanging vines and branches wove
Canopies of gold and shade
Through which the sky serenely peeped
And gentle breezes humming strayed.
The bulbul sang of only love;
Nature listened in delight —
I felt joy rise in my breast;
Thrilled at the beauty of the sight.
Captivated by the place
The morrow found me there again...
But alas! the scene was changed
And horror petrified my brain.
The violets and roses were
Lovely; though the bulbul's song
Was as musical and sweet,
Yet my heart in pain was wrung!
Stunned, I saw a sight that made me
Wish my seeing eyes were blind...
Stagnant vapours and black snakes
About the flower stems were twined.

ELEGY

O heart, in dreams I behold thee,
In toils of despair and of pain.
Thy throbbings are wrung by emotions
That torture the heart and the brain.
The sun and the moon shine no longer,
The world lies in darkling and gloom,
And my life nursed by grief and by sorrow
Is shrouded in darkness and doom.
Thus tortured with madness of dreaming,
I curse all my past and my life;
And the heart embittered and weary
Wants but to be freed from the strife.
'Tis torture to live in a land where
The faith of one's sires is profaned,
Where honour and justice have fallen,
Where freedom in darkness is chained.
O where are the deeds of true valour
Our past and our heritage claim?
Thou phantom of glory rise from thy
Grave where is buried thy fame.
O breathe in me, Georgia, the epic
And life-giving fires of thy might!
Infuse in me strength for the struggle;
In pride let my falchion gleam bright.
May the bosom that nursed me to manhood
Curse and blast me fore'er if I fall.
O my heart, that is aching, have courage,
Fight on, though in agony's thrall!

THE SWORD'S COMPLAINT

Rust adorns thee, sword, and mould'ring
Is thy scabbard once so fine.
Where's thy master's arm of iron,
Where's that flashing gleam of thine?"
"On the fatal plain of Shamkor,
He fell dead, with many a wound,
And his blood flowed like a torrent,
Dyeing red the battle ground.
Though he fell beneath the struggle
With the deadly enemy,
Valiant were his deeds and dauntless.
Matchless was his bravery
Foremost was he in the battle,
Smiting, hewing down the foe.
Georgia and a soldier's honour
Made him bear the crushing blow.
A coward's hand has hung me useless
Here to rust in endless night.
Georgia has become a market
Cursed and doomed by venal blight!
I, who proudly fought for freedom,
Now am pawned or sold for gold,
A bartered thing to crown the downfall
Of my country's pride of old.
Many years have passed since
Georgia's Son did whet me till I flashed,
Rendered sharp my blade so deadly,
And with me to battle dashed.
Nor have I heard sounds of trumpets,
Nor the shouts of victory...
I have passed an age thus hanging
Here in rust and slavery."

LETTER OF A PSHAV SOLDIER TO HIS MOTHER

Thy dreams, dear mother, will become
A garden full of happiness.
O weep not so, nor drown thy heart
In languor of grief's heaviness.
Our wounds are healed, and once again,
We're ready for a dubious fight.
The morn we'll greet with battle cries,
With deeds of wonder and of might.
Tamari's sons will flood the skies
With radiance of vict'ry's light,
And with our lives we'll guard and keep
The torch of honour ever bright.
For glory born of fallen pride
We ne'er will barter Georgia's right!
We'll fell the enemy or die,
And ne'er like cowards shirk a fight.

Though now we're far from Georgia, yet,
Our hearts for her with longing sigh.
One thing sends fires through our veins,
As wondering we see on high,
Above a red-fanged field of war,
Upon a flying steed — a knight!
He holds a flaming sword that like
A star of hope shines in the night!
His glowing eyes flash sombre light.
And there midst man-wrought hell and woe
That knight protects our souls from blight!
When all is still and not a sound
Is heard of cannon's deafening roar,
When battle's surging din is hushed,
And thoughts invade my mind once more,
I seem to see thee, mother, combing
Wool in the quiet of the night.
Thy head is bent and tears like torrents
Fall on the carded wool so white.
A homespun 'chokha' wilt thou sew
For me, made holy by thy tear;
No sword can tear it, nor can fire
Burn through the cloth, O mother dear.
And through the long and dreary night
Sleep toucheth not thy tearful eyes.
God grant to happy smiles and song
Be changed thy mournful dirge and sighs.
Farewell! the battle-trumpet rings,
And bids us rush where soldiers' cries
Resound; where blades like lightning blaze
And cannon's volley rends the skies.
But woe! if glory's thrill is o'er
And all our hopes turn to despair!
Woe if the spark of valour's flame

To ashes cold be quenched fore'er!
Perchance the raven black will croak
A dirge of doom o'er Georgia fair!

Farewell! the battle-trumpet rings
And bids us rush where soldiers' cries
Resound, where blades like lightning blaze
And cannon's volley rends the skies.
Farewell! and weep not, for thy son
Will fell the foe or bravely die!

THE SNAKE-EATER

(An assembled group of Khevsuris are amusing themselves by drinking and singing in honour of warriors whose deeds have made the world wonder. They sing songs of praise to the accompaniment of softly humming panduris. Sitting with them is a pale-faced, grave and dignified figure. Strange tales are told of Mindia's past)

For twelve years Mindia was held
A captive by the Kajis fierce.
Estranged from home, from friends and kin,
He spent his dreary days in tears.
Thus moments, hours, weeks and months
Through tedious seasons led him on,
Tied to a rope of misery
From blasted hopes and evils spun.
Thoughts of his distant native land
Like balm flowed o'er his maddened brain.
He shut his eyes, and lo! there glowed
The land of Khevsuri again.
Dim visions of her snow-capped mounts,
Her winding paths and murm'ring streams,
His parents, kin and cherished friends
Invaded all his thoughts and dreams.
His lowly hut now seemed to him
A paradise beneath the skies...
And as he thought and pined for home
Sobs burst from him, tears filled his eyes.
With time he lost all faith and hope
Of ever seeing home again,
And longed to find relief in death
From all his miseries and pain.

.....

Once o'er a blazing fire he saw
A cauldron full of serpent's meat.
It was the Kajis' choicest dish
Which they with relish oft would eat.
Now Mindia believed if he
Ate of the loathsome meat, 'twould turn
To poison in his veins and every
Fibre of his body burn.
He ate one piece, and sickness smote
His every nerve: a chilling sweat
Ran down his face, and he could scarce
Repress the horror that he felt.
But suddenly it seemed to him
That from above flowed splendent light
And spreading through his veins he felt
A surging stream of strange delight.
New wisdom pierced his wond'ring brain;
He saw the world with different eyes,
He saw it smile, he heard it speak,
He knew the meaning of its sighs.

All things that breathed or lived had tongue,
Held converse soft in language strange;
And as he learned their secret thoughts
He wondered much at all this change.
Though Mindia's now sharpened eyes
In deepest hell and darkness crept,
Though earth and sky and forest, mount,
Communed with him or silent wept,
No wickedness or evil thought
Entered his noble heart or brain.
Thus skilled in Kajis' mystic art
He strove to banish every pain.
All feared his superhuman powers,
His God-like strength and piercing eyes.
The Kajis fumed and burst with rage
To see the mortal rendered wise
Inspired, full of life and courage,
No more did Mindia despair.
He cherished now the hope of breaking
The chains of slavery fore'er.

.....

Soon Mindia became renowned
In Pshav-Khevsuri; and his fame
"With time increased, and far and wide
Was spread the glory of his name.
Th'illustrious Queen Tamari smiled
In pride and blessed him from on high
And said: "Though strong the enemy,
His might will Mindia defy,
And naught can crush Pshav-Khevsuri
As long as Mindia is alive,
For with his powers he'll overcome
The foe however hard it strive."
He snatched from gaping jaws of death
The wounded, sore, nigh cleft in twain,
Restored to health the dire diseased,
Relieved all suffering and pain.
And Pshav-Khevsuri's soldiers brave
Stood ever ready for a fight.
Thus all praised Mindia the grave,
His wisdom and his deeds of might.

.....

'Twas early spring. The world awoke
From hoary winter's sleep profound,
In fields the flow'rs breathed fragrant balm,
The hills with verdure fresh were crowned.
The scented buds with bursting smiles
Peeped forth through emerald and dew.
And Mindia with throbbing heart
Roamed mount and vale 'neath heavens blue.
He loved to be with trees and flowers,
With twitt'ring birds and butterflies;
And nature, lovely as a bride,

Saluted him with joyous cries.
The flowers blushed like virgin maids
As each its heart to him unveiled,
The trees and grass with rustling swayed,
And Mindia with gladness hailed.
He saw them tremble as they heard
The fondling breezes whisp'ring love,
And hearkened to the birds as they
Disburdened their full souls above.
He knew the longings of their hearts,
Their troubles, dreams and all their fears;
Their wish to bring relief to man
Made Mindia shed happy tears.
He learned what root and herb distilled,
A soothing balm, for grass and flowers
Begged him to pluck them, and thus heal
"Wounds by the magic of their powers.
The songs of birds were more to him
Than melody or sweetest sound;
It was the language of their hearts
That in his soul a refuge found,
Oft Mindia, with axe in hand,
Went to the forest for some wood,
But as lie raised his axe, a voice
Broke through the forest's solitude.
In cries that shook the frightened leaves
He heard the pleadings of the tree?
It brought deep anguish to his heart
And made him suffer bitterly.
"Thou hast an axe, and strong thou art!
Why strike me down and kill me so!"
Strength ebbed from him, his slack hand fell,
The axe dropped on the ground below.
He stood bewildered as the trees
All wept and pleaded for their lives.
Their tears seemed drops of blood to him,
Their sighs cut through his soul like knives.
Thus Mindia went slowly home,
Unhappy and with troubled heart.
He bent before the fireside low
And raked the dying embers lest
The fire extinguish and expire,
Then brought some twigs and heaps of hay
To feed the flick'ring feeble fire.
He called together all the folk.
"The trees feel joy and pain," said he,
"Cut them not down! Use only twigs
And straw for fire, I beg of ye."
In this all thought him queer, for they
Said: "God has made all things to be
A blessing for the mortal man."
None hearkened to him, and the tree
Was cut. And to this very day

Man fells the tree and thanks the Lord.

.....

(It was a holiday, and the Khevsuris were gathered together. They praised Mindia's wonderful powers. But Chalkhia, wished to prove to them that Mindia was an impostor and only pretended to be superhuman. He said that Mindia differed in nothing from them; that the plants and animals were created by God for man's use, and Mindia's talk was all nonsense. Many agreed with Chalkhia. Mindia, who was sitting in their midst, paid no attention to those about him. Tears were in his eyes; no one could understand why. When asked the reason for his tears he pointed to two birds that were perched on the branch of a tree near by. One of the birds, he said, was telling the other of the death of their little nestlings. The mother-bird was weeping. And as the Khevsuris looked up, the bird suddenly dropped down on the ground before them dead with a broken heart. All were astounded, and those who had doubted Mindia's powers now believed in him the more. But nevertheless, they continued to hunt and cut down trees.

The enemy invaded the country many times, but thanks to Mindia victory was always on the side of the Khevsuris.

In the meantime Mindia had married. He was obliged to hunt and cut down trees in order to feed and keep his wife and children warm. And here began the tragedy of Mindia's life. He felt, as he continued in the ways of man, that he was gradually losing his wonderful powers. Nature soon spoke to him no more.

It was early morning. From Mindia's hut could be heard the voices of Mindia and his wife Mzia. He was blaming her for all the misfortunes of his life, and in bitter words expressed his regret at having married her. Mzia reminded him of how he had wooed and loved her. She tried in vain to make him see that she and her children were not the cause of his suffering. He then confessed that he had lost his magic powers and expressed his fear for the welfare of his country.)

The world was wrapt in flimsy veil
As from the sky poured sheeted rain;
Down mountain sides the waters sped
And serpent-like flowed on the plain.
The leaves received in patters soft
The hissing rainfall from the sky.
Each flower beneath the raindrops shone
Like Queen Tamari's sparkling eye.
The sheep like gems adorned the hills,
Sweet-scented was the air and bright;
And hearts rejoiced as nature poured
Abundant beauty and delight.
Fair is the world, yet troubles kill
All joy within the human breast.
Countless the wretched, but man knows
But few, and cannot see the rest.

Dark forms of hurrying men were seen,
From far resounded shouts and cries:
"Where is our leader? Seek him, quick!
Find Mindia, the ever wise!
The bridge, o'er Arghun is destroyed
By the advancing enemy.
We must with courage beat them back,
From Scythians our country free!"
Khevsuris thronged upon the field

Made ready for the coming fight.
In every breast there burned a flame —
Lore for their country's honour bright.
Now after many years of peace
The foe, athirst for combat new,
Had once again besieged the land
And Khevsuris in tumult threw.
The Pshav-Khevsuris ready stood
Awaiting for the morning light.
Shields, swords and falchions like a sea
Of flashing silver lit the night.
Each knew that if the leader of
The Scythians were captive made,
'Twould free the country and the world
Of one who like a threatening blade
Was harbinger of tears and woe.
The hero's name in every heart
Would like a torch forever glow.
Brave women with their children went
To towers where they in haste prepared
Some food and wine in sheep-skin sacks
With anxious hearts and loving care.

.....

Twilight its mantle gray spread o'er
The valley, field and mountain high,
Flow'rs drooped in prayer as evening strewed
Her purple shadows from the sky.
Aragvi hummed in solitude,
The landscape faded from the sight,
Loud voices rent the twilight's gloom
And broke the stillness of the night.
"Pshav-Khevsuris, unsheathe your swords!
Crush down th'usurping enemy!
Your threatened country needs you now,
Fight valiantly for victory!"

'Twas dark. No shepherd's whistling clear
Was heard to cheer the gloomy night.
Dark forms were seen, and things of worth
Were hid away from human sight.
The sheep were led to safety, then
The folk to shelt'ring forts retired.
All wait impatient for the dawn
With faces set and hearts afire.

.....

On Khakhmat's sacred altar gleamed
A candle's quiv'ring feeble light,
Its yellow rays embraced the trees,
Expiring there in sheer delight.
At times the light gleamed brighter still
And flung the shadows black aside,

Then, like a soul in agony
Of death, it flickered low and died.
Enough remained of sombre light
To see two figures on the plain;
One held a blood-stained sword, and on
The ground there lay a bullock slain.

Berdia

"God's blessings on thee, Mindia,
Upon thy faith and sacrifice,
May He thy ardent prayers receive
And hearken to thy endless sighs.
Thou art the comfort of our lives,
The Pshav-Khevsuris' faith and pride.
Heaven and earth extol thy name
With hymns that echo far and wide.
I wonder much, my Mindia.
To see thee here both night and day.
What troubles thee, what hast thou done
Thus ceaselessly to weep and pray?
To God we owe immortal thanks,
His praise resounds beyond the skies;
May He forgive me, but thy ways
Exceed all bounds of sacrifice!"

Mindia

"A bullock, ox, three cows have I
As offerings to our Lord on high;
Perhaps He'll hearken to my prayers
And heal the wounds that make me cry."

Berdia

"What wounds, my man, can trouble thee,
What pain concealed makes thee despair?
Thou hast the power to cure all ills
With magic herbs and cordials rare."

Mindia

"My tongue is tied, no words can ever
Express why I thus anguished groan.
'Tis easier to speak of troubles
Endured by others than one's own.
Does he who gold and silver hoards
Open his purse for all to see?
O woe! Pshav-Klievsuri is doomed,
Condemned by destiny's decree."

Berdia

"Thou art our pride, our only hope,
The idol of Khevsuri's heart.
Thou art the favoured son of God,
Schooled in the powers of magic art.
When man by illness is oppressed,
And sorrow wrings his tortured soul,
Thy wisdom banishes his woe,
Thy powers restore him, make him whole."

(Mindia knelt before the altar and with upraised hands pleaded to God to heed his prayers and bring him back to grace again.)

.....

Down poured the rain in hissing sheets,
The skies frowned o'er the darkened world,
The rumbling sound of loosened rocks
Was from the depth of midnight hurled.
The thunder pealed, then rumbled on,
The high winds howled as if in pain,
The grass and flowers drooped low in fright,
And shuddered 'neath the trampling rain.
On Khakhmat's rock no more was seen
The feeble gleam of candle-light.
No more did they who weeping prayed
Kneel there that awe-inspiring night.
The sacred altar stood unmoved
As winged fire in the heavens flashed.
Below the haughty Aragvi
Upon the cliff in fury dashed.

.....

(Women were seen in a tower praying for the welfare, of their country and their men. Mindia's wife, Mzia, was also there. She looked troubled. She confided to Sandua (a Khevsuri woman) how Mindia had changed of late. She told her of a dream she had had):

"I saw a vision in my sleep
So turbulent and full of dread,
That ill-forebodings fill my mind
And o'er my heart their poison spread.
A furious storm raged o'er the land,
Black clouds drew down the weeping sky,
The lightning leaped from peak to peak,
And deaf'ning thunder rolled on high.
I almost screamed in fear to hear
Such groans of driving wind and rain,
To see such bursts of blinding fire,
Such tumult wild and hurricane.
Confusion swelled; the sky and vale
All seemed to mingle in a maze
Uniting hell with earth's despair.
But suddenly in lightning's blaze
The mountain shook and overturned;
The shattered trees and rocks were whirled

Convulsively into the air,
Then into chasms dark were hurled.
A fiercer blast the valley shook,
Cataracts from the skies descended;
Upon the plain, with sullen roar,
The waters swelled and upwards tended.
A horrid noise was heard above
A roar that rent the stifling air,
Lamentings wild in dread of death
And anguished cries of great despair.
Shields, swords and corpses floated on
The surging waters of the flood;
And none there was to weep and mourn
Over the dead with tears of blood.
The house from where I saw this hell
Stood safe upon a rocky place,
But soon the waters curled, and lo!
The cliff was shattered at its base
And in one mass of wreck was swept
Away upon the rushing tide.
I screamed in terror as I felt
Myself into the waters slide.
Thus caught in Satan's frenzied whirl
I rent the air with cries for aid;
Pressing my children to my breast
"With bursting sobs to God I prayed.
I tried to clutch the shore, but woe,
It spurned my clinging, trembling hand!
Then o'er the faces of my babes
I flung a veil to hide the land
Where features black and blood-shot eyes
Of doom-wrought men I saw with fright.
Into the wild insurgent stream
They pushed me back with all their might.
"Tis doom to land upon this shore!
God's will be done!" they loudly cried,
'Go swiftly back before 'tis late,
And follow thou the rushing tide!'
Just then before me I beheld
Mindia on the waters fleet.
He turned to me and sadly smiled;
Then spoke in accents low and sweet:
'Forgive me if I wronged thee with
My bitter words, beloved mine.
Thou seest the Wheel of Fortune turn,
Yet do not weep for me nor pine.
Tend well our children, shield them from
Life's bitterness and misery.'
Ah me! that dream forebodeth ill.
Fear makes me writhe in agony."

(The Khevsuris were ready for the coming fight. They wished Mindia to lead them and did not believe him when he told them that he had lost his powers. They vowed that without his

leadership they would not fight. He yielded. The place he chose for battle gave rise to apprehension and fear, but having sworn they had no way but to obey.)

Two days and nights beyond the mount
The battle raged in deadly swell.
Tigers with lions fiercely strove
In gaping jaws of roaring hell.
As gleams of steel flew dazzling o'er
The struggling mass upon the field,
Heart-rending groans and cries were heard
Above the clash of lance and shield.
Who will to death his glory yield?
Who'll breathe his last upon that plain?
Who'll find renown and victory there,
And freedom for his land regain?

Five Khevsuris with faces grim
Stole from the field without a sound.
They bore a burden o'er the mount
And laid it gently on the ground.
It was a wounded warrior,
A Khevsuri whose bleeding head
Was with a kabalakhi bound,
And o'er whose face death's pallor spread.

The Khevsuris

"Why rush into the jaws of death,
And like a madman fight in vain?
The truly wise and prudent chief
Should for his land his life retain;
For who can tell, the odds may turn,
And we may drive them back again."
They turned and rushed beyond the mount
With waving swords and hearts aflame,
Athirst for triumph o'er the foe
With deeds that claim immortal fame.
'Tis agony to yield to death
One's vital breath and God-like clay,
Yet better feel the pangs of death
Than one's own country to betray.
Let cowards hide their trembling frames
Beneath a woman's dress of shame;
But he who braves the foe will live
Immortal on the page of fame.

Meanwhile Mindia gnashed his teeth
As he lay there beneath the skies,
For disappointment and despair
Burst forth in smothered groans and cries.
He struggled long to free his hands
From bonds that cut into his flesh.
He longed for death upon the field

Of battle, not within this mesh.
When Mindia unloosed his hands
And staggered to his feet again,
Fire raged in every wound of his
And made him wince with awful pain.
A sudden terror froze his blood,
He scarce believed his staring eyes,
For he beheld the village glow
In blazing flames that lit the skies.
Aghast was he to see this sight.
Cold sweat in drops o'erspread his brow.
Hope died within his inmost heart,
And crushed he wavered 'neath the blow.
His stony eyes were past relief
Of soothing 'tears'; cold anguish tied
Him to the spot; his fingers still
Closed on the dagger at his side;
No prayer he dared to murmur as
He looked up towards the crimson sky.
A sudden flash, — then Mindia
Sank down without a word or sigh.
He lay upon the soft green grass;
As if in slumber he reclined;
Blood flowed in streams upon the ground
And there the grass with blood was lined.
The waning moon in sorrow gazed
Upon the lifeless form below.
She cast o'er him a silver veil
And drooped her head in silent woe.
The breeze came blowing down the steep,
With silver moonbeams gaily played,
Then for a moment stopped to gaze
Upon the blood-stained deadly blade.
It touched the unsheathed dagger's point,
Whirled round the upturned fallen shield,
Then flirted gaily with the grass
And whistling danced across the field.

ALEXANDER ABASHELI

(1834 — 1954)

Becoming acquainted, in his early youth, with the progressive social and literary ideas of his epoch, A. Abasheli commenced writing poetry in 1905. His first steps in poetry attracted great attention, owing to the freshness and originality of his creative conceptions, as well as the clear and vivid form of his poems.

The early works of A. Abasheli reflect in an original manner the discontent of the masses of the people with the social and political conditions created by the failure of the first Russian Revolution. In those days, the leitmotif of his poetry was strife between light and darkness. This leitmotif extolled the bright and sunny element of life.

The poet greeted the victory of the Socialist Revolution as the end of the rule of darkness. By degrees, under the influence of the triumph of the new life, the strains of depression in A. Abasheli's poetry give place to enthusiastic lays, depicting and singing the joys of the rejuvenation and renaissance of his native land. His poetic voice was raised with especial force in the days of the Patriotic War. His rhymes of flame, calling to acts of devotion in the struggle for the Fatherland, penetrated into the hearts of the people like a passionate alarm-bell of battle.

THE TORCH OF WISDOM

Where dawn's rose-tinted rays disperse
The lurking shadows of the night,
There life is glorious and new
And honest toil brings but delight.

Where hope inspires the new-born soul,
And cheerful songs resound on high,
There sunbeams endless pour on flowers
The fragrance of our victory...

Fatherland! wisdom rises from thy mind,
Derives its wondrous powers from thee.
No force can e'er supplant the light
Of wisdom's torch held up by thee.

SPRING

Sleep shut up winter's frosty eye,
Spring warmed the crisp and frosty air,
May showers and sunbeams glistening fell
And spread sweet gladness everywhere.

The sun about rose-tinted mists
A web of gold and azure wove,
And once again we saw spring wake
The soul of new-born life and love.

It brought the thunders and soft showers,
Whirlwinds of scented blossoms white.
As lightnings flashed, the flowers burst
Into a hundred candles bright.

Oft have I seen spring's stormy skies
And trees that blossomed sudden burst
To flames, yet eagerly I wait
For May as though it were the first.

The flowers caressed by sunbeams hot
Yield up their fragrance to the skies.
An eagle with triumphant cries
Above our land exulting flies.

The hills and valleys sing in joy,
The very rocks throb in delight.
As May's first lightning leaps from high
The new created world gleams bright.

JOSEPH GRISHASHVILI

(1885 —)

Joseph Grishashvili is one of the most popular modern poets of Georgia. Since his early youth, he has enjoyed wide popularity and commended a keen interest among the reading public. His early poetic attempts written in 1905 — 6, attest the great influence exercised on the poet by the original folklore of Tbilisi. They also reflect the events of the first Russian Revolution and the feelings evoked by it. The principal motifs of his verse are themes of love and worship of feminine beauty. His optimistic songs sounded strikingly powerful against the gloomy background of literary decadence which extolled hopelessness and occasionally, imaginary passions and movements of the soul. The poet has elaborated his own form; his verse is remarkable for its captivating melody. The exoticism of old Tbilisi found a vivid expression in his works.

The victory of the Socialist Revolution was the great turning point in the ideology and creative work of the poet. J. Grishashvili overcame the narrow limits of his early poetry, his themes became broader and more complex; he accepted the foremost ideas of the epoch.

Conserving his individual manner, his melodiousness and whimsicality, he began to depict in inspired songs the surging life of his rejuvenated country. He grasped and reflected the formation of the moral qualities of the new man.

A remarkable master of poetic translation, an outstanding writer for juveniles, Grishashvili incessantly pursues research in the field of classical literature. He is a member of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

AM I OLD? NO!

Through all the tempests of my life,
Through joys that now are mine, my dear,
Through all the years, through life, through time,
I love but you, my dear!

Am I old? No! My songs exhale
The fragrance of real poesy;
True love can ne'er grow old, my dear,
It lives eternally!

As soon melt Georgia's snowy peaks,
Hush torrents thundering from above,
Or stop the flow of poetry
As quench the fire of love.

Though like the oleaster tree
Silver now glimmers in my hair,
My heart is yours, my kindled soul
Sits in your eyes fore'er!

Am I old? No! My songs exhale
The fragrance of real poesy,
True love can ne'er grow old, my dear...
It lives eternally!

A TOKEN

One... two... three... truly,
Know, to-day is gala day!
In remembrance as a token,
Take from me this glove, I pray.
Know, this glove is sewed and fashioned,
Strange, fantastical and gay.
Not like other gloves, my dear one,
Is this glove in any way.

Yesterday I dreamt a fairy
Whispered to me that a mist
Lay upon a mountain lightly
And the peaks caressed and kissed.
Through a telescope I quickly
Peered and in surprise beheld
That the mountain, like a diadem,
A fleecy mist in pride upheld.
Troops of flow'rs I gathered round me,
Called the rainbow from the sky,
Then we wove a ladder reaching
The summit of that mountain high.
From the loveliness there nestling,
From the mist that lay above,
With sun-scissors I cut deftly
A fantastic little glove.
From the night I got some moon-thread,
Myriad-coloured, fairy spun,
From the spring a silver needle,
Gilded by the rising sun.
Then I sewed the gloves and sprinkled
Them with fragrance of the rose
From the lashes of a fountain
That like sun-split diamond glows.
But alas!

A button!

Button!

For the glove to make it whole!
Under seas and over mountains
Everywhere from pole to pole,
Long I sought to find a button,
None I found to suit or please
Even under highest mountains,
Even in the deepest seas!
Eh! I wept to think my labour
Was a vain and futile dream.
Sobbings shook me, made me tremble,
Tears poured downward like a stream...
Suddenly —

A pair of tear drops

Tumbled off the stream above,
Danced

And gamboled,
Skipped

And capered

Playfully upon each glove.
Then each tear became a button,
Fastened gently to the glove.
Thus the glove became a shelter
For the shining tears of love.
Yes, 'tis gala day, yes indeed,
Know, to-day is gala day —
In remembrance, as a token,
Take this fairy glove, I pray.

LONGING FOR YOU

The violet longs for dewdrops bright,
The swallow for its last year's nest,
The sea with beauty to unite,
The cliff — to be by floods caressed,
Youth longs for kisses' endless chain,
The aged — telling tales of old,
But I — your friendship to obtain,
And in my love your love enfold.

TO M. N.

She sings more sweetly than the lark at dawn
That overflows the summer skies with song,
More sweetly than the love-sick nightingale
About whose every note the moonbeams throng.
And all who hear her sing must stand entranced,
Nor till her song is ended can they move,
Yet even then they linger long to catch
Each dying echo of her song of love.
Yes, song of love, for love can find but tongue
In such enchanting melody as hers.
The sinking heart forgets its former griefs
As her sweet voice new hopes within it stirs.
She has a voice that like a copious stream
Flows through the winding mazes of the heart,
Bids passions fall and ecstasy of bliss
Rise like an exhalation by her art.

.....

She sings more sweetly than the lark at dawn,
That overflows the summer skies with song,
More sweetly than the love-sick nightingale
About whose every note the moonbeams throng.

LIGHT

(On the opening of the Hydro-Electric Station at Khrami)

O winds, coming from Bedeni and Trialeti
That in this desert place like fiends howled dreadfully,
Throw down your clarions upon this open plain,
Now panting, trembling midst the whirling hurricane.
Come, rest awhile, and you will see a wondrous sight —
A symbol of man's victory o'er nature's might!
Behold a sea placed here by man so near the sky,
Above the spacious world, between these mountains high.
Long long ago, beyond the bounds of memory,
There was a spring of water in Tabaskuri
Fed by the snow the mountains brought. The tiny spring
Grew larger, swelled, and like a veil leaped on the wing
Of light, and there before venturing forth into
The world stood for a moment trembling; then it threw
Itself over the mountain side, then split in two
The cliff and bid its birthplace now a loud adieu.
As down it thundered, soon it met the conquering hand
Of man that stopped the waters of that torrent grand,
Creating there a man-made lake of might,
Thus pouring o'er our hearts and lives a brilliant light.
And when I see the Soviet people gathered here
With iron nerves wrought by the sun with love and cheer,
My heart rejoices to behold our country's sky,
Whose splendent light will glow undimmed fore'er on high.
Now, with the water in the hollow of my hand
I drink in pride a toast to my dear native land!
As I behold electric lamps gleam everywhere
To demagogues of foreign countries I declare —
These piercing rays have struck you blind, you fear the light;
You are the slaves of night, corrupting truth and right.
No man can cleave these waters with a mighty sword,
No force can dissever us, no enemy horde!
We rise a single tide, we flow a single stream.
Immortal are our land and waters! A bright beam
Of Georgia's sun we fling up high and from afar
It adds a golden spark to Kremlin's ruby star!

GIORGI KUCHISHVILI

(1887 — 1946)

The early poems of G. Kuchishvili were written at a period of unbridled reaction following the defeat of the revolution in 1905 — 1907. The poet depicted the hopeless life and the unspeakably hard toil of workers who were subjected to terrible oppression under the bourgeois-landowner regime. Many of his poems of that period are replete with a feeling of indignation and hatred towards the oppressors while in others the poet reveals his deep sorrow and despair.

During the first world war, G. Kuchishvili manfully championed the cause of the people and denounced the criminal intentions of international reaction.

In the epoch of the Socialist Revolution, G. Kuchishvili began a new life of creative work. New ways of life, the prosperity of the collective farm, the industrial reconstruction of the country became the main source of his inspiration. But it was during the Great Patriotic War against the German fascist invaders that G. Kuchishvili's poetry sounded with exceptional force.

Many short stories and novelettes, as well as poems and ballads belong to the pen of G. Kuchishvili. He has written much for children.

THE BRIDGE OF CHAIN

Have you seen that ancient abbey,
That Abbey of the Cross,
Whose belfry's fondled and caressed
By soft ethereal mists?
Have you seen that ancient abbey,
That Abbey of the Cross?

2 — That Abbey of the Cross stands as
It stood in former days,
A symbol of the by-gone past,
A crown of glory's rays.
The abbey stands as proudly as
It stood in former days.

3 — From far the ancient church is seen
Upon a mountain high.
It seems to be a fairy fort,
Thus hanging from the sky.
From far the ancient church is seen
Upon a mountain high.
Its beauty charms the heart and soul,
Its beauty lures the eye.

4 — 'Tis said that in this house of God
There lived an aged monk,
And Holy Father was he called
By all the Christian folk.
'Tis said that in this house of God
There lived an aged monk,
A snow-clad forest seemed the beard
And tresses of the monk.

5 — To Mtskheta from that house of God
A bridge of chain did lie.
'Twas blessed by heaven's grace, and lay
Beneath the azure sky.
To Mtskheta from that house of God
The bridge did lightly sway
As down it walked the holy monk
One lovely summer day.
The Aragvi flowed restlessly
Beneath that bridge of chain
And dashed against the rocky cliff
With all its might and main.
The Aragvi flowed restlessly
Beneath that bridge of chain,
And from her depths there thundered forth
The nation's wail of pain.

6 — To Mtskheta bound, the monk walked over
The bridge as in a dream,
When lo! he saw a maiden bathe
In the clear rushing stream.
The maid was lovelier far
Than even Aphrodite.
The waves caressing clung to her
In passion and delight.
To Mtskheta bound, the monk walked over
The bridge as in a dream,
When lo! he saw a maiden bathe
In the clear rushing stream.

7 — The Holy Father wondering gazed...
He saw the maiden there.
His eyes had never yet beheld
An angel quite as fair.
Blush-tinted was the graceful form
Of the fair maid below,
Upon whose rounded breasts two buds
Of rosy hue did glow.
Two blushing buds that gently heaved
With poignant warm desires,
Enticing hearts to swoon in bliss,
And burn in passion's fires.

8 — The monk with excess longing gazed,
That Holy Father grave...
The chain bridge snapped, and monk and chain
All vanished in the wave.

9 — Henceforth there's dreary solitude
Within this abbey old.
The bats from darkened ceilings hang
Within this abbey old.
No prayers, no tears, no hymns of praise

To God resound on high.
No more is seen the bridge of chain
That swung beneath the sky.
Yet, in the heart of every Georgian
This legend e'er will lie.

SANDRO SHANSHIASHVILI

(1888 —)

Sandro Shanshiashvili, a poet and playwright, began to write verse in 1905. In his early works, he responded to the revolutionary events which took place at the beginning of the century.

Carrying on the fine traditions of classical Georgian poetry, he paints pictures of manners, of the toil and of the martial life of his people in numerous poems and ballads.

S. Shanshiashvili has done a great deal for the development of the modern Georgian theatre and playwriting. His plays "Anzor", "Arsena", "The Hero of Krtsanisi", "Giorgi Saakadze", "Khevis Beri Gocha", etc., occupy a prominent place in the repertory of the leading theatres of Georgia.

A MOTHER'S ONLY SON WITH LENIN

The night is cold... the wind blows loud.
A winter night... the hour is late.
The moon is supping in the oaks.
A heavy lock hangs on the gate.
A woman sits before the hearth.
The tears have dried in her closed eyes.
Eh! who can soothe a mother's heart
That for her absent child cries?

...

She dozes, then startling wakes again
To sigh the long white night away...
Thus languishing, she waits for him
Who is her only strength and stay.
Alas, poor soul, she pining droops,
Incessant tears have dimmed her eyes.
She breathes his image in her prayers,
His name's the burden of her sighs.
The morrow will a new night bring
And hope anew with it will rise.

...

She dozes... suddenly she hears
A voice and knock break through her sleep:
"O mother, can't you hear me, dear?
It's me, your boy... O do not weep!
The night is cold, the wind blows loud,
And on the gate there hangs a lock.
Your only son has come at last
As strong and hardly as a rock."
She starts as from a dreadful dream,
Joy through her veins unbridled tore.
She scarce can speak: "My boy, I'm here."
Then trembling hurries to the door,
She quickly opens wide the gate...
Her eyes pierce through the night in vain.

Then silently lets fall a tear —
"It was a vision sweet again!"

...

It was with Lenin at his side
That he had trampled down the foe.
And while he fought his mother dozed
Expectant by the fireside low.
He fought as only he can fight
Who fights for liberty and right,
Whose courage like his country's flag
Expands the brighter in its height.
He saw the gray of battle's smoke;
And in a distant grave found rest,
But never more the gray hair of
His mother nor her soothing breast.

* * *

Henceforth the mother sits and waits...
The night is cold... the wind blows loud...
The shadows deepen to a pall
And tears wrap her as in a shroud.
She keeps awake, ears strained to hear
His knocking at the locked gate,
And sighs the life-long night away
Till morning creeps in desolate.
Thus through long weary nights she waits, ...
Through tears she sees the rising sun:
"The day another night will bring,
God bless my boy, my only son!"

DEW

A dewdrop,
 bright as liquid diamond,
Trembling
 glimmered on a rose.
Emotion made your heart beat faster
And in your eyes
 a sadness rose.

"Eh", you whispered, "tiny dewdrop,
The slightest breath will make it fall.
On black earth will it die and all
Its silver fade to a funeral pall."

"You weep," I muttered, "for the dew,
Yet have no pity for the heart
That faints and dies in loving you,
Struck through with Cupid's smarting dart."

THE BRIDE OF KAKHETI

A lovely maid in garments gay
Stood in an autumn garden fair;
So faultless was her form and face
That beauty saw a rival there.
Her cheeks were flushed, her breath came quick
As heaving sobs the maid suppressed;
She felt fire rage through every vein
And passion's flame burn in her breast.

Once, when the sun shed o'er the world
Pale beams that shone with feeble light,
When raindrops fell on rustling leaves
And mountain peaks were decked in white,
A tower was built for the fair maid,
A tower of fruit and columns tall
Of luscious grapes; adorned with flowers
A throne was placed within that hall.
Above were latticed canopies
With 'broidered flowers many hued;
On every side flowed nectared founts
Of sparkling wine with rose imbued.
To day the happy bridegroom comes,
The bride is smiling as she sips
The first sweet draught of passion's flame
With quiv'ring pomegranate lips.
Desire runs through her veins like fire.
"Whose shall I be?" she deeply sighs.
Defiance rages through her heart,
And fires flash in her dark eyes.
In profuse streams flow everywhere
Wines, purple hued and ember gold...
Then Gonja with his pointed beard
And wine-sack all in joy behold.
With jests and jokes and reckless mirth
He flings all rankling cares aside.
And as the sazandari plays
He staggers dancing round the bride.
The bride-groom's coming, and the bride
Is smiling, yet her eyes flash ire,
For in her heart she feels the pangs
Of love consumed in passion's fire.

With wine that flows from countless founts
Horns, silver bowls and cups are filled;
An ox, a sheep, a goat are slain,
And even the sacred bull is killed.
Tables are spread with choicest food
And viands that allure the taste;
Rome bake and cook, while others turn
The spits o'er red hot coals in haste.

The bride with feelings all confused
Falls for one moment in a trance,
Then casting from her all her jewels
And dainty veils, begins to dance.
Gonja whirls all about her to
The rhythmic beatings of a drum:
"Bridegroom, make haste before 'tis late!"
The sazandaris seem to hum.
"Enfold thy bride within thy arms
Before it's late, O bridegroom, haste!
The rose has bathed her in its dew,
A sunbeam clings about her waist."

The bride stops dancing... What forebodes
This madness of the soul? For he
Who is her love now roams alone
And sorrows for her bitterly.
She deeply sighs as she recalls
When on a bed of fragrant flowers
She had nigh swooned to feel the bliss
Of kisses fall on her in showers.
She feels him press her to his breast,
His lips upon her eyes and hair.
His dark eyes burn into her soul
As she bids him good-bye fore'er.
Her reverie is broken by
The strains of singing as the guests
Approach to share the nuptial mirth
And feast with glowing eyes and breasts.

The bridegroom towards the maiden steps
And folds her in his arms: the sound
Of song and revelry now swells
As meat is served and bowls go round.

Now all is turned to jollity,
To feast and dance, and many a bowl
Is drained and filled with wine that burns
And mingles with the raptured soul.

Dawn blushing spreads above the hills
A flimsy and translucent veil;
Ethereal mists and drops of dew
Lie over Alazani vale.
The cold breeze from the mountains comes
To see the jolly revelry.
The sazandari plays, and songs
That praise the morn resound on high.

But Gonja who was ever gay
Is leaning now against a tree;
Grief droops his head in anguish deep,
He weeps and suffers bitterly.

What secret pain gnaws at his heart?
Why is he thus by grief oppressed?
'Tis hopeless love he hides within
His bursting sorrow-stricken breast:
No more will Gonja jest and sing,
For every joy from him has flown;
Henceforth his songs will be but sighs,
He'll wander weary and alone.

VALERIAN GAPRINDASHVILI

(1889 — 1941)

V. Gaprindashvili was one of the founders of the school of Georgian symbolists. His poetic conceptions were determined, in the early period of his literary career, by a mystical attitude towards actuality by extreme individualism, a cult of bohemianism and intoxication.

It was the new social atmosphere, purged by the Revolution, that enabled the poet to escape from the blind-alley of decadent pessimism. He found a vivid realistic method of depicting the rich world of emotions and thoughts of men of the age of Revolution.

V. Gaprindashvili has done much fruitful work in the sphere of poetic translation. He has also written a number of critical essays on literature.

THE OCEAN

The ocean yearns to be as tiny
As a teardrop in a maiden's eye
And longing gazes on the starlet
That twinkles brightly in the sky.

He's weary of his ponderous weight
And endless roll of heaving waves.
To be the tiniest thing on earth
With all his heart the ocean craves.

He hates the ceaseless roar and whirl
Which like a leech sucks at his breast.
He wants to hide within a pearl
And from all tempests' rage to rest.

In dreams he sees himself a reed,
The jewel in a fairy ring,
Or just a cockatoo that cleaves
The air perched high upon a swing.

But once a beauteous lady came
And traced her name upon the main.
Her face was decked in luring smiles,
Her form — in whirling hurricane.

The sea enamoured, heaved a sigh,
And loudly wailed as if in pain;
But then he swelled, and proudly spread
Before his love a gorgeous train.

SANDRO EULI

(1890 —)

In his poems, the themes and ideology of which are an expression of actuality and in which he follows the traditions of classical realistic lyrics, Sandro Euli gives a truthful presentation of the process of development and the upsurge of the new life, of the heroic struggle and labour of the victorious Soviet people.

In his poems "The Author of the Epoch" and "The Steel Poet", S. Euli depicts episodes of the remarkable life and revolutionary struggle of the great Stalin. In the years of the Patriotic War, besides a number of short poems, he wrote his poem "From the Eyrie of the Eagle", describing the heroic strife of the Soviet people in defence of the honour and liberty of their Fatherland.

FROM SPRING TO SPRING

On the day of my birth a pine tree was planted
Before this window
 In the garden below;
To the ocean of life was another drop added,
 To the forest, another pine tree.

Together we grew, together pursued we
Our laughter and play
 All the long sunny day.
Caressed by the winds was the tall slender pine tree,
 And I — by my mother's sweet love.

In spite of fierce winters and sun-bescorched summers
The tree stands upright
 Ever sprightly and bright.
It seems to enjoy the coldest of winters
 While spring brings its sorrow to me.

But lo! All is changed! And to our lives are restored
Childhood's best delight —
 The sun and the light.
Though my hair now is gray, on my heart spring has poured
 Its freshness and beauty and warmth.

Life now is a joy. I gaze at the pine tree
Before this window
 In the garden below.
My heart whispers: "Pine tree, could I remain like thee
 From spring to spring ever green."

MARIJANI

(1890 —)

Marijan (Maria Aleksidze) was born in Tbilisi in 1890. Her first book of poems, published in 1921, attracted favourable notice. Besides poems Marijan is the author of many delightful stories for children as for example "Zura in Peach Town", "Children of Sunny-Land", and others. Her latest book of poems came off the press in 1957.

Marijan's poetry is rich in melody, reflecting the sincere emotions of the heart in beautiful melodic verse.

THE THEME WHICH TROUBLES ME THE MOST

My early verses brought me praise,
And I was called a poet by name,
But now I seem to stand on ice
And feel no more the Muse's flame.

I stepped aside — life passed me by,
My day was closed, my verses — dead.
I seemed to see another with
A new pen standing in my stead.

So many rhymes were born to die,
So many perished with the night.
Perhaps they may revive if I
Entrust them to this paper white.

What silenced me? What quenched the fire
That burned within my once full heart?
What sits so heavy on my soul?
What makes me stand from life apart?

My words, bereft of breath and strength,
No longer knock at life's closed door.
Ev'n he for whom I chanted feels
The beauty of my songs no more.

If old songs moulder and decay,
Become a foul, forgotten urn,
Why was I born if future days
My thoughts and every passion spurn?

But wait!...

Fire burns within my heart!
Why do I lag behind and sigh?
One road there is to happiness —
To seek and find new life,
or die!

CONSTANTINE CHICHINADZE

(1891 —)

Constantine Chichinadze is one of the finest representatives of the pre-revolutionary generation of modern Georgian writers. He began to write poetry in 1905 and his poems were first published in 1908. He became more active as a writer after the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia.

His works are mainly lyrical pieces, but he has also written a number of long poems. The poems "Marina Raskova", "Central Asia" and others belong to his pen.

C. Chichinadze pursues important research in the sphere of ancient Georgian literature, particularly in the study of the great poet Rustaveli.

C. Chichinadze is a fine master of poetic translation. He has enriched Georgian literature with some excellent translations of both Russian and West-European poetry.

THERE ARE TWO ANCIENT FORTS IN GEORGIA

There are two ancient forts in Georgia:
A large and dusky one is Tmogvi,
The other standing on a mount
In dignity and pride is Gori.

Gori is Kartli's mother who
With her full breasts feeds Georgia's youth.
She is our hope, our flesh and blood,
The bulwark of our might and truth.

The days when battles o'er her raged
Pass once again before her eyes,
And like an eagle's vacant eyrie
She smiles into the sun-lit skies.

GALAKTYON TABIDZE

(1892 —)

Galaktyon Tabidze is the greatest Georgian poet of the XX century. His role in the development of modern Georgian literature and his influence on the new generation of poets in the last decades have been very considerable.

The first volume of G. Tabidze's verse, appearing in 1914 brought him the fame of a highly gifted poet, opening new vistas before Georgian literature. In this book the poet voices a feeling of indignation and protest against the forces of reaction in those days of their triumph. During this period the poet published his volume of poems entitled "Seeds of the Blossoms of Art", which contained a number of lyrical masterpieces. However, in both these books, the poet simultaneously voiced a yearning for those changes and sang of them.

At the time of the October Revolution, G. Tabidze was in Petersburg and witnessed these great events of world significance. This circumstance had the greatest bearing on the subsequent life of the poet.

When Georgia became a Soviet Republic, G. Tabidze was one of the first of the pre-revolutionary intellectuals to join the ranks of the builders of the new culture. He became the inspired herald of the victories and ideals of the new era. Strains of melancholy and despair finally give place in his poetry to enthusiastic optimism. In a number of lyrical cycles and poems, he expressed the idea of the triumph of the new world.

The exceptional variety of G. Tabidze's thematics is blended with a great variety of means of poetic expression. G. Tabidze has done a great deal towards the renovation of Georgian poetry towards the formation of modern Georgian poetic culture. His musical verse based on inner melody, replete with fresh images, his vivid imagination and infectious emotion always find a ready response among the people. He is a member of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

NIGHT AND I

With pen in hand I sit alone while night is burning,
melting, pale.

The breeze that comes in from the window tells me the
valleys' fairy tale.

The earth tries to remove the veil the moon has thrown
over her face.

The wind beneath my window sways with lilacs in a
loose embrace.

Blue columns rise, then lean against the softness of
a dove-hued sky

As full of passion as I would these lines with rhymes
to glorify.

Enchantment silently transforms the world with stealthy
magic light

As full of passionate emotions as my heart this
very night.

Within my heart I long have borne a secret hidden from
all eyes

Lest it be soiled by breath or touch deep in my heart

secure it lies.

None knows what sorrow-burdened load that one heart can
in silence bear;
None knows the anguish that is mine, concealed within
my heart fore'er.

No warm embraces of smooth arms, no wonders of
love-laden breasts
Can ever lure away the secret that in my heart securely
rests.

No sleep, however heavy-eyed, no bowl with everflowing
wine
Can reach the secret guarded in the darkness of this
heart of mine.

In sleepless hours when night shines on my window in
a clear white light
I open wide my heart and show my secret to the clear
white night.

Night knows the anguish I endured, the happiness that
passed me by.
In all the world we are but two —
night and I, night and I!

SOMEWHERE I SAW A FACE...

Somewhere I saw a face,
Lovely...
It haunts my wake and sleep.
Love words whisper in my ear,
Soft hands touch caressingly,
Breast clings to breast,
Lips to lips,
Stealthily,
Yet unseen...
I searched for her,
Long and far...
In vain!
I know how far away she is, yet, —
Why does her nearness torture?!

YOU AT THE SEA-SIDE

The sea grew gray in the coming night.
You stood on the shore like a guiding light.

Your beauty lashed at me like fire,
Sweet adoration and desire.

A ship at sea entralls the sight
As love — the heart with sweet delight.

I watched the fading ship depart...
I felt a pain... pain in my heart.

The vessel bore with her the fire
And ecstasy of sweet desire.

* * *

Yes, to-day is autumn
Autumn...
The soul
Wishes solitude...
Soft hues are dying,
Gentle Mary.
A sky-blue shadow's flying...
Autumn
Recalls your lips...
What a pity...
Farewell,
Mary.

LET BANNERS WAVE ON HIGH!

The day has dawned. A sun of fire glides up...

Let banners wave on high!

The soul's athirst for liberty and right

As wounded deer that seek a streamlet bright.

Let banners wave on high!

Glory to those with souls devoid of fear,

Who for the people's cause did bravely die...

Their names shine bright like torches in the night...

Let banners wave on high!

Glory to him who fills our hearts with hope,

Braves foes with matchless worth and fearless

The day has dawned! United let us fight!

Let freedom's banner o'er us wave on high!

THE MOON OVER MTATSMTND

My eyes have never seen the moon so lovely as to-night;
In silence wrapt she is the breathless music of the night.
Moonbeams embroider shadows with fine thread of silver light.
O, eyes have never seen the sky so lovely as to-night!
The moon adorned in beams of pearls seems like a queen divine,
The stars like fire-flies tangled in a web about her shine.
The Mtkvari flows a silver stream of lambent beauty bright.
O, eyes have never seen the moon so lovely as to-night!
Here in immortal calm and peace the great and noble sleep
Beneath the soft and dewy turf in many a mouldering heap,
Here Baratashvili came with wild desires to madness wrought,
Oppressed by raging fires of passion and perplexing thought.
O could I like the swan pour forth my soul in melody
That melts the mortal heart and breathes of immortality!
Let my free song fly far beyond this world to regions high
Where on the wings of poesy 'twill glorify the sky.
If death approaching makes the fragrance of the roses sweeter.
Attunes the soul to melodies that make all sadness dearer.
And if the swan's song thus becomes a denizen of heaven,
If in that, song she feels that death will be but ecstasy, then —
Let me like her sing one last song and in death find delight.
So breathless still and lovely I have never seen the night!
O mighty dead, let me die here beside you as I sing.
I am a poet, and to eternity my song I fling,
And let it be the fire that warms and lights the spirit's flight.
O, eyes have never seen the moon so lovely as to-night!

SHALVA APKHAIDZE

(1894 —)

Shalva Apkhaidze began to write in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. In the epoch of the Socialist Revolution, influenced by the surging tide of construction building up a new life, Sh, Apkhaidze, goes over to realism in poetry. The rich world of ideas of the new man, the creator and builder of the new life became the principal and determining source of the poet's creative inspiration.

Sh. Apkhaidze also works fruitfully in the field of literary and theatrical criticism. His last volume of poems was published in 1957.

EVENING

The sun leaves beauty on the skies
Such as brings tears to our eyes.
The air opalescent and bright
Trembles in a flash of light.
Blood red heavens turn to gold —
A sight astounding to behold.
Circling swallows trace black rings
On expectant silent wings.
The horizon becomes a pyre;
Earth and sky burst into fire.
Shimmering shadows,
 A dying spark,
Twilight,
 Purple shades,
 Then dark.

DAWN

Morning wakes and tears the veil
Of darkness from the twilight pale.
She gently yawns and rising, spills
Her coloured garments on the hills
And on the floor of heaven stands
With up-raised rosy-tinted hands.
Dew-pearled and fragrant as a rose,
Golden radiance from her glows,
Radiance that makes the day
And ushers in the sun's bright ray.
Then we see the sun rise high
Treading upwards in the sky,
Burning, blazing, glorifying,
Melting, moulding, beautifying.
It glows steadfastly and bright,
Draws my soul within its light,
Far beyond the stream of life,
High above all human strife,
And with immortality
I walk midst eternity.

THE VOW

I vow by my Georgia, my dear native land,
By the gardens and meadows that blossom all year,
By the mountains and valleys, the shady green woods
And the rivers transparent and clear.

I vow by my country, so spacious and grand,
By the breezes that flirt with the blue of the skies,
By the sun of my land, by her moon and her stars,
By my life and the light of my eyes.

I vow by the milk of my dear mother's breast,
By the lullabies that gently hushed me to rest,
By the love that is true, and the friendship that soothes
The heart by life's troubles oppressed.

I vow by the dreams that to life now are kindled
In the land that has made us all happy and free,
By the charter that heals all the wounds of the people, —
By the Charter of Liberty!

I vow that in battle like a flash of lightning,
With my blood turned to steel in the veins of my hand,
I will strike down the foe and e'er guard with my life
The rights of my dear native land!

PAOLO IASHVILI
(1894 — 1937)

Paolo Iashvili, a poet of no mean talent, was endowed with an optimistic world outlook, and love for his native land that rings forth in many of his poems.

Before the Revolution Paolo Iashvili belonged to a poetic school called "The Blue Horns". The members of this school attempted to introduce into Georgian literature traits characteristic for putrescent West-European art, beginning with symbolism and ending with futurism. But subsequently Iashvili found strength to overcome bourgeois decadent tradition and was one of the very first of the Georgian poets to come over the side of the working class. He soon became an inspired singer of songs which apart from their beauty and melody overflow with his enthusiasm for the victories of Socialism.

ARGVETIAN NIGHTS

Silver swallows quietly sit
In blue nests against the sky.
The moon falls coldly, coldly down
In nets of branches that upon the forest's
breast out-spreading lie.

The moon is caught and held by boughs,
A snow-white pheasant bird it seems.
The watch-dog by the fence all night
Breaks the darkness with loud barks and raves
through snatches of dog dreams.

Silver-threaded velvet cloaks
Are wrapt about tall poplar trees —
Such tantalizing laziness.
The river seems to be so full of flashing,
snow-white floating geese.

The out-cast melancholy bat
Flutters through the lonely night.
Let none spill the voices now
Turned into a magic flute by mystic
transports and delight.

A SHADOW IN THE COLD

Rain... rain...
A frozen valley,
A shadow tall and thin.
Who is this shadow?
Where is he bound?
The shadow shivers in the cold.
He sought shelter... late...
Too late!
With frozen groans it wanders on and on
Reaching nowhere.

Death is coming...
Where is he bound,
Where has he been?
Torn eyes seek sleep.
Evening comes...
A crow separated
From a mourning flock of crows.
Miserable traveller, find the night,
Then sob and moan.

The wind knows not to whom to tell
The valley's tale,
The rain seeks for the door
Where it can weep.
The crow finds warmth
On frosty nights
Within the traveller's rags.
Peace to all
Who meet grim death
.Beneath a winter sky.

THE SOUND OF BELLS IN THE WIND

Nau nau nani
nau nani nana...

Somewhere,
In the distance,
A flower has fallen fast asleep
Beneath a bush...

Nau nau nani
nau nani na...

The wind ran quickly
Past the dewy grass across the field.
The dew dropped from the grass
And grieving sobbed...
Nau nau nani...

The sound of bells in the wind,
Bells in the wind...
Nau nau nani
nau nani nana...

Why those tears, my violet?
Do not fear the bell.
The wind will leave
For mountains
And sleep on folded arms...
Nani nau nani
nau nani nana...

To-morrow morning the grass
Will greet the sunbeam with a smile
Nani nau nani
nau nani nau...

Somewhere
A monk has died...
Nani nau nani...
Was Christ betrayed?
Sinned — did not repent?
The bell rings louder,
Louder —
Nau nau nani nana...

The wind, as with a ball,
Plays with sins, shames,
Sighs and scandals of the world,
Bears them over hills and mountains,
Ever near the sinful earth.
Nau nana
nau nani!

Beyond the hill

A gold ray flashes,
The spring spreads silver on its breast.
And he,
Who rang the bell,
Exhausted sleeps on cold stone.
The sighs of the bell
Grow still —
 Nau na na u...
 na n i na...

TITIAN TABIDZE

(1895 — 1937)

Titian Tabidze is a well-known Georgian poet. He was born in 1895 in the district of Imereti (Western Georgia). He began publishing poems in 1913. He joined the literary school of decadent symbolism, the "Blue Horns", which took form in pre-revolutionary Georgian literature. But after the Socialist Revolution he was influenced by the triumph of the new life and the pessimistic, depressive strains of his poetry gradually gave place to enthusiastic songs that rose in beautiful melodies of happiness and joy.

A POEM LANDSLIDE

I write no verses, verse writes me,
Makes me what I am,
 Kindles, breathes and sows
 Life within my heart,
 Freedom in my soul,
 Wisdom in my mind,
 Truth to make me whole.

A poem is a landslide,
Thundering and strong,
 Races, catches, bears you
 Down the sliding mass,
 In a frenzied drive,
 In a tight embrace,
 Buries you alive.

I was born in April
Out of apple blossoms,
 Whiteness, splashes, rain-drops
 Pouring over me,
 Snow-white apple flowers,
 From my eyes the tears
 Fall below in showers.

When I die, I know
This poem will remain
 Trembling, living, singing.
 If it touch and hold
 Just one poet's heart
 I can say my life
 Is a thing of art.

All will say there was
A boy from Orpiri,
 Nurtured, taught and moulded
 By the breath of song,
 Harmony and rhyme,
 Having depth and height,
 Gripping fast on time.

Never straying far,
In his sack he carried
 Stanzas, songs and measures
 Full of vibrant tone,
 Teemed with lofty thought,
 Mad, unfettered, free,
 Fallen, chained' and caught.

Georgian sun and soil
Made him weep till death,
 Wounding, painful, loving.
 Joy was taken from him,
 Naught could woe remove,
 Yet he gave to verses
 Happiness and love.

I write no verses, verse writes me,
Makes me what I am,
 Kindles, breathes and sows
 Life within my heart,
 Freedom in my soul,
 Wisdom in my mind,
 Truth to make me whole.

OKROQANA
(Golden-Field)

Little dogs bark at the moon.
The moon glides down — a silver light.
Falling stars spill showers of fire
Like a sheet of lightnings bright.

Little dogs bark at the moon.
The clamour keeps sweet sleep away.
My only treasure, sleep, the dogs
Have stolen from me as I lay.

The moon glides slowly down the sky,
Hides behind Koroghli tower.
The mountains bend like tusks and lift
Above Tbilisi a shield of power.

Dearest mother, my Tbilisi,
Laugh not at your love-seared son
Who, to gladden you, barks loudly
Praise and rising of the sun.

Through the marrow of my bones
Gladness thrills as I look down,
My happy lot — a little dog —
Loves you, guards you, mother town.

SLOWLY WALKING TO AND FRO

Slowly walking to and fro,
Softly humming as I go,
Dreams of Georgia do I bear
In my heart where'er I go.

If I had a thousand hearts
All would I tear out for you.
To protect you, know, I stand
Ever ready, ever true.

Thousand reed pipes rise in song,
Mountains echo in reply.
For these strains that give me life
Gladly would I life deny.

More than this what can I do,
A feeble reed, uncut and green?
Let my heart meet death for you,
Pierced by thirteen bullets keen.

KOLAU NADIRADZE

(1895 —)

Kolau Nadiradze began to write in 1914. In both his poetry and in his articles of literary criticism, he defended the creative and the ideological positions of symbolism in pre-revolutionary Georgian poetry.

The second period of his creative life, beginning after the triumph of the Socialist Revolution in Georgia, is characterized by a consistent leaning towards themes of social actuality and to realistic means of poetic representation of the universe.

K. Nadiradze has done much fruitful work in the sphere of poetic translation.

THE LEADER

He rises with the dawn. His eyes behold
The face of Lenin lit by morning rays.
And he who makes our lives a joy looks up
And meets approval in his teacher's gaze.

Lenin, the guiding light, the hope of all
Oppressed mankind, smiles down at him with pride,
At him who holds on high the flaming torch
That floods the world with light both far and wide.

Our life, our welfare are his constant care.
He never rests but guards us day and night.
He meets those kindly eyes with conscience clear,
For he has kept the trust undimmed and bright.
He slowly lights his pipe. His humble home
And Georgia's vales arise before his sight.

ILO MOSSASHVILI

(1896 — 1954)

Ilo Mossashvili's literary career began in 1920. The virile and heroic spirit of the epoch, forming the basic content of I. Mossashvili's poetry, determines the originality of his poetic style. All the signal events in the life of his native country find a response and are reflected in Ilo Mossashvili's works. His poetry is inspired by Soviet patriotism. In his best works, the poet sings of the all-conquering power of love for one's native land.

Ilo Mossashvili tried his hand with success in writing plays and scripts for films.

A NIGHT IN THE WOOD

Night like a one-eyed giant came
With burnt clouds on the back.
It strewed gray mists and ashes on
The forest from a sack.

Night brought dark shadows and black roots,
Made them the mottled camels' feet,
And as we walked, night's silken thread
Embraced our movements fleet.

From open-mouthed gray cliffs the pine
Hung o'er with naked knees.
Like old and gaunt wolves passing by
Marched on the old oak trees.

Beyond the forest is black night,
Beyond the wood there is a wood.
The wood is dark, the ashes gray,
The night is black and mute.

The world is spacious, small the eye.
Let's spread our cloaks somewhere near by.
Glory to all the stars on high!
Glory to dawn that lights the sky!
Glory to all the birds that fly!

Glory to every cry the eagle.
In gladness sends to nature's breast!
And like a little man the sparrow
Will build its tiny feathered nest.

The lark will open wide the door
Of dove-hued smiling morn,
Then singing greet the sun and drink
The dew with a bill of thorn.

Let morning come and wipe away
The coal and ashes of the night,
Then with an artist's master hand
Another picture bring to light.

RAZHDEN GVETADZE

(1897 — 1952)

Razhden Gvetadze, poet and novelist, is the author of a number of novels, short stories, poems and lyrical cycles. At the beginning of his literary career, he joined the literary school of decadent symbolism, the "Blue Horns", which took form in pre-revolutionary Georgian literature. But since the Revolution, the range of his poetry broadened considerably. His novels and stories, "Teo", "Tchiakokona", "Evenings in Lashauri", etc., reflect the social changes of the epoch, the formation of the new man, the hero of our day. Vivid plots and realistic pictures of life characterize his prose. In poetry he is a master of form, an enemy of standards. The sincerity and spontaneity of his poetry are blended with a sense of actuality and social significance.

TO SHALAMBEKIDZE

I've never seen you, soldier brave,
But I have heard the deafening roar
Of your gun thundering through the air
As to the foe it havoc bore.

I heard the beating of your heart.
You were indeed a hero born!
And as a father for his son
I now lament for you and mourn.

My son was fighting there. Perhaps
He trod with you the blood-stained ground.
And when you fell, perhaps 'twas he
Who gently bound your mortal wound.

Though life from you was ebbing fast
As still you strove to rise again,
Perhaps the Georgian words he spoke
Brought balm to you and eased your pain.

You yearned to hold that flag once more,
Your country's banner, waving high.
You longed to see with your own eyes
The downfall of the enemy.

Death overpowered you who fought
So bravely for your native strand.
You died, yet knew that victory
Would glorify your motherland.

You left a name that like the sun
Will shine forever in the sky
And e'er a symbol will it be
Of manhood true and bravery.

GIORGI LEONIDZE

(1899 —)

G. Leonidze, a poet of great lyrical pathos, an outstanding master of poetic landscape, vividly portrays various scenes of renovated life and the majestic nature of his native land. He describes the rich and noble spiritual world of Soviet man. In a number of his masterpieces, the poet revives episodes of the heroic history of the Georgian people.

For the first book of his epic poem "Stalin" the poet was awarded the Stalin prize. This poem is very popular, not only in Georgia, but throughout the Soviet Union. It has been translated into a number of languages of the peoples of the Soviet Union.

Besides this, G. Leonidze expresses the universal feeling of affection for his country in a number of fine poems.

A series of monographs and investigations in the sphere of classical Georgian literature belong to the pen of G. Leonidze. He is a member of the Academy of Sciences, Georgian S.S.R.

ON READING "THE LIFE OF GEORGIA"

Turn o'er the pages of this book —
Grey ashes of once shining steel —
Heroic actions, wondrous deeds
The clash of broken swords reveal.

Turn o'er the book. Each page lies on
The bosom like a heavy tomb.
Like ghosts we see grim warriors
March on the brink of death and doom.

A sombre shroud of banners black,
Like mists descended on our land.
Red vapours rose from dripping blades
Crushed under death's relentless hand.

The scarred earth opened wide its mouth
As blood of innocents was spilled.
High pyramids of corpses rose;
Black gaping holes with blood were filled.

What sound is that that shakes the earth?
Terrific shrieks of pain and awe.
The women, children, hurled from towers,
Fall into death's blood-thirsty jaw.

Heart-splitting wails of woe are heard,
The clang of swords, the clash of arms,
Deep echoes of the gruesome past,
The trumpet peal and wild alarms,

Burnt homesteads ash-turned in the dust,
The bellows of smoke-blinded cows;
The forests shudder as trees shoot.
To heaven charred accusing boughs.

A deafening groan of woe, swelled forth;
In Georgia's soul deep sorrow crept...
A pause — the universe stood still,
Then heaved a mighty sob and wept.

But that what makes us inward weep,
And leaves us breathless and aghast,
Is that this volume which preserves
The tragic story of our past
— Bears the title "Life of Georgia" —
"Kartlis Tskhovreba"!

TO NINA CHAVCHAVADZE

You are a faintly glimmering star, and yet your charm
Sheds over me a shower of lustre from the skies.
The clay decays, all things may fade, the world whirls past,
But beauty true immortal is and never dies.

You are not dead! Your loveliness inspires the poet
To sing of love and joy in melodies of fire.
You were spring's bower where longed-for dreams all came to life,,
The sacred covert for the soul and heart's desire.

Beyond your beauty's realm no dawn can e'er exist,
For light receives its life but where your beauty glows;
Yet on your snow-white breast, the sod in clogs was cast,
A breast that none had dared to touch, not even the rose.

A hundred years have passed... I sing your beauty's praise!
A thousand more will pass, and still your splendour's light
Will kindle hearts, O hurricane of loveliness,
As even now mine burns and worships in delight.

A KARTLIAN NIGHT

A black bull, black-burnt, moving slowly,
Urmuliani night of Kartli
The Mtkvari, willow, ancient temple,
Garden roses, rustling quietly.

Cloudless skies look down in silence,
Hay-stacks slide past with the stars...
Here it was that history thundered,
And —
Georgia weeps silent o'er her scars.

WHERE WILL THE SUN SET?

Where will the sun set,
Where will it sink?
Beyond those mountains,
Beyond that brink?
Where will the torrents
O'ergorging drink?
Where will my poem
Its wishes fling?

I SING TO MY COUNTRY

The earnest throbbings of my heart
O'erflood this page, then upward fly,
Where my dear country's fame unfolds
Like golden banners in the sky.

Deep-rooted in my native soil,
I stand beneath my native sky.
No other land can give me life
If mine abandons me to die.

My country's light shines ever bright,
Beams flow o'er me like flakes of snow.
I've never wished to live beyond
Her beauty's soul-inspiring glow.

O let my words of fire ascend
The heavens in majestic song.
Let my rhymes flow in lofty verse,
And swell like unchained torrents strong.

The time has come for me to sing,
I gathered all these flowers, see!
With carven ornament I deck
The glory of a new Kartli.

My heart has found its light at last.
My eyes see Kartli glorified.
My bosom thrills for my sweet land,
And to her do I sing in pride.

DAVID GACHECHILADZE

(1902 —)

The poems of D. Gachechiladze are characterized by a sober sense of reality, vivid imagery and genuine lyricism.

In the years of the Patriotic War, he wrote a number of remarkable poems, some of the greatest works of Georgian poetry on warfare.

D. Gachechiladze is a talented translator and does much work in this line.

CALL OF IMMORTALITY

I did not die! When flames surrounded me
I fell where ravens croaked in awful glee.
I am not dead! I live! I dare defy
You, fate! I wish to see my native sky!
And there beneath the earth once wet with blood,
Upon an emerald hill where memories brood,

And sunbeams rove above my up-heaved breast,
Within a dark and lonely grave I rest.
The hill smiles up into the azure sky,
White butterflies flit by with many a sigh,
The rose's blush in seas of fragrance fades
As crooning zephyrs play with gentle shades.

Here, near me is a cloud the wind last night
Brought from the sky and placed upon this height,
It sleeps as silence hums a lullaby...
'Twas here I crushed the mighty enemy.
This cloud is smoke that burst forth from my gun
Whose dazzling fires like rockets reached the sun.

O passer-by, come see my lowly tomb,
Come near, fear not its sombre shroud of gloom!
Woe! I, who for my country conquering died,
Whose matchless courage with the lightning vied.
Am now o'erpowered by the tiniest flower,
And in the clinging cold worm's loathing power!

Come, rest, and let us while the hour away,
Conversing, watch the scented breezes play.
O dawn! did mother earth, my mirror hide,
Lost on the battle field before I died?
Perhaps by chance you came across its light,
Now hidden by the grass and shades of night.

I well recall as I lay on the ground
Beside an open grave when friends around
Me grieving stood, that in a bursting cry
The thundering guns wailed forth a last good-bye.

I suddenly opened my eyes, and lo!

My name was flying upwards from below!
And then I knew that immortality
Called me, for I had fought for liberty!

So why should I be fastened to this grave,
For to my native land my life I gave?
I'll rise... my body is the breath of spring,
And with the bee I'll fly perched on her wing.
The glimmering light of Georgia's azure skies
Will give the lustre to my smiling eyes.

SIMON CHIKOVANI

(1902 —)

Simon Chikovani began to write in 1924. His early poems proved the undoubted talent and creative potentialities of the young poet. S. Chikovani became one of the most prominent and original masters of poetry of socialist realism. Depth and actuality of thought are the foundation of his poetry. In a number of his best works together with colourful landscapes of his renovated country, S. Chikovani describes episodes of his people's heroic past, in the light of the aspirations and ideals of progressive men of our day.

His important lyrical poem "David Guramishvili" is, in this sense, the most characteristic achievement of modern Georgian poetry. A number of poems reflecting the people's love and loyalty to their native land belong to the pen of S. Chikovani. His poems "The Citadel of Gori", "Kartlian Evenings", etc, rank among the best works of Soviet poetry on this subject.

At the same time, S. Chikovani writes critical essays and articles on questions of both modern and classical literature. He is the editor of the magazine "Mnatobi".

SNOW

Snowflakes like feathers soft and light
Upon a whitening valley fell,
And from afar I heard the call
And greetings of a sledge's bell.

As through a mist the weary smoke
Glides eagerly to reach the sky,
Thus silently into the snow
I walked on with an inward sigh.

Each fluttering lightness, like a dream,
Crept silently into my brain,
Poured ecstasy on heart and soul,
A mixture of delight and pain.

The snowflakes, stars of dreamland skies,
On my gray hair fell from above,
Became a haven for my thoughts,
Starlights of beauty and of love.

With up-thrown head I hurried on
To catch a falling crystal fine;
It fluttered in the crystal air,
Then gently settled on a pine.

The pine tree, like a lighted candle,
Stood glowing white against the sky;
I felt a burning in my bosom
For vibrant things that never die,

At last I stood before your window
Upon which winter's hand had traced
Exquisite patterns diamond hued,

Pin-points of silver interlaced.

Then eagerly I caught a snowflake
And let it nestle on my palm,
For I wished to bring to you the snow-star
In all its purity and calm.

But ah! so gentle was the star,
That on my palm as on a pyre,
It melted, leaving in its place
A tearlet wrought by love's desire.

Then slowly from your door I turned
— Leaving you behind me far,
But know, that in my heart's engraved
Fore'er a glimmering radiant star.

WHO SAYS MY NATIVE LAND IS SMALL?

Who says my native land is small,
That realm of beauty and of lore?
In Georgia fair who e'er beheld
A tower or fort and deemed it small?

Then let your eyes in rapture bend
On silver-ridged mountains high,
And hear the whir of eagle's wings
Blend with the wild deer's ringing cry.

On every peak there stands a fort!
The poet's eye e'er keen and bright
Measures the might or gathers hues
By nature scattered in the light.

The whirlwinds howl in passion wild,
Imprisoned fast in chasms deep,
And grumbling torrents fall and roar
As in the heavens lightnings leap...

The past whose glory reached the sky
O'erstepped the bounds of time and space,
And cherished in the Georgian heart
Are Gorgassali's deeds and face.

The Gate that stands upon that peak
Has stood the fury of all fires,
A kindling glow invades my soul
That Georgia's loveliness inspires!

Who says my native land is small,
That land of beauty and of lore?
In Georgia fair who e'er beheld
A tower or fort and deemed it small?

THE SWALLOW'S NEST

Alert and swift on lightning wings
The swallow builds its little nest,
Lays eggs that glow like burning coals
Beneath a pulsing feathered breast.

To hear the nightingale is joy,
But when I see the swallow fly
About in wheeling airy wheels,
Or like quick silver pass me by,

I wonder much and wish to help
The little builder at its work
As it brings feathers, grass and mud
With twitters, chirps and many a perk.

O could I fling the words I wrote
Last night that now on paper rest,
Perhaps the bird would pick it up
And use as lining for its nest,

Or pick the thoughts that on my pen
Pant, burn or struggle to be free —
Unuttered accents of my soul,
Emotions long confined in me.

The ashes of past joys may warm
The nestlings in their nest on high,
Or new emotions may be hatched
And with the nestlings learn to fly.

Let the swallow perch upon my verse,
Peck each word from the paper white;
The egg warmth and my hope will make
Two swallows from the nest take flight.

O swallow, seek not other lands;
You beautify our native sky.
Why leave when all the year is blessed
With food and warmth, a full supply?

The Georgian garden glows like fire
Beneath the sun's life-giving ray.
For years we warmed the earth, and now
Even winter's like the month of May.

Let my song lie within your nest,
A warm and ever-glowing hearth;
And Georgia's soul upon your wing
Will singing rise above the earth.

Alert and swift, the swallow looks

Like out-spread scissors in the sky,
It folds its wings in Georgian bowers
That hum to it a lullaby.

O could I line the swallow's nest
With passions that my heart-beats bear,
Or place the nestling in my breast
And make it love our winter fair!

TO M...

When I am far from you, it seems to me
Your heart accompanies me everywhere,
It beats like mine, thinks, feels and throbs like mine,
Has eyes to see but for one shining star.

I hurry homewards though I know, dear one,
You have my heart to keep you company.
I fear to lose your soft voice in the wind.
That like a cradle rocks in harmony.

We being one, your loving heart seeks mine
To comfort it and find a sheltering cage.
You are the inspiration of my youth,
The hope and consolation of my age.

KARTLIAN EVENINGS

How lovely is the twilight time in Gori
When autumn's colours blend with deepening shades;
They steal over the stillness of the gloaming
That with the landscape into dream-land fades.

The trees before the little hut are swaying,
Their rustling holds the soul of solemn quiet;
And as the sun sinks far beyond the mountain,
I seem to see a golden deer upon it.

The Mtkvari flows, a gray and winding river,
Perhaps before your hut it spent the night,
Before the narrow door that you found open,
From where emerged the dawn's life-giving light.

I hear the evening hum through tingling silence,
I see two horns of gold shine in the sky
Upon the summit of the purple mountain,
Just where the sun has blessed us from on high.

The voices midst the trees and vines are silenced,
The wearied winds are dozing on the lea;
The mountains stand like soldiers ever guarding
Their native land in silent loyalty.

I feel the rocking of an unseen cradle,
I feel the heart of happy Georgia thrill;
I see a youth scattering seeds of future
Joy as he passed over the vale and hill.

The youth has grown to manhood now. The eagle
Has left his mountain eyrie. A light
Now fills the world and shines above in splendour —
The light that has dispelled our country's night.

My soul is wrapt in fires of exultation.
I quiver with the fervour of delight;
And gazing on the beauty of fair Gori
I feel the glory of our nation's right!

VICTOR GABESKIRIA

(1903 —)

Victor Gabeskiria belongs to the galaxy of poets whose literary career began just after the October Revolution.

Lyrical landscapes are depicted by the poet as sincerely as scenes of life characteristic for the new life and manners of his native land.

V. Gabeskiria's poems are characterized by finished lyrical themes, graceful composition and picture esque descriptions.

* * *

Winter!
And cold!
A hungry wolf (do not fear it!)
Shambles forth
Out of a bare-limbed forest.
Ah!
A field!
The wolf crawls up to a stump,
Sits back on its haunches
And sniffs.
The frost gnaws
Into the marrow of the bone...
Bone!
The wolf raises up its snout
And sniffs...
Suddenly,
A lusty gust of wind comes swooping
Up the hill,
Whistles,
Blusters,
Roars in royal rage.
Then rushes through the trees
Carrying away a long-drawn howl,
And suddenly is gone,
Leaving plain and forest
To black silence.
The moon, crossed by clouds,
Hurries, scurries,
Drifts grinning into nowhere.
The shadow of a snout,
Like a spectre,
Silhouettes stiffly,
Black against the sky.

THE WOLF

A full moon sheds a pale cold light
Upon a valley white with snow.
A hungry wolf with wistful eyes
Looks at the village stretched below.

It looks about, then suddenly
Wolf, snow and shadow downhill slide.
It stops, but is encouraged by
The shadow running by its side.

The lights come near, eyes sparkle fire,
When suddenly,
 A crashing sound
Bursts through a bush.
A black shape leaps,
Then thudding falls upon the ground.

No more the haste, fate willed it so,
Cold silence falls
And flakes of snow...
But where,
 Where has the shadow gone?
Why has it left the still wolf so?

THE HUNTER

The village looked lovely from far, and each homestead
Rose up in new colours as nearer lie drew.
He walked through the shade intertwined with the, sunlight
With his weary dog behind him.

His neighbours and friends greeted him as he, passed.
The moment lie stopped to shake hands or be greeted
The children came thronging about him to look
At gay-feathered birds behind him.

They prattled in voices excited and shrill
And wondered to see the gay birds with their eyes
Closed tightly and beaks hidden under their wings,
Their chirps and their flights left behind them.

THE KHERKHEULIDZE BROTHERS

Nine brothers lived and toiled together.
They ploughed and sowed on field and plain.
Where'er they worked the fields were blessed
With fragrant hay and golden grain.
And now upon that very field
The brothers come to fight the foe.
Dawn, creeping from the eastern sky,
Lights up Marabda field, and lo!
Shields, banners, swords, the cross gleam in
The sun's first rays. The trumpets blow!
The Georgians forward rush with cries:
"For Kartli, strike! Down with the foe!"
A living mass of fire and steel
Rolls on the field. Foremost of all
The brothers fight, devoid of fear,
And stand together like a wall.
They watch the youngest of the nine
To see that he fall not behind.
Though very young, his every blow
Cleaves through a helmet swift as wind,
The sword grows redder, death-shots pour,
The earth with mortal clay is spread.
The field once golden now runs red
With the blood of a myriad dead.
The enemy breaks through... Soon four
Of the brothers sink on the ground.
A horseman bearing Georgia's flag
Rides quick away for the hills bound.
The roaring mass of fire and steel
Is hushed and scattered on the field.
The sun's last rays now gleam on cold
Dead eyes and broken limb and shield.
The scythe of death a harvest reaps
Of men who died for their country;
Their names, not born to die, will live,
Their souls will light the heavens high.

ALIO MIRTSKHULAVA

(Mashashvili)

(1903 —)

Alio Mirtskhulava's first poem appeared in 1921, just after the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia. Since then his creative development has been unbrokenly linked with the process of development and consolidation of the new socialist mode of life, of which Alio Mirtskhulava is the inspired poet and singer.

In his best works, he has deeply reflected his generation's optimistic outlook on life, its lofty ideals, the pathos of strife and creative labour, the optimism of Soviet people, their belief in the righteousness and invincibility of their cause.

His poems "The Birthplace of the Leader", "Hymn to the Fatherland", "Birth" and others are some of the finest achievements of Georgian Soviet poetry.

Besides lyrical pieces, Alio Mirtskhulava has written a number of poems, the most remarkable of which, "The Inguri", shows the development of the new man, the hero of our time, against a background of socialist construction in Georgia.

THE ASPEN

I stand, a white aspen, on a cliff
With wide-spread arms and up-thrown head.
To those who fell I gave my hand
And from sure death to safety led.
I keep back bolts from younger aspens;
Let them in peace and freedom sway.
The winglets of the doves grow quick.
And from their homes they fly away.
Ev'n now I struggle with the wind,
Rain on my breast like dewdrops cleaves.
Words fall from me...
 (Yes, words, I say!)You thought them to be autumn leaves?
They fall...
 Don't think they're leaving me!
They tremble...
You thought them fading fast?
The sooner will they spring to life,
The sooner will they feel the blast.
You think that shadows of the evening?
It is a flock of doves above!
They'll fly down, perch upon my shoulders,
And sweetly cooing, sing of love.
O motherland,
Your white asp tree
Defends and guards you from this height.
Deep-rooted am I in your soil.
No storm can shake my steady might.
The night has vanished,
War is over,
No more do pools of blood gleam red.
This scar?
 This gash?

This pain-wrought smile?
— By fires caressed and battle bred.
I also trembled...
Earth split in two,
Into my heart fire found its way...
And then —
 The windows of my heart wide opened.
I also trembled...
In meditation the branches rustled bitterly.
If on my shadow a foot was placed
My body trembled painfully.
I guarded you!
I guard you now!
 My mother-land!
Though weather-beaten, weather-marred,
Though battle-stained and bullet-scarred,
Deep-rooted, firmly do I stand
With up turned head and wide-stretched hand,
Undaunted on my motherland!

A CRADLE

With joy I remember my mother's sweet face.
I had a strange dream that gave me delight.
The cradle that hilled me so gently to sleep
I saw through a shimmering light.

It glowed like a changi of gold, and the sight
Brought memories back that made me rejoice,
For in the clear song of the cradle I heard
The sound of my childhood's voice.

GEORGIA

I gave the sons of Georgia birth,
True sons and heroes of the land.
I've moulded all their days and led
Them with a strong and tender hand.

I spent my days in endless wars,
Inspired my sons to bravely fight,
But now I bask in happiness,
In everlasting spring and light.

The hero from the lightning shapes
A sword that gives the sun its flame,
And cleaves through immortality
And brings me to eternal fame!

KARLO KALADZE

(1907 —)

Karlo Kaladze belongs to the new generation of Georgian poets. He began to write in the first years after the Socialist Revolution. His world outlook and his individuality as a poet were influenced by the great changes wrought by the Revolution.

In 1920, at the early age of 13, a number of his poems were published. The first collection of his works appeared in 1925. Since then he has been one of the leading Georgian-poets, reflecting the thoughts and feelings of modern men in his numerous lyrical poems and ballads. Karlo Kaladze is also a playwright-Several of his plays have been staged by the leading theatres of Georgia.

* * *

A pretty girl with lover came,
 Came wandering down a sandy shore.
A bright moon shone, a strong wind .blew.
 The waves through evening darkness tore.

The waters leaped and roared like mad,
 Unfettered broke in on the hush.
Wave after wave like mountains rose,
 Then smote the shore in crashing rush.

Two hearts throbbed wildly in transport,
 Nigh bursting through the close-pressed breast,
With sighs and strainings, tremblings, moans,
 In love's unchained and fiery zest.

Now, you and I come wandering down,
 Come wandering down the sandy shore.
A bright moon shines, a light wind blows,
 The waves on evening blueness pour.

Where have the girl and lover gone?
 Where have their plighted pledges fled?
Where are the flashes of their eyes,
 The sparks of fire their passion shed?

Gone!...
 Two shadows stir as one...
A storm is brooding overhead...

THE LINDEN BLOSSOMS

There was a time when the sun shone
In burning rays — a flaring blaze —
 And tops of poplars sought,
When I would seek the shelter of
The linden tree for company,
 And there recline in thought.

Then — all was peace; there were no battles;
No cannons roared, no bullets poured
 On us like stinging rain.
We knew no heart-sick separations,
Nor severed years, nor gathering tears,
 Nor broken hearts, nor pain.

Once more I see that hour in spring
When lindens shed blossoms that spread
 Themselves on grass below,
When the noonday sun hurled glaring beams
On flowers that closed their eyes and dozed
 Beneath the fiery glow.

And there beneath the linden tree,
In the cool shade where branches swayed
 And flirted with the wind,
I lay with thoughts that flowed from me
In golden streams, and with the beams
 Of the sun intertwined.

Spring poured her laughter in my heart
There, where a screen of leafy green
 Sheltered me from the heat.
The branches bent to kiss me when,
Suddenly showers of dainty flowers
 Were scattered at my feet.

Soon, I was covered with a host
of cock like, blooms that waved their plumes
 Tumbling down from the tree.
I was a Gulliver, and they
Were cocks of gold, countless and bold
 That thronged all over me.

O cherished still, and dearer, is
The hour when I beneath the sky
 Reclined in peace and cheer.
O linden tree, I see you now,
Though cannons roar, and bullets pour —
 A vision sweet and dear.

Could I find words to sing your praise,
O linden tree, when ecstasy

Made me her own in joy
Beneath your shade, that day in spring,
When dainty flowers in golden showers
Fell lightly over me.

MARIKA BARATASHVILI

(1908 —)

Marika Baratashvili, poet and playwright, was born in Chiatura (Western Georgia) in 1908. She is a graduate of the philological faculty of Tbilisi University. Her earlier poems are mainly lyrical, but she has also written some long poems. The poems "Nanuli," "Khachagana," appearing in separate volumes have attracted favourable notice.

Besides poems Marika Baratashvili has tried her hand with success in writing plays and scripts for films. Her comedy "Marina" occupies a prominent place in the repertory of the leading theatres of the Soviet Union and many countries of Europe.

TOO LATE

Love stirred "tumults in my breast.
From that hour I knew no rest,
Chains held tight my heart completely,
Fires burned through me singing sweetly.
Too late, too late.

Now, tears rain into my soul;
Crashing waves over it roll.
Smothered anguish upward rise
Like hot lava to my eyes.
But I stifle tears and sorrow,
For despair comes with the morrow.
Heavy, heavy is my heart,
For we part; yes, we must part.

Happiness for me is broken.
All my hopes remain unspoken.
My heart lifts a heavy load
As I leave you on the road.

I am left alone, alone,
With the beatings of my heart.

TO ALL THE MOTHERS OF THE WORLD

I ask my friends, the doves, to fly
O'er many a mountain high and sea,
And bring, O women of the world,
To you a little note from me.
No words of gold and sparkling gems
Adorn my little note to you,
But every thought is intertwined
With throbbing heart-strings warm and true.
I ask my feathered friends to span
The highest skies with wings unfurled
And bring warm greetings, love and peace
To all the women of the world.
Here, in our country, spring has come;
The very hills and valleys sing;
Even the stream awakes to hum
As buds burst forth to welcome spring.
All seek a road to reach the sun
With eyes uplifted to the light.
See, poppies red have scaled flagstaffs
And flirt with sunbeams in delight.
Our spring glows like a fairy dream,
Makes nature glad and life rejoice,
Engenders beauty in all things
And winter's blast and frost destroys.

Would you were here now at my side
To speak of what we mothers feel.
Though skin be dark or snowy white
And eyes more silver than bright steel,
Though eyes be blue or black as jet
The hearts of mothers everywhere,
Of different lands and different creeds
Are full of love and mother care
When man is anxious, sunk in pain,
Despised and scorned, by life oppressed,
He turns to that sweet breast where once
His infant griefs were hushed to rest.
When a mother hears, "O mother, help!"
Her heart, though trembling like a leaf
Is ready to receive the bullet
And die to bring her child relief.
Do you know that we call the earth
In Georgia — motherland or earth,
And everything beloved bears
The name of woman from its birth.
Huge mountains turn, wild seas are calmed
By woman's will and mother's breath.
A Georgian woman's veil could part
Two in a fight for life or death.
If skies are darkened by black clouds
Our hearts like veils we will unfurl!

Who gave death right to count the days
Of any living boy or girl?

I ask you, women of the world,
O Indians, Greeks and all the rest,
What right has death to revel on?
Enough the scar left in our breast.
Let us defend our children's rights,
Their happiness and future days,
And in a song of mutual joy
To sun-lit skies our voices raise.
I ask my feathered friends to span
The highest skies with wings unfurled
And bring warm greetings, love and peace
To all the women of the world.

MAQVALA MREVLISHVILI

(1909 —)

Maqvala Mrevlishvili was born in Tbilisi in 1909, in the family of an outstanding Georgian artist. Having finished school in 1926, she entered the philological faculty of Tbilisi University, from which she graduated in 1930. Since then she has been working in various public and cultural establishments. At present she is assistant editor of a magazine for children, "Dila" ("Morning").

She began to write early. Her poems have appeared in Georgian magazines since 1926. While still a student, she took part in a number of expeditions the aim of which was to collect and investigate Georgian folk poetry. This greatly helped the young poetess to study the life of her native country and to delve into the rich treasury of national folklore. Owing to this the poetic works of Maqvala Mrevlishvili are characterized by a vivid sense of actuality, by great truthfulness and veritably, national form.

M. Mrevlishvili also writes plays dealing with both historical subjects and with the contemporary life of the Soviet people.

THE HANGING BRIDGE

The hanging bridge, a hair's breadth bridge,
Above dark swirling waters deep,
An airy path that overlooks
A chasm, perilous and steep.
Scarce a foothold, slippery, wet
By sprays that on it splashing leap.

The bridge is spanned between two cliffs,
A thread-like, narrow, sky-high way.
Place one foot on it and at once
The hanging bridge will gently sway.

It sports with you and makes you yield
Your body to a swinging dance,
Then swift, as if on air, your feet
Trip lurching forward in a prance.
"You may get dizzy, look not down!"
The waves hum with a warning glance.

One step on it and stumbling feet
Reel as the bridge begins to sway.
Below, the watching waters laugh
And playfully fling up the spray...
Our love, my dear, is like that bridge,
Relentless, frolicsome and gay.

* * *

Why were you named a sunflower,
My lovely one?
For, but your drooping head
And not your eyes
Turn towards the sun?
One must be bold indeed
To look upon that lire-lit face.
The scraggy tangled weed,
Beneath a fence,
Looks brazen-faced and bolder
At the sun than you.

SUNFLOWER

The joy of all your days and life

Is but the sun,

Light of the world.

When morning breaks, bright genial beams

Myriad-hued

From it is hurled.

Perhaps the sun with eyes of love

Pursues another sun on high,

And cares not whom its rays fall on

Or who beneath its radiance lie.

RAIN

It rained.

 Dew Kittened on the grass,

But when it strewed the brook

 I laughing thought:

Why does it take such pains?!

SILK

With faces fair and lissome limbs
Some fairies dance with revelry;
Their merry voices, glad and free
Rise in the air like melody.
In lengths of streaming gold their locks
Flow down midst rays that gleam and thrill;
Then to the sound of humming soft
They dance like sunbeams on a rill.
The shuttle 'mong the maidens glides,
And swiftly passes to and fro;
His quips and jests and sprightly talk
Make smiles on their sweet faces glow.
"I'll bring you beauty and delight,
O maidens mine, O fairies fair;
I burn for you, my soul's on fire,
O maids with lovely flowing hair.
The burning sparks that fly from him
The fairies in their hair enfold.
The shuttle holds their locks and turns
And twists them into braids of gold,
He sues and woos and weaves a snare
Where charms and magic intertwine.
Entranced the maidens yield and lo!
They're changed to shimmering fabric fine!
The hearts of countless looms now thrill
And quiver as the fairies hide
Within the refuge of the looms
Their silken locks now firmly tied.

* * *

The cloth like petals of a rose
In graceful folds and softness lies.
A rustling low of silk is heard,
And lo, we see before our eyes —
A meadow decked with honey drops
And dew that through the twilight peeped;
A rosy strawberry all crushed
Just where a deer had lightly leaped;
Snow flakes throng all about a piece
Of azure that had gone astray;
Wine, seen through crystal, sparkling winks
In symphony of colours gay.
The colours from the Georgian bowers?
The white more soft and white than milk,
The gold and azure of our skies
Are spun and woven in our silk.

* * *

Thus robes of richest silks the sons

And daughters of our land adorn.
In happiness and joy are made,
In happiness and joy are worn.

IRAKLI ABASHIDZE

(1909 —)

The early poems of Irakli Abashidze reflect the pathos of the industrial reconstruction of the country. Light, joyous tones characterize his poetic palette. He shows an extremely developed feeling for melody.

The epic of the Patriotic War of the Soviet people has broadened and enriched I. Abashidze's stock of poetic themes and images. The most remarkable of the poems written by him during the war is "Captain Bukhaidze". All the characteristic traits of I. Abashidze's poetic talent are fully reflected in it — a sincerely lyrical tone, truthfulness and spontaneity, clearness of form, a lofty simplicity and popularity of poetic craftsmanship. He is now the chairman of the Writer's Union of Georgian S. S. R.

GEORGIA

Georgia's beauty leaves me speechless,
All her wonders make me breathless!
Though I know why leaves fall sighing,
Why the lark sings upward flying,
How the fragrance ooze from pine-trees,
And the fires from pearls in deep seas.
Breezes murmuring in the shadows,
Skipping, skimming over meadows,
Blushes of the bee-kissed roses,
Peace that in the woods reposes.
I know why the oak-tree towers
Over timid little flowers,
Why my heart weeps with the willow,
Or rejoices with the swallow.
I know what the waves are saying
When the gale comes wildly playing,
What the billows feel when leaping,
What the ocean dreams when sleeping.
Bolts of thunder pealing loudly,
Ice-bound peaks with heads raised proudly,
Melodies that love composes,
Subtle thoughts that man discloses.
Georgia's beauty leaves me speechless,
All her wonders make me breathless,
Strength of eloquence avoids me.
To describe her is beyond me.
Words are mute and phrases helpless,
All attempts of speech are hopeless...
I must die,
In vain my yearning,
I must die,
Thus longing, burning.

EVERY SONG

Every song goes back to somewhere,
Every song by years is wrought,
Every song goes back to someone,
Lost, forgotten now by thought.

Month of roses leaves its fragrance
And its colours in some song.
February winds and tempests
To another song belong.

In loud strains we hear the deluge
That had raged throughout the land,
Or behold the torch of freedom
Glowing high above our strand.

There is music sweet and soothing
Humming mother's lullaby,
Music where I hear my father
Call me in a cheering cry.

Every song goes back to somewhere,
Every song by years is wrought,
Every song goes back to someone,
Lost, forgotten now by thought...

But, my dear one, since I found you,
Every song by love is wrought,
Every song reminds me of you,
Ever in my heart and thought.

CAN YOU E'ER FORGET?

If a Georgian true you are
And speak the language of your laud.
And have a home to love, and eyes
To gaze upon your native strand,

And while you gladly greet a guest
With open hands and heart aglow,
While love for friend and kin exists
And bitter hatred for the foe,

Can you forget the birthplace of
Your sires who fought the enemy,
Who for your country's honour strove
To crush the might of tyranny?

There shine your sun, your moon and snow;
There lies your heritage of old;
Ruins of ancient Georgian homes
In Euphrates vale you still behold.

The boundaries that you have oft
Seen in your dreams are there. And lo!
Khakhuli stands before your eyes,
And Oshki's bells ring soft and low.

So can you e'er forget the marks
Left on the ancient Georgian road
By Georgian horsemen who through fire
And steel on it to battle rode?

The cradle of your sires is there...
So, if you are a Georgian true,
Then listen to the pleading cry
Your fallen homestead sends to you!

CAPTAIN BUKHAIDZE

I am a Georgian, named Bukhaidze,
Buried upon a mountain high.
Could I but rise again, my brothers,
From the dark grave wherein I lie!

I am no more, for I am dead,
But gladly would I sacrifice
My life once more for that sweet earth
That now upon my bosom lies.

Tell Georgia's spreading fields of green,
Snow-covered peaks and azure sky
That here, on Balkharet'i mount
Bukhaidze crushed the enemy.

I barred the Pass of Dariel,
Struck down the serpents with this hand.
Then I fell dead. But no! I live!
I live, and guard my motherland!

Georgians! your duty is to serve
Your land and for her rights to brave
All woes! The glory of dying
For Georgia illumines the grave!

ALEXANDER GOMIASHVILI

(1911 —)

Alexander Gomiashvili commenced his literary activity in 1929 when his poems appeared in a YCL paper. His originality, both as regards the themes of his poems and his poetic voice, at once attracted attention. At that time, he mostly depicted his native hills, the breaking down of the patriarchal life and manners of the hillmen and the penetration of the spirit of new times into the highlands of Georgia. The poet borrowed the epic form of verse from the rich treasury of the folk poetry of the hillmen. Having spent a number of years in the ranks of the Soviet Army, the poet gave a broad presentation of the life and spirit of Soviet soldiers.

One of Al. Gomiashvili's ballad "The Last Day of Ketskhoveli" gives the image of that fervent revolutionary, Lado Ketskhoveli, the intimate friend and helpmate of Stalin in the years of his work in Georgia and the Transcaucasus.

THE BRIDE OF KHEVI

(Mqinvari Peak)

Have you ever seen the Bride of Khevi
In the waking dawn's pale light,
All tremulous with softest radiance,
Rearing high her graceful neck
Proud against a pearly sky?

O Bride of Khevi, in my heart
For you there is a song;
I have hid its fire of melody
Within my breast.

But lo!

With a sudden flash of wonder,
Through soft floating mists of dawn,
Like a diadem,
 Jewel-studded,
Like a garland,
 Myriad-hued,
From that snow-capped mountain rises
A rainbow, high above the Bride!
And in fearless joy and rapture
I fling up high my eager song
 For all to hear.

WHERE I WAS BORN

Sweet memories bring back the place
Where my forefathers built their home,
Stephantsminda near Mqinvari
Is in my heart where'er I roam.

And you, my home above the clouds,
The garden of my infancy...
Ev'n now I hear my mother's voice
And father's lusty, cheering cry.

Once more I seem to be at home,
My native sun shines in the sky.
I hear a cradle rocking soft,
The humming of a lullaby.

I see my youthful mother sitting
Before the fireside burning bright,
Hear in the rocking of the cradle
The horses trampling in the night.

I see my father and my brothers
Before the gathered harvest stand,
And in my mother's nana growing
Another horseman for the land.

A moon shines over Mqinvari —
A sickle moon — an earring white.
Mqinvari Peak looks down upon
The Dariel ranges with delight.

Among these mountains was I born,
Their songs and legends made me strong,
O would that I had left upon
The eagle's wing my childhood's song!

O home, I left my youth with you!
Where is the image of my spring!?
The eagles sit upon your roof
With blinking eyes and folded wing.

The dream is gone. Pain passes through
Me as I slowly close the door.
The winds are rocking in the attic
An empty cradle with a roar.

No figure of a bent old father
Or of a mother now appear,
No humming of a lullaby,
No lusty call or shout of cheer.

I stand before my childhood's home,

Into its coming days I peer —
New lullabies, new lusty calls
Will soon replace, the silence here.

TO MY SWEETHEART

The crash of cannon fills the air.
A searing flame zigzagging flies
Across the skies that with the blaze
Flare up and blind the watchful eyes;
And for one instant are revealed
The gaping trenches in the light
And flitting forms that melt within
The Stygian darkness of the night.

Now all is still and I recall
As in a dugout dark I lie
The words of hope you said to me,
My dear, when I bade you good-bye.
"Know, he who has a gallant horse
Is ever ready for a fight,
And he who has a loving wife
Will come back home and know delight."
Your beauty makes me breathless, dear,
As smiles light up your face divine.
Your image glorifies my soul
Yet, dearest one, you are not mine...

The war-horse flies across the fields;
No ruling reins, nor curbs it fears,
And does not heed the cannons' roar
As swift as wind through fire it tears.
Dear, love for you has golden wings,
Inspires me on to deeds of might.
It has no bounds, and stirs my soul
To rise in pride to nobler height.
What is a horse? What is a wife?
What is our life without true love?
Alas, love never will return
If once it leaves the heart to rove.
Through whistling bullets, bursting shells
I seem to hear your voice divine.
Your image glorifies my soul
Yet, dearest one, you are not mine...

The wind comes roaring from afar,
Then wails over the dusky plain;
And o'er the woods where lurk the tanks,
It screams as if in mortal pain.
No more does Amirani feel
The vulture's beak both day and night.
The Amiranian fire makes
The mountain glow like crystal bright...

Your beauty makes me breathless, dear,
As smiles light up your face divine.
Your image thrills my soul, and yet —

You're not my wife, beloved mine.

ANDRO TEVZADZE
(1912 —)

Andro Tevzadze was born in the village of Gomi (Western Georgia). He began to write verses early. His first book of poems, "The First Spring", was published in 1937. This was followed by other editions.

A. Tevzadze has a great love for and understanding of children and his verses for children are enjoyed by old and young alike. Many of his poems have been put to music.

A. Tevzadze has been connected with many periodicals and magazines. It is noteworthy to mention that he has contributed to newspapers and magazines many interesting essays and articles.

At present he is the director of the "Sabchota Mtserlis" Publishing house.

WATERFALL

Waterfall, why all this uproar,
Why this laughter, why this splashing?
The valley opens wide its portals
Yet you storm it, wildly crashing,

On the mountain's arms you slumbered
Like a crystal maid reposing.
Why were you sent down the cliff side
Plunging, roaring, downwards jostling?

Yet your laughter rings forth loudly
As you leave behind your birthplace.
Will you go back to the mountains
With your up-turned, smiling, bright face.

No soft moss clings to your body
For you love turmoil and strife.
Do you know advancing motion
Is the essence of our life?

Why this noise and peals of laughter?
What makes you so madly joyous?
Like all life you are resistless,
Animated, sportive, boist'rous.

Forests fold you to their bosoms.
The sun and moon shed gold and silver.
You are youth, astounding, deathless,
Laughing, dashing on for ever.

Could I catch your mirthful laughter!
Could I live like you the longer!
Laugh on, waterfall, your laughter
Makes you spring's eternal songster.

MY SONG

As I go on in life,
No storms can frighten me.
My soul is strong as winds,
My heart's a spacious sea.

The blue skies of my life
Are often floods of tears
Yet I have never felt
Life's hopelessness and fears,

Green envy has pursued
Me, strove to seize my soul
But I, who sought but truth,
Attained a true man's goal.

My shoulders reach the skies;
Serene, I do my best,
And offer to the world
Sparks bursting from my breast.

GRIGOL ABASHIDZE

(1913 —)

The poetic activities of Grigol Abashidze began in the thirties of the current century, and the very first verse he published established his reputation. At the dawn of his poetic activity, he wrote a poem entitled "Spring in Black Town", one of the best works of modern Georgian poetry.

G. Abashidze's poem "George VI" describes a dramatic episode in the age-long struggle of the Georgian people against foreign invaders. During the Patriotic War, the poet wrote two poems "The Invincible Caucasus" and "The Dream of Zarzma", a poetic embodiment of the most elevated and noble qualities in the character of Soviet man.

During these last years, G. Abashidze has published many volumes of verse. At the same time, he does much successful work as a writer for children.

THE FIRE-FLY

Eyes you have but for the blue night,
Wings that jeweled dewdrops bear.
Often have I seen you tangled
In the web of maidens' hair,
Like a scintillating starlet
Twinkling in a dark blue sky.
You are flashes drawn from lightnings,

Sparkles in a lover's eye.
Sickle bright you lure from meadows
Shadow-hidden scents of hay,
Leaving fragrance on the night air
As you pass me, star astray.
With white wings of fire you hover
For a moment on your way
To place a halo over roses
As in joy towards you they sway.

Flying flints of lightning arrows,
Like an evanescent gleam,
Ever distant, lead me onward
Like a ne'er forgotten dream.
Gone!

In vain my quest to find you!
Gone forever from the eye...
Would I had you for a candle,
Little fire-fly, when I die.

SUNSET ON THE TBILISI SEA

The sea is gay with shining vessels
Tinted by the setting sun.
Breezes skim o'er deep blue waters
That wave crests try in vain to shun.

I close my eyes in meditation...
But when again I look, the sky
Has rolled a ball into the waters,
Flaming, blood-red, from on high.

Circling swallows hovered expectant,
A sudden flash,
Red turns to gold,
A burst of flame that would have been
Music to finer ears than mine.

The landscape trembles into darkness,
Soft shadows glide in woodland glades,
Low voices mingle with the dark leaves
That stir and rustle in the shades.

Thus,
 When the drowsy birds are calling
 Softly to the drowsy night,
 When the heavy eve is swooning
 Through a falling, waning light,
 Then my dreams and wistful longings
 Bring a vision dear to me,
 Vision of to-morrow's sunset,
 Sunset by that deep blue Sea.

THE FLOWER OF THE RIVER SIDE

Long and breathlessly I wait your coining, dear.
Among sweet flowers you seem a streamlet or a fawn.
You are the embodiment of early spring,
The unextinguished star-like lantern of my dawn.

Ev'n undeserving eyes gaze at the sun,
Seeking shadows in the brilliance of its light.
Blinded by the brightness of my love for you,
The shadows that about you throng disperse in fright.

Look! green envy also comes to look at you,
Crawls towards your beauty, writhing like a leech,
But convulsed with rage and hate it hissing dies
At the purity of grace it cannot reach.

Deep within the darkened abyss of my soul
Love has placed your image there to light my way.
You, the evanescent lantern of my life,
Find abode within my heart's impassioned lay.

Late!... I hear you coming softly through the night.
Among sweet flowers you seem a streamlet or a fawn.
You are called the flower of the River Side,
The unextinguished star-like lantern of my dawn.

BANNERS

When our fair native land was whole,
When we in happiness did bide,
The sacred banner of David
And Gorgassali was our pride.

Their fame was great, yet Tamari
For grace and wisdom was renowned.
Her lashes sent the sun its rays,
And love its image in her found.

Those who but once beheld her beauty
Her willing slaves fore'er became.
Beloved was she by all the Georgians,
Yet — Georgia's flag bears not her name.

A ruler great was Irakli,
Whose deeds of fame like thunder roared,
And valiantly he hewed the way
To victory through fire and sword.

A mighty king was he and loved,
Recorded in the rolls of fame,
The pride of every Georgian heart,
Yet — Georgia's flag bears not his name.

Time whirled wild tempests o'er the land
That groaned enwrapped in raging flames;
Brave men made Georgia whole again,
Yet — Georgia's flag bears not their names.

The two whose names that standard bore
Were nursed on battles, fire and steel;
Vakhtangi who was 'Lion-Wolf' called
Was wolf and lion in might and zeal.

Who thirsted more for fame than he?
Whose deeds in India rang high?
His peerless sword pierced highest peaks,
Unfurling rainbows in the sky.

Then David placed that sword beyond
The Pontus and the Caspian. Lo!
Even now his blazing eyes flash fire
From the fresco to us below.

In David's time, in Vakhtang's time,
Our foes knew only tears and sighs;
The flag of David waved on high,
And Gorgassali's reached the skies.

They are no more! but no! their fame

Lives on fore'er. Their banner bright
Embroidered with gold lions pours
Over the past a radiant light.

The land became the prey of Turks,
Of Chingiz-Khan and Tamerlane,
Yet even then the Georgians saved
That flag from scourging hurricane.

But now the ensign faded, torn,
Leads no brave troops to victory;
Its warfare's o'er, it rests in peace
With memories for company.

Another flag now leads us on,
A flag of liberty and right,
And with the last drop of his blood
The Georgian for that flag will fight.

The flag that freed us from our chains
The way to happiness has led,
And brought us everlasting joy
Is our country's banner red.

The banner like a flaming torch
Inspires and guides us on our way;
And every Georgian's hope and pride
Is that red flag of crimson ray.

Now when the cannons deafening roar,
And foes from us defeated run,
The flag of David and Vakhtang
Gore-stained and weary slumbers on.

But when the morning brings the light
And freedom's ringing voice is heard,
These flags feel warmth steal through their folds
As in their sleep they hear the word.

They wake and listen with delight,
The red flag kindles them to life;
Decked with gold lions they also wish
To lead the people through the strife.

They see the flag that bears the name
Of freedom glow in victory,
O'erfraught with gratitude they bless
That flag of Right and Liberty.

ALIO ADAMIA

(1914 —)

Alio Adamia was born in 1914 in Batumi. His first poem was published in 1930 in "Akhalgazrda Communisti." He is the author of many books of poems and ballads. He has also published several volumes of short stories. Adamia has made tours all over Georgia and the result is two interesting books describing the new life of Georgia.

TUSHI MAIDENS DANCING

The hall was spread
 With coloured carpets,
Guitars, panduris
 Swelled in song.
When May is born
Do poppies for December long?

The Tushi maidens
 From every side
Come dancing, soaring
 As if on air.
The wind devoid
 Of strings now played
Upon long braids of hair.

 The Tushi maidens,
 Tall and slender.
Gently sway —
 Alaznis waves.

The Tushi maidens'
 Beauty burns
 Like subtle fire
While from afar
 Their modest smiles
 Sweet dreams inspire.
Panduris hummed,
 Guitar strings throbbed,
 The dancing, whirling —
A beauty spell!

The dancing stopped,
 And all at once
 The maidens, wind,
 In silence fell.

A SONG

How lovely bloom the peach and apple trees!
Alone I wander in a garden fair.
I left Tbilisi yesterday and yet
I'm eager to be back, for you are there.

The poplar and the asps are rustling softly.
Mid leaves the rustle of the breezes mild.
Now tell me, dear, on such a peaceful evening,
Why does my heart beat turbulent and wild?

A tiny ray that pierces not the dark
Can never make my heart feel joy or pain.
The breezes sway the asp and poplar trees,
But to the roots a way they ne'er can gain.

Your gentle breath delved deep into my roots,
For like a wondrous dream you sudden came.
Though far away this lovely spring of flowers,
Your image is before me like a flame.

I'm far from you, the trees are rustling quietly,
Mid leaves the rustle of the breezes mild.
Now tell me, dear, on such a peaceful evening,
Why does my heart beat turbulent and wild?

REVAZ MARGIANI

(1916 —)

Revaz Margiani was born in the village of Mulakhshi (Upper Svaneti) in 1916. His first book of poems was published in 1940. It was followed by other editions of verses, as for example, "Mumli Mukhasa", "Poems and Ballads", "My Friends", "Selected Poems" and others. Many of his poems have been translated into other languages.

He worked as editor of the children's magazine "Dila" (Morning); from 1952 he is the editor of the magazine "Pioneer".

SALUTE

Stars are falling one by one,
Somersaulting like a clown.
Probably the sky's on fire
And the stars in fright drop down.

Some are red, and some are blue,
Some are green or yellow bright;
Like a garden does the roof
Of my house gleam in the night.

Who has ever seen a rainbow
Glowing in the sky at night?
Can it be a bolt of thunder
Or a lightning in its flight?

True, the sky must be on fire
For the heaven's all aflame.
Why do songs in mighty choirs
All attention from us claim?

Stars are falling from the heavens,
Fire lights up the skies like day!
No! it is no fire or lightning —
Fire salutes the Ninth of May!

MOTHER

There is no one dearer,
No one quite as near,
No one wiser, no one kinder
Than my mother dear.

She it was who taught me
To lisp my a b c's,
Guided me to wisdom,
Showed the way to peace.

Often in my childhood,
Even now when grown,
On my mother's bosom
Like a child I groan;

With her arms about me,
My head upon her breast,
Gently does she calm me,
Hushes me to rest.

What a load of troubles
Every trial and care,
Sacrifice, devotion
A mother's heart can bear.

There is no one dearer,
No one quite as near,
No one wiser, no one kinder
Than my mother dear.

L ADO ASSATIANI

(1917 — 1943)

Lado Assatiani, one of the most promising of Georgian poets, was born in Georgia in 1917. He began, to write verses as a child. His first book of poems was published in 1940 when he was but twenty-three years old. Tin's was soon followed by other editions.

Lado Assatiani's love for his country is the foundation of all his work and his inspired, melodious songs have burned into Georgian literature and penetrated into Georgian hearts as few utterances of man have done.

Many of his poems have been translated into other languages.

THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE

In Georgian mounts you were created,
Language of love, song and blessing!

From pre historic tribes descending,
Torrential water falls, white dashing.
Ice bound peaks eternal melting,
Soft, magnificent and flashing.
Flocks of sheep on emerald pastures,
Georgian shield on shield loud clashing.

From pre-historic tribes descending,
Peeling forth to-day so loudly,
Under aurous hues of dewdrops,
In the breeze ripe wheat sways proudly.

Hammers fall on anvils thudding.
Look, a star on seas is riding.
In the shade of this dark fortress
Love that fears is sweet in hiding.

Worshippers till morn make merry
When the Lord is celebrated.
On soft pillows sleep sinks quietly
By sweet dreams illuminated.

In Georgian mounts you were created,
Language of love, song and blessing!

IN GEORGIA

Georgians born on Georgian soil
Always wished deep in their breast:
"Would our youth come back to us
With the valour it possessed."

Georgians never look for death;
Fighting they may fall and die,
But the hope that life lives on
Bursts forth like a slogan cry.

Even when a Georgian died
The wish beat stronger in his breast:
Would our youth come back to us
With the valour it possessed."

Let all know that Georgia's sons
Never shunned a valiant strife.
We may die in battle, yet,
Even then we leave not life.

Life is feeling, warmth and motion.
Every door to death lock tight.
And let us bless the happy moment
When we first beheld its light.

ON THE WAY

I ask for happiness,
You offer me despair.
You do not hear me, why?
 Do thoughts hold you in chain?
A little patience, dear,
O just a little bit,
And the longed-for mountains, hills
 You soon will see again.

As on a misty morn
The black clouds sudden part
And disappear before
The sunrays streaming through,
Thus hosts of ravens, crows,
 That overspread the skies,
Will scudding fly away,
And Tbilisi, my dear,
 Will glow before your eyes.

Look! how like a bull
The train attacks the dark,
Rushing headlong, tunnelled
 Air caves ever near.
A little patience, dear,
O just a little bit,
And we will see once more
 The nightingale and deer.

A little patience, dear,
O just a little bit,
And you will see Krtsanissi
 Flash before your eyes,
Then the church of Metekhi,
Where queen Tamari prayed
Before His Holy Image,
 Rise up against the skies.

I ask for happiness,
You offer me despair.
You do not hear me, why?
 Do thoughts hold you in chain?
A little patience, dear,
O just a little bit,
And the longed-for mountains, hills
 You soon will see again.

JOSEPH NONESHVILI

(1921 —)

Joseph Noneshvili was born in the village of Kardanakhi. On graduating from Tbilisi State University in 1943 he enlisted in the army and served till 1946.

J. Noneshvili's first poem was published in the magazine "Our Generation" in 1938, and in 1940 his first book of poems came off the press.

He has travelled much and the varied scenes and people he has seen and met are reflected in many of his poems with a simplicity of style and masterly choice of words and expression.

His poems comprise several volumes: "After the Tempest" "There are Friends Everywhere", and many others. His poems have been translated into many foreign languages.

* * *

'Tis said one lovely moonlight night
A deer came wandering to a pool.
The pool, surrounded by tall reeds,
Lay motionless and tempting cool.
He saw his image mirrored there,
And at the antlers gazed with pride,
But at the long and slender legs
With deep regret and chagrin sighed.
Then suddenly a lion's roar
Awoke him from his reverie,
And in an instant the slighted legs
Like lightning flew across the lea.
Within the covert of the woods
He dashed to find a safe retreat,
But the branches of the thickets caught
The much-coveted antlers neat.

Now give a thought to this old tale
For like the deer, perhaps, your eyes
See but the beauty of your face
Blind to all beneath the skies.
So if in praise you find delight
Then know, remember well, my dear,
Your beauty may destroy you as
The antlers high destroyed the deer.

* * *

That she would dare climb such a height! Well,
I've never seen the like in all my life!
Yet here she came and deftly carved her name
Upon your bosom with a cruel knife.
You could not rend the skies with screams and cries.
I wonder what her thoughts were. If she knew
That every pain inflicted, stifled sighs.
I know you'll curse her for her cruelty.
.Hut why? She's only venturous and wild.
Now look at me, a pale-faced poet am I,
Insignificant, by nature weak and mild.
No pity did she show me but devised
Love-tricks and every wile my heart to tame.
She slit my breast and on my heart engraved,
Engraved upon my bleeding heart — her name.
But I do not reproach her or complain,
For all her childish pranks will pass with time.
O sweet is she and fair, so let us all
Forgive and overlook a young girl's crime.

* * *

Why I look?
My eyes desire to see at once
The faults and merits of your features fair,
For if I fall
In love with you then all at once
Of only loveliness I'll be aware.

KHUTA BEEULAVA

(1924 —)

Khuta Berulava, a talented poet and translator, was born in 1924 in the town of Zugdidi (Western Georgia). He is a graduate of the Gorky Literary Institute of Moscow.

Khuta Berulava's first book of verse "Love for One's Native Land" appeared in 1944. He has since published more than 15 volumes of poems.

K. Berulava has enriched Georgian literature with his fine translations of Eussian, Ukrainian and Armenian poetry (Pushkin, Lermontov, Necrassov, Bloc, Issakian, etc).

* * *

The ocean asked a seaman, "What is fear?
Have you seen its face in grief or joy,
Or ever heard its awe-inspiring voice?
Tell me, have you seen fear, sailor-boy?"

The youth was puzzled, wondered what was fear,
Wondered much but knew not what to say.
Dropping down his puzzled, jet-black eyes,
The youth with down-cast head went on his way.

The ocean bade the waters rage and swell
Like huge mountains turbulent and grim.
The youth was blinded by the wings of death
That descending, hovered over him.

Has fear made you tremble, sailor-boy?"
The ocean in a voice like thunder cried.
A dark frown covered eyes suppressing fire,
And with a look of pride the youth replied,

"I have never seen fear's dreaded face,
Nor in terror from its violence fled".
Then he raised his voice and sang of life,
And quickly went his way with up-thrown head.

ANNA KALANDADZE

(1924 —)

Anna Kalandadze "a poet of Nature's own making", was born in Kutaisi (Western Georgia) in 1924. She is a promising, modest young woman, working at, the Academy of Sciences, Georgia, and is, at the same time, a member of the Writer's Union.

Only three small editions of her verses have been published but they have enriched Georgian literature. The special charm of Anna Kalandadze's poems, most of them short and showing the mood of the moment, lies in their being the fruits of a brilliant imagination, sensitive nature and the exquisite choice of words.

MY HEART IS BURSTING INTO LAUGHTER

When I pass a dewy meadow,
The dew amuses, gladdens me.
Wind,
 Bring a blossom from the peach tree;
Wind,
 Strew the leaves all over me.
Like a madman, like a madman,
With dishevelled hair the meadow
Roars with laughter as the tree,
Fearfully with trembling branches,
Sheds its jewelry on me.
I was also rendered frantic,
Like a madman, like a madman...
No, it is not I that's roaring,
Bursting into laughter.
 See!
It's my heart that's laughing, laughing,
Laughing, bursting into glee...
And, my dear one, when you pass me,
Pass me in the street or lea.
Like the leaves and peach-tree blossoms,
Strew your love all over me.

A TINY TWIG AM I

The sun caresses me who asks for love,
The sky pours blueness on me from above,
The thrush sings to me (though the rest have gone)
A tiny twig, swaying here alone.

The wind steals up and bears my flowers away,
And I am left alone, trembling as I sway.
Caress me, wind, be kind, I fear your blow
For I am but a tiny little bough.

Now tell me, tell me how can I entrust
My secret to a mad, capricious gust?..
Stay, gardener, (though all the rest have gone)
A tiny twig, I fear to be alone!

FOLKLORE

AMIRANI

There was and there was not (of God's best may it be!), there was an old hunter, named Sulkalmakhi. He lived in a forest with his wife Darejan and his two little sons, Badri and Usupi. His eldest son Tsamtsumi lived in a distant country.

One evening, on his way home, after a weary day of hunting, he came to a high cliff. As it was late, he spent the night in a cave near this cliff. At dawn he heard a scream that came from the top of the cliff. After much difficulty, he reached the top. And there, in a cave, he beheld Dali, the Goddess of the wood (hunt). She lay writhing on the ground. The Goddess on seeing him begged him to take a knife and cut open her womb and take from it the baby that was there. She told him that a stranger had come to her while she was sleeping, and had cut off her long golden hair, and had remained with her that night-

"If it be a boy, name him Amirani. Take him, and bring him up and love him as thine own."

The hunter did as she told him. He cut open her womb with his knife and took out the infant. It was a boy who had a golden tooth in his mouth.

The hunter took the infant home to his wife, who soon loved him even more than her own sons, so that he was called "Darejani's son". Amirani grew as much in a day as other children grow in a year.

II

Soon the hunter and his wife died, leaving the children to look after themselves. As for Amirani

Astounding was the quantity of wine he drank and food he ate.
For dinner he a bull devoured; for supper more than three he ate.
Now Badri was as gentle and as lovely as a virgin maid.
A crystal tower did Usup seem, so strong and graceful was he made.
But like a dark and lowering cloud was Amirani, ever grave.
Once Amirani and his brothers went ahunting far from home.
O'er many mountains did they wander, over plains where devils roam.
They passed the Algetisni mountain, heeding neither heat nor cold,
When sudden from its lofty summit sprang a deer with horns of gold.
Upon this strange and distant mount they saw a crystal castle fair.
They walked around the lofty tower, but could not find an entrance there,
Then Amirani struck the wall on which the sun its light did pour;
And there the castle oped its mouth, and lo! before them stood a door.
A warrior dead upon the floor, and near his head a steed they spied;
At his right side a giant sword sent flashing lustre far and wide.
His shield reached heavens high, and tore the lining of the spacious sky;
And in one corner of the room in heaps did gold and silver lie.
With loosened hair his mother knelt, and for her child she loudly cried.
His wife whose tears o'erflowed the seas sat weeping at her husband's side.

The dead man held a letter in his hand, which he had written before his death. Amirani, stooped down, took it and read aloud...

"I beg of ye, to list to me. Usup's brother's son am I.
All trembled at my strength and might; the foe from me in fear did fly

Yet while the devi Baqbaqi is alive, no peace have I,
So, whoe'er slays that monstrous giant to him my flashing shield give I;
Whoever brings the tidings glad to him my peerless sword give I;
Whoe'er my parents buries well to him my wealth and land give I;
Whoever finds my sister's fate to him my hoard of gold give I;
Whoever buries me to him my wife and faithful steed give I."

On hearing this the brothers were greatly troubled, for it was then that they learned of the brother whom they had never seen or known of. Amirani was the first to speak. "Why do we stand here doing nothing. Let us go and seek the devi Baqbaqi. But wait, let us take away the lady, the steed and all this gold and silver before we go."

But the brothers said:
"O Amirani of the sun, desire not that what is not thine.
Else thy good name be spat upon for robbing a dead man's riches fine."

They buried the dead and locked the castle. Then they set out to find the devi. Soon they met the devi Baqbaqi who had heard of Tsamtsumi's death, and was coming to eat him.

But Amirani rushed upon the devi with his sword on high.
"No Christian wilt thou touch," he cried, "thou monster vile, I dare thee try!"
Then Amirani and the giant to all the world their strength disclosed.
Their cries like thunder echoed far as both in deadly struggle closed.
The devi felt his strength give way and down he fell upon the plain.
His arm was cleft, he howled aloud as on the ground he rolled in pain.
"Darejani's son," he cried, "O kill me not, I beg of thee!
And I shall tell thee of a maid who lives beyond a magic sea.
So fair is she that ev'n the sun has never seen the like before.
Her dress is made of wondrous silks and gold that sunbeams o'er it pour.
But one must pass great seas and mounts to reach Qamari's native strand.
I'll give to thee a cunning slave to help thee find that distant land."

Amirani wished to let the devi go free, but his brothers said: "Kill him, otherwise thou wilt regret it."

The devi had three heads. Amirani, listening to his brothers' words, cut off Baqbaqi's heads. But before he had cut off the third the devi said: "One thing I ask of thee before I die. Do not kill the three worms that will crawl out of my heads."

Amirani cut off the third head. From Baqbaqi's heads three worms crawled out. Usupi told Amirani to kill them at once, but Amirani laughed and said: "The devi could not do me any harm, so can three tiny worms do anything to me?"

Then he turned to the guide Baqbaqi had given them and told him to lead the way to Qamari, a maid such as the sun had never seen the like of.

Thus they went over hill and vale, without a rest, without delay,
Hoping to reach the destined place at close of every weary day.
They followed e'er the wary guide, and thus went on an endless way.
But soon the brothers understood the guide was leading them astray!
Then Amirani shouted loud: "Thou wretch, I'll make thee howl in woe.
Mislead us not or else I'll strike thee flat upon the ground below."
The guide soon led them to a plain where they beheld in dread dismay
Baqbaqi's worms to dragons three had grown and there before them lay!
One worm was red, the other black, the third was white; and all the three
Sang: "Amirani do we seek," as they came prancing o'er the lea.

"Come, brothers mine, and let us kill the dragons!" Amirani cried.
"Thou didst not kill the worms; so fight alone the dragons," they replied.
Then Amirani clutched the sword that like the wrath of heaven flashed:
"Help me in my distress, my sword!" and towards the dragons three he dashed.

A dreadful struggle took place. Amirani killed the white dragon. Then he killed the red one. The black dragon rushed forward belching fire and smoke. Amirani was so exhausted and weak that the monster swallowed him, and off it went to its mother, the sea. Usupi and Badri were greatly distressed. They resolved to kill the dragon. Usupi drew his bow and lo! the dragon's tail was severed off. The monster wished to wind itself about a tree and crush its prey. But it strove in vain and could only flap the stump of its tail on the ground. The dragon groaned: "O mother, help! my entrails burn and render me wild!"

"None but the son of Darejan can ever harm thee, dearest child."
"He who is in me has a tooth of gold." the dragon writhing sighed.
"Woe to thy mother and to thee, for that is Darejani's child!"

In the meantime Amirani had taken out a sharp knife which he had in his boot. He cut through the dragon's belly, and came out.

Once again the three brothers set out in search of Qamari. They went on and on beyond the sky, across the earth, through forests, across the plains, over the mountains, through storm and battle and through fire and blood. At last they came to a large castle where nine devis lived together with their wives and children. It was impossible to count the number of their sons and daughters and grandchildren.

Then Amirani rushed within and killed the devis at one blow.
Blood flowed and overflowed the house; the world gleamed in a crimson glow.
The blood rose up and filled the tower, and Amirani felt the dread
Of being drowned within the sea of blood that now had reached his head!
But suddenly his eyes beheld a struggling devi floating nigh;
He caught and threw it at the door, which opened wide, and with a cry
The blood rolled up, and like a ball of thunder left the castle high.
The brothers came into the tower and found a mount of devis dead.
They cleared the house and washed the floor which devis' blood had stained with red.
And thereafter the brothers three a life of peace and comfort led.

IV

Thus Amirani and his brothers lived happily together for some time. But, as time passed, Amirani grew sad. The thought of Qamari, the maiden unseen even by the sun, was ever in his mind. He grew restless. So one day he turned to Badri...

"Give me thy steed Snow-white," he said, "'twill lead me safe o'er land and sea;
We'll fly along the tempest's breast, and bring Qamari back with me."

Badri gave him his steed Snow-white. Amirani together with his brothers went forth to find Qamari.

Soon they came to a great sea. Amirani, leaving Usupi and Badri on the shore plunged into the sea.

Snow-white cut through the waves and Amirani in the twinkling of an eye found himself on the opposite shore, where Qamari lived.

Qamari's parents lived amidst the suns and stars in heavens high;

Above the world their castle fine hung swinging in the azure sky.
Then Amirani spurred his horse, and like an arrow made it fly;
And with his sword he cut the chain that tied the castle to the sky.
The castle fell, and Amirani to the window rode and cried:

"Qamari, come, and be my wife, in happiness with me abide."

Qamari was tidying up the house when she heard Amirani call.

"Thou must wait," she replied, "I must wash these dishes before I go with thee."

Amirani tied his horse and went in. The beautiful maiden asked him to help her.

He placed each dainty dish upon a shelf. But one little dish would not stand upright.

He tried and tried and tried in vain, he tried with all his might and zeal;

And then impatiently he threw it down and crushed it with his heel.

Then piece with piece, and dish with dish, began to speak in deafening cry;

And all the dishes upwards flew to Qamari's father in the sky.

Qamari told Amirani to make haste for —

"If my father finds us here, to escape his anger will be late."

So Amirani and Qamari rode away in great haste...

The whirling winds in fury blew; the rain like torrents flowed from high.

But Amirani wondered much to see the sun shine in the sky.

"The wind," explained Qamari, "is the dust blown up by the rushing feet of my father's men. The rain is the tears shed by my mother who is weeping for me. But Amirani, quick, lest we be overtaken."

"My Qamari," answered Amirani, "why this haste? Fear them not.

No tiny forest bird am I caught by a falcon when on high;

No rabbit caught by dogs am I; no little leaf wind-tossed am I.

My brothers two and I will cut the heads of all the coming foe,

And all thy father's men I'll lay stone dead before thee with one blow.

So let them come! Let thousands come! I'll meet them with my dagger bright.

However great their number be, however great their strength and might."

Amirani and Qamari soon reached the shore where Usupi and Badri were waiting. They looked back and saw the sea covered with ships sent by Qamari's father. The ships were full of devis and Kajis. Usupi mounted the steed Snow-white and plunged into the sea. He fell upon the Kajis and devis and killed half their number. But he was wounded and fell dead. Now Badri rushed at the enemy, and hewed and hacked them down. But he also fell wounded and died.

Amirani shot an arrow, but before following it cried:

"Far better than a shameful life is gloried death within a grave!"

Now Amirani forward rushed and made the foe before him fall;

But there was one whom none could kill, the strongest, mightiest of them all.

The lord of the devis and Kajis was Qamari's father, who was wroth to see all his army slain. He rushed in fury and anger at Amirani. Fire lighted up the sky as sword met sword. They struggled a long time, but neither could strike the other. Qamari saw with a sinking heart that Amirani was about to fall. She knew that it was impossible to kill the lord of the devis and Kajis. She called to Amirani:

"Thou fightest not as warriors should," and tears flowed from her anxious eye.

"Strike lower down to bring him down! Thy sword thou wieldest up too high."

"A house that's shattered at the base will fall, however large or high."

Her father on hearing her words cried:

"Cursed be the hussy! Hear her words! How to her father she is blind.

Like leaves do husbands thrive, but can she another father find?
Why did thy mother care for thee. It would have been better if she had brought forth a dog instead, for it would have been more faithful and true to her."

"I never sucked my mother's breast, nor ever heard a lullaby;
None cared if I lived on or died, alone, abandoned I would cry."
When Amirani heard the words he swung his mighty sword around,
And in one lightning stroke his foe, deprived of life, fell on the ground.

Amirani, victorious and happy hurried back to Qamari. But on the way he met a woman. She said to him: "Where goest thou? Why this haste? For thy beloved thou hast slain her father and his men. But who is grateful to thee for the deed? If thou wert a man thou wouldst unsheathe thy steel, and find thy brothers."

Amirani suddenly remembered Usupi's words, "For thy lady love thy brothers are willing to die." Amirani forgot Qamari. His only thought and desire was to find Usupi and Badri. He said to himself, "If I find my brothers alive, I will rejoice and be happy with them, but if they are dead, I will dig a grave, and lay myself beside them."

On the fields covered with the bodies of the devis and Kajis vultures and beasts of prey were feasting and revelling. After a long search Amirani found the dead bodies of his brothers.

"O brothers mine," he wailed aloud, "Hear how I mourn for you and cry.
Have pity! be not wroth with me; to ye I come; with ye I die."
He tried to plunge into his heart his dagger, but in vain the strife;
He knew not that if he had cut his little finger with a knife,
Then he would bleed to death and thus, with gladness, leave this woeful life.
But Amirani knew this not, so down he sat and grieving said:
"Unworthy am I ev'n of death." And on the ground his dagger laid.
But one dead Kaji sudden sat, and to the other Kajis said:
"O Kajis, listen to me now and know of what the world is made.
You hear how Amirani weeps and grieves because he cannot die;
If he cuts off his finger then the blood will flow and he will die."
On saying this the Kaji lay down again. All was as still as before.

Amirani, who had heard the words of the dead Kaji, took his dagger and cut his little finger off. The blood flowed out and he lay down beside his brothers.

"Qamari," he whispered weakly, "give up thy life for me, and die with me. Prefer me dead to even the glory of a living lion."

Amirani breathed his last. Qamari with loud wailings ran up to him.

With loosened hair, she mourns her mate; her tears with seas and oceans blend.
In pity leaves from trees drop down, and to her wailings rustlings lend.

At that moment there jumped out a little mouse. It began to lick Amirani's blood but Qamari in rage took off her shoe and throwing it at the mouse killed it.

At this the mother of the mouse came out and to Qamari said:

"Thou wanton, for thy love and sake thy mate and all thy kin are dead.
Thou canst do naught for all thy dead, while I can bring my child to life."
When both the mice had disappeared within their holes beneath the ground,
Qamari rose with beating heart, and soon that very herb she found.

Qamari applied it to Amirani, and he was restored to life. When he saw Qamari he said: "What a long time I have slept!" But Qamari said: "Thy sleep would indeed have been a long one but for the mouse." She told him what had happened. Then she applied the herb to Usupi and Badri. They both came back to life.

Then all the four, Qamari, Amirani, Usupi and Badri went home rejoicing.
O happy they, three brothers true, for whom the golden sunbeams glow;
Their wives none dare to carry off, none dare to face their deadly blow;
None dare to break within their homes, nor to their lives bring grief and woe.

Thus they lived happily. Amirani was always in search of new adventures. He killed many giants and dragons. And the wonder of his deeds spread throughout the world. For fear of him no bird flew under heaven, no ant crawled on earth. And soon there were but three devils, three wild boars, and three oak trees left standing in the world.

Many times had Amirani offended God but had always been forgiven, nevertheless —

Amirani, who had nowhere met his match, became so confident of himself, that he desired to try his strength with his Godfather, Jesus Christ.

So once when Jesus Christ stood before him he expressed his desire to wrestle with Him. Jesus Christ said that it was a sin to fight with one's Godfather. But Amirani would not be persuaded and wishing to test. His strength challenged his Godfather to wrestle with him.

"Very well, have thy wish." said Christ.

He waved a large stick above His head, and driving it deep into the ground, told Amirani to pull it out. Amirani pulled, and with one hand drew the stick out. Then his Godfather drove another stick into the ground. Again did Amirani draw it out.

"Art Thou playing with me?" he asked angrily.

"Try to draw this one out," said Jesus Christ.

And saying this He swung His stick and fixed it firmly in the ground.

The stick took root which grew so long that soon about the world it wound.

Amirani could not pull the stick from the ground. Then Jesus Christ cursed Amirani. Upon the highest peak of the Caucasus He stuck a huge iron pole, and bound Amirani to it with a chain. He left a black-eared dog with Amirani, for the dog had killed many deer loved by God. A vulture had given it birth, so that it had wings. Every day a raven brought to them a loaf of bread and a glass of wine. Amirani and the dog pulled ceaselessly at the chain the whole year long;

The pole was almost out when lo! a bird would perch upon its top.

Amirani knew that the bird was sent by God, and wishing to kill it, he flung a large iron hammer at it. The bird flew away in time to avoid the hammer.

The hammer strikes the iron pole which sinks into the ground again.

And every year do Amirani and the dog pull at the chain.

The chain thus strained at soon wears out and when about to break in twain,

The blacksmiths of the world come there and quickly make it whole again.

And Amirani's dagger lies beside him on the ground below;

But rust hath eaten up its blade; no more doth it with lustre glow.

"God forbid!" every Georgian prays, that Amirani ever break the chain and become free "He will first kill all the blacksmiths, and then dare defy even God."

Let woe be far, and joy be near; chaff be there, and flour be here;

God's blessings on the minstrel old, and all who list with eager ear!

And up a mount I push a cart; then down the hill it rolling flies.

We'll live in joy and die in peace, and then we'll dwell in Paradise.

LAY OF THE HUNTSMAN AND THE TIGER

A beardless youth once went a hunting;
He roamed o'er hills and valleys through
The forests dense; then swiftly crossed
The heights where rhododendrons grew.
Upon a mighty cliff a herd
Of deer appeared before his eye;
He killed their king, and then, a sound
Of clashing horns rang in the sky.
But suddenly a tiger sprang
Before him on the rocky height;
And like a flash of lightning leaped
On him with eyes that lit the night.
The huntsman and the tiger closed
In dreadful struggle; and the world
Groaned as the mount was rent in twain,
And rocks and pine were upward hurled.
The youth fought bravely, yet could not
Ward off the deadly claws that tore
His flesh, nor fend the cruel teeth
That rent the coat of mail he wore.
Bravely the youth endured the blows,
And like a bursting thunder-cloud
Struck at the tiger with such force
That down it crashed with roaring loud.
The earth shook as the tiger's weight
Pressed down the cliff with blood imbued;
The youth lay weltering in his gore;
His face with gashes was forehewed.

But who will tell the mother how
Her son upon the mount lay dead,
How in a well-fought struggle he
Had overthrown the tiger dread?
An awful hush, then suddenly
Heart-rending screams and cries resound:
In streams of tears now turned to seas
The mother's bursting heart is drowned.
With loosened hair the mother rushed
Where her son had in combat died;
Beside him was a naked sword
That to the hilt with blood was dyed.
"Though awe-inspiring was thy strength,
True wisdom did not guide thee on;
Though might met might in mortal strife,
Death claimed thee for its own, my son!"
She cleansed each gore-stained wound with tears;
Smoothed down the soiled and matted hair;
Then kissed the chilly pallid lips,
And heaved a sigh of cold despair.
"My son, no more will I mourn thee,
Weep bitterly, nor beat my breast.

My son, no more will I mourn thee,
For thou art sleeping and at rest;
Wherefore should I grieve bitterly,
Weep seas or burst my heart with woe
For thee who fought so valiantly,
And braved the tiger's dreadful blow?
No sobs will fill thy mother's breast;
No tears will overflow her eyes,
For proud is she to have a son
Who on the shrine of courage lies.
Farewell, my boy, farewell to thee!
May God receive thy spirit free.
No coward's blood ran through thy veins;
My bosom swells in pride for thee!"

The mother often in her dreams
Beheld the tiger, saw him tear
In rage with deadly claws the coat
Of mail her son was wont to wear.
Then lo! the youth would seize the beast
And dash him dead upon the ground.
Such visions ever vexed her dreams,
And thus, in sleep no rest she found.
Once, waking from a troubled sleep,
Thoughts seized and shook her burning brain.
"What hand can soothe more gently than
A mother's when in bitter pain?
Perhaps the tiger's mother grieves
And mourns her dead with loud lament;
Perhaps her heart is bursting now
With sobs that rend the firmament.
So quickly will I go to her
And strive to soothe her sorrow deep.
She'll proudly tell me of her child,
And we in common grief will weep."

NOTES

- Alazani — a river in Eastern Georgia, affluent of the Mtkvari.
Aragvi — an affluent of the Mtkvari rising on the southern slopes of the Caucasus.
Arghun — a river rising on the northern slopes of the Caucasus.
Aspiroz — Hesperus.
Balkhreti — district in the Caucasus.
Bazaleti — a small lake north of Tbilisi.
Betania — a church and old monastery in the environs of Tbilisi, built in the latter part of the XI and at the beginning of the XII centuries.
Bulbul — a nightingale.
Changi — a Georgian string instrument.
Chinnari — a plane-tree.
Chokha — a national Georgian garment for men.
Chonguri — a Georgian string instrument.
Dido — hillmen dwelling in the mountains to the NE of Kakheti.
Dmanisi — a village and ancient fortress south of Tbilisi.
Gamzrdeli — one to whom the instruction and up-bringing of a child is entrusted.
Gori — a town in Eastern Georgia.
Gulansharo — the Sea-Realm, Venice.
Kabalakhi — a headdress for men.
Kakheti — part of Eastern Georgia.
Kartli and Kakheti — two regions (formerly kingdoms) forming Eastern Georgia.
Khakhmati — a sanctuary in Khevsureti.
Khakhuli — an ancient Georgian monastery (built in the X cent.) in Tao Klarjeti, formerly a Georgian province, now on Turkish territory.
The Kherkheulidze brothers — nine heroes who fell in the battle of Marabda, defending their country against the Persians led by Shah-Abbas.
Khevsuri — a hillman of the Khevsur tribe.
Kinto — small tradesman of Tbilisi; the kintos used to peddle fruit, vegetable, etc. in the streets of the city.
Kisti — hillmen, subtribe of the Chechens
Khrami — a mountain river not far from Tbilisi.
Leki — Lazghis, hillmen of Daghestan.
Marikh — Mars.
Merani — a winged horse; Georgian Pegasus.
Misreti — Egypt.
Mtatsminda — a mountain overlooking Tbilisi.
Mtkvari — the river Kura.
Mushtar — Jupiter.
Nina Chavchavadze — a famous beauty, daughter of the poet Alexander Chavchavadze and wife of the great Russian playwright Griboyedov.
Noste — the patrimony of Giorgi Saakadze, the "Great Mouravi" of Kartli, a remarkable general and statesman of XVII cent. Georgia.
Ortachala — a suburb of Tbilisi.
Oshki — an ancient Georgian monastery (built in 958 — 61) in Tao-Klarjeti, formerly a Georgian province. Now on Turkish territory.
Osmanli — Ottoman Turks.
Ossetians — descendants of the Alans dwelling in the upper course of the Liakhvi and the Aragvi south of the Caucasus (South Ossetian Autonomous Region) and in the valleys of the Ardon and Digor north of the range (North Ossetian Autonomous Republic).
Otarid — Mercury.
Panduri — a Georgian string instrument.

Pshav-Khevsureti — a region in the highlands of Georgia, named after the tribes inhabiting it.

Shamkor — a town in Azerbaijan.

Suliko — a term of endearment, meaning "My soul".

Tamada — a toastmaster.

Tamari — daughter of George III of Georgia. She succeeded her father in 1184, after being associated in the government since 1178. She died in 1212, leaving to her son, Giorgi IV called Lasha, a powerful state stretching from Trebizond in the West to Derbent in the East. Her reign was remarkable for the brilliance of its culture. It was a veritable renaissance of Georgian literature, architecture, philosophy, etc. It was the epoch of the greatest genius of Georgian poetry — Shota Rustaveli, the author of "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin", and of the brilliant goldsmiths, the brothers Beka, and Beshken Opisari.

Tmogvi — an ancient (XII cent) stronghold in Meskheta.

Tushi — a hillman of the Tushi tribe.

Zual — Saturn.