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GEORGIAN POETRY, 1911-1922

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

The Ohio State University
1958

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"You start a question, and it's like starting a stone," said Robert Louis Stevenson. If we were always wise enough in the beginning to ask the right questions or make the right assumptions, writing a literary history would be infinitely less hazardous. The question which led me to undertake this dissertation was essentially a historical one: why should Georgian poetry have flourished at precisely the time it did? In the early twentieth century, an age in which most English non-poetic literature was oriented toward a sober, serious representational realism, how did it happen that poetry seemed to turn to precious little nature lyrics, sentimental effusions on English Love, Home, and Fireside, and unconsidered trifles about nightingales and moonlight?

My too easy assumption about the nature of Georgian poetry quickly turned out to be ridiculously over-simplified and, in most cases, downright wrong. Moreover, my initial question became only the first step into a labyrinth of other, anterior questions. Who, in fact, were the Georgians? Was the word to be used denotatively—as a historical tag, that is, to describe those poets who wrote by and large in the second decade? Or should it be used connotatively, to describe a poetic school? Critics had used it both ways, with confusing results. If the word was used to describe a coterie instead of an age, what, then, made a Georgian a "Georgian"? What
poetic canons did the "Georgian" poet subscribe to? Again, since the five volumes of Edward Marsh's anthology included poetry published as early as 1910 and as late as 1922, was it not reasonable to assume that over a thirteen-year span—which included the eventful years of the First World War—Georgian poetry should have experienced several mutations? Did the word "Georgian," then, mean the same thing in 1912 as, say, in 1919 or 1922? Finally, was the Georgians' relationship to their age as uncomplicated as many subsequent critics have made it out to be? Were the Georgians only escapists who, in the uneasy twentieth century, sought the chimera of "Beauty and Certainty and Quiet kind"? Or did they too reflect something of the temper of their age? What, indeed, was the "age" of the Georgians? Did they perhaps live not in one but in two rather different literary "ages"—the prewar and the postwar?

I hope that my initial wrong question led me finally to ask a few of the right ones. At any rate it led me from the beginning to undertake not a critical but a historical study of the Georgians. I assert no claims to expertness as a literary theoretician, and I do not pretend to be able to distinguish, even to my own entire satisfaction, that imprecise line of demarcation between literary history and criticism. I assert only that my aim in this dissertation has been not so much to evaluate as to explain. Except where it was necessary to reinforce a historical fact, I have not tried to pass judgment on Georgian poetry qua poetry, but to define
and explain the Georgian movement. I have attempted to reconstruct the conditions under which Edward Marsh's anthology was born, flourished, and died; to describe and define—loosely, I fear, for that is the only way it can be defined—the Georgian school; to place the Georgians in the perspective of their age; and to describe and account for the changes which occurred in Georgian poetry from 1912 through 1922. Perhaps the ultimate task with Georgian poetry, as with all poetry, is essentially critical; sooner or later Georgian poetry must be evaluated qua poetry. But I have not attempted thus to evaluate it here.

Having determined upon a literary history, I was faced with the pleasant necessity of going to England, for there I hoped to gain access to the Edward Marsh Letter Collection, the most significant single source of information about the Georgian movement. When the late Sir Edward Marsh, editor of Georgian Poetry, died in 1953, he had in his possession a voluminous body of letters written to him over a span of more than fifty years not only by countless English public figures, but also by almost every poet of consequence in the twentieth century. With few exceptions (notably in the case of D.H. Lawrence and Isaac Rosenberg) the letters of the poets were unpublished. Upon his death Sir Edward willed the collection to Mr. Christopher Hassall, a close friend of the later years and Sir Edward's literary heir. In 1957 Mr. Hassall transferred almost all the Marsh papers from London to the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, where they now reside. Obviously no significant history of the Georgian
movement was possible without taking into account the Marsh Letter Collection. And so having received a leave of absence from teaching duties during 1954-55, I went to London in hopes of seeing the Marsh papers.

To Mr. Hassall I owe a debt which I can never repay nor even adequately acknowledge. He not only gave me access to the Marsh Letter Collection but also gave abundantly of his knowledge and assistance in many other ways. It is no exaggeration but only sober truth to acknowledge that without Mr. Hassall's generosity, my work, as it is here embodied, would have been impossible. Mr. Hassall has recently (1956) edited a collection of Rupert Brooke's prose; he has in preparation a biography of Sir Edward Marsh which is near completion; and he is undertaking the official biography of Rupert Brooke. To one who is doing so much directly to ensure a more sympathetic understanding of the Georgians, this dissertation may serve, I hope, as an indirect tribute, for it is he who made my work possible.

I am also indebted to many other English friends, chief among them Mr. Bertram Rota, proprietor of Bodley House, the most fascinating bookstore in London. Established in the old home of John Lane's Bodley Head Press, Mr. Rota's shop afforded comfortable—indeed, impressive—quarters for my examination of the Marsh papers during several months in 1954. To Mr. Rota too I owe more than I can express. I relied heavily upon his wide and varied knowledge of modern literature and twentieth-century men of letters; and I am grateful for his
judicious, balanced appraisal of the Georgian achievement and for his never-failing hospitality. I must also express my gratitude to his son Mr. Anthony B. Rota, who is associated with his father at Bodley House, and to Mr. Anthony Newnham, bookseller, now of Kingston, Corfe Castle, Dorset, from both of whom I learned, if not so much of literature, certainly much of London.

Among the Georgian poets I am particularly grateful to Mr. Wilfrid Gibson, who received me graciously at his home in West Byfleet, Surrey, and who, in the course of a long conversation, gave me many new insights into Georgian verse and the Georgian poets. I am also obliged to Mrs. Daisy Drinkwater and Mrs. Alida Monro, both of whom answered fully and candidly all my questions about their husbands' relationships with Sir Edward Marsh and the Georgian Poetry series. My conversation with Mrs. Monro particularly supplied me with many details about the Georgian movement and the Poetry Bookshop which could have been obtained in no other way and from no other source.

There are few visiting scholars in Britain who are not indebted to the authorities of the British Museum. I am no exception. I am under particular obligation to the staff of the Reading Room, who were willing to go out of their way to assist me in some of the thornier problems of bibliography. To the staff of the Bodleian Library I also owe thanks for their courtesy and assistance. But my special thanks go to the staff of the London Library, St. James Square, and to
the Director, Mr. Simon Nowell Smith. I contrived to do much of my research into Georgian periodicals and little magazines at St. James Square during the winter months of 1954-55, not only because of the excellent periodical collection in the London Library, but also, I admit, because the Reading Room boasted a fireplace of sumptuous proportions before which an exile from the land of central heating could gain temporary respite from the ubiquitous British chill. For that I shall be eternally grateful.

Among the Americans to whom I am deeply indebted are many members of the English Department of the Ohio State University. I am particularly obliged to Professor Richard D. Altick, the director of my dissertation. Having had to write this work piecemeal during three summers and at other random moments when I could squeeze a few free days from a full-time teaching schedule, I am sure I taxed Mr. Altick's patience severely. For his understanding and forbearance I am deeply grateful. Above all I thank him for his frequent and judicious use of the pruning shears. I am grateful also to Professors John Harold Wilson, E.W. Robbins, and Roy H. Pearce, who served on my examination committee and who gave me many helpful suggestions on my dissertation. Finally, I owe thanks to Professor Andrew Wright, through whose friendship and good offices my introduction to Mr. Hassall was made possible.

To the members of my own family I owe the largest debt of all: to Susan, Robert, and Carolyn for keeping quiet—
not at all times, but usually at the right times; and to my wife for suffering the horrors of authorship with me page by page, chapter by chapter, and for retaining her critical faculties when I had lost mine.

Ohio Wesleyan University,
Delaware, Ohio,
May, 1958
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CHAPTER 1

THE LITERARY SCENE: 1911

This volume is issued in the belief that English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty.

... This collection, drawn entirely from the publications of the past two years, may if it is fortunate help the lovers of poetry to realize that we are at the beginning of another "Georgian Period" which may rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past.

(Edward Marsh, preface to Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912)

By his brief preface to the first volume of Georgian Poetry, written in October, 1912, Edward Marsh achieved several remarkable results. It is ironic that literary history should record the chief among them to be the launching of a new school of poetry, for if Marsh initiated a new poetic movement in 1912, he did so almost by accident. Intensely certain that English poetry stood on the threshold of a new age, and convinced that vital new voices were not getting the hearing they deserved, Marsh set out to secure for several promising young poets an adequate and, if possible, enthusiastic audience. Though that was his aim (and, in the beginning, his only aim), he achieved more. He gave the new poetic age a name. "Georgian," it would be called. But by "Georgian" in 1912 Marsh did not intend to describe, strictly speaking, a new school of poetry, much less launch a new coterie. His proud adjective was intended rather
to distinguish his own poetic era from the Edwardian decade which had preceded it. In its context it was intended to suggest the widely held assumption that by 1912 a poetic renaissance was under way, that poetry was beginning to strike out on new and exciting paths. It was intended to suggest, moreover, that the new age dawning would be somehow more vital, more stimulating—in short, more "modern"—than the Edwardian era. It was the consciousness of renaissance which, more than anything else, Marsh intended to connote by his preface to Georgian Poetry I.1

Edward Marsh did not claim either to have begun the renaissance or to have been the first to call attention to it. Subsequent critics who claim for him either honor pay him an unsolicited and undeserved compliment. English poetry had begun to quicken with new life and vigor over a year before the publication of Georgian Poetry I, a fact which contemporary critics and poets alike were quick to discern and announce to any who would listen. By the happy choice of a word, however, Edward Marsh succeeded in epitomizing the feeling for newness which he perceived all around him in 1912. He gave the chief tendencies of his new age a name; and by so doing he gave his age, for the first time, self-consciousness.

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1 For the sake of brevity and clearness, throughout this study I shall refer to the volumes of Georgian Poetry in this fashion, i.e., by adding the appropriate Roman Numeral suffix to the title. The full title of the first volume is Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912. The second volume of the anthology covered the years 1913 through 1915; the third, 1916-1917; the fourth, 1918-1919; and the fifth, 1920 through 1922. Volumes I, III, and IV were biennial, volumes II and V triennial. The entire anthology covered a period of 12 years. In footnotes henceforth the title will be abbreviated to G.P.
Unfortunately, in his preface Marsh also set himself up as something of a prophet. To suggest that the new "Georgian Age" might "take rank in due time" alongside such notable eras of poetic achievement as the Renaissance or the Romantic Age seems pretentious and, in the light of subsequent events, ironic. But Marsh was expressing a conviction which, in his time and place, was being subscribed to on every side. By late 1912 old men were dreaming dreams and young men were seeing visions. The poetically barren years of the Edwardian decade were past. The time was spring, the air was fresh, the morning was at seven. It is small wonder that Marsh could confidently predict a fruitful summer, for still incalculable, still mercifully hidden below the horizon in 1912, was the dark and terrible storm of the First World War. Edward Marsh, like most of his contemporaries, may understandably be pardoned if he thought he saw the coming of a new age.

The comments in his preface to Georgian Poetry I erred, if at all, on the conservative side. To say that English poetry seemed once again to be "putting on new strength and beauty" was to understate the facts as they appeared to most observers in 1912. Most of Marsh's contemporaries were willing to use far more dramatic language to describe what was happening at the turn of the decade. A "revolt," many called it, or a "revival." And by 1912 such phrases as the "new era," the "new age," and the "boom in poetry" had become clichés in the little magazines as well as the established literary journals. What did these phrases describe? Did English poetry suddenly begin to flower in 1911, or perhaps in 1912—the same year in
which American poetry achieved its modern *annus mirabilis*? Was English poetry in fact "putting on new strength and beauty"?

In 1911 British poetry had no place to go but upward. It could scarcely have come to rest on a less promising or inspiring level than that to which the Edwardian age had brought it. However nostalgically one may regard the uncomplicated Edwardian days of the bicycle, bloomers, feminism, Fabian Socialism, and ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, certainly one cannot claim that the age produced, with one or two obvious exceptions, any but mediocre verse. In the history of English poetry the Edwardian age appears as a hiatus, a barren decade whose best is second-rate, a time comparable perhaps to the period between the death of Byron and the first mature verse of Tennyson. By 1900 most of the major surviving poets of the later nineteenth century were silent. Kipling was turning in the new century primarily to prose fiction as a more popular and acceptable medium. Francis Thompson, though he lived until 1907, published no more poetry after *New Poems* (1897). Henley published yet one more volume of verse, *Hawthorn and Lavender* (1901), and died in 1903. By the turn of the century the Decadence had passed into history, its major figures having either died or outgrown the narrow creed of aestheticism. Beardsley died in 1898; and as if to mark the end of an era finally and dramatically, both Wilde and Dowson died in 1900. Lionel Johnson survived them only two years. With *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), Yeats began a new phase of his career with the Abbey Theatre; and Arthur Symons, after publication of his *Poems* (1901), turned away from poetry to literary history and criticism.
Among the considerable poets of the Rhymers' Club, only John Davidson continued producing important poetry well into the new Edwardian decade. His five Testaments appeared from 1901 to 1908, and the unfinished trilogy God and Mammon in 1907-08. To put a fitting code to the melancholy 'nineties, Davidson drowned himself in 1909 before an incipient cancer could kill him.

Robert Bridges was doing important work during the barren decade, but since he published little, and that in more or less obscure periodicals, the poetry-reading public paid scant attention to the scholarly recluse at Boar's Hill until he was appointed Laureate in 1913. Without doubt the most considerable poet of the first decade was Hardy, whose Dynasts (1903-08) stands out like a brilliant beacon over the monotonous flatlands of mediocrity and worse. Though the Dynasts was, as Swinnerton says, "almost unanimously considered to be the most majestic creation of the age" by discerning contemporary critics, the Edwardian public could scarcely have been expected to take Hardy's poetry to its heart. Its message was too austere, and the crabbed and unsonorous verse grated too harshly on ears long accustomed to the music of Tennyson or the triolets and ballades of the Decadents. The future of English poetry apparently rested in the hands of poets like Stephen Phillips and William Watson. Conservative to the core, with "a dis-

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3Watson deserves to be held in memory primarily as the elegist of two great Victorians in whose tradition he followed. His elegies to Tennyson (*Lachrymae Musarum,* Poems [1905], I, 3-8) and to Arnold (*In Laleham Churchyard,* ibid., II, 27-30) say noble things nobly.
concerting fragrance of Wordsworth and Arnold about them, these men carried over into the new century some of the less happy aspects of the old: the mood and diction of Tennyson in the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington"; the ornateness and sentimentalism of Coventry Patmore; the Carlylean conception of the poet as vates, but shorn of Carlyle's fervor; the high seriousness of Arnold, but without Arnold's understanding of the grand style; and a pseudo-Wordsworthian concept of nature, but lacking both Wordsworth's philosophic mind and his majesty. In Watson and Phillips the flame of the great tradition which had produced Keats and Tennyson, Shelley and Browning, Wordsworth and Arnold, finally guttered and died. In the twentieth century the verse of Watson and Phillips seemed little more than mechanical, decorated rhetoric, faintly, ironically redolent of the past glories of English poetry. One must agree with the critic who, in 1912, summed up Watson's modest contribution to poetry in terms which apply equally to both poets. "In a turbulent and unmannerly age," he wrote, "Mr. Watson provides a soothing draught for well-bred, contemplative, unprogressive, peaceable persons who have a regard for the decencies of language and a respect for the limitations of form."5

It is startling to recall, however, that the age of Watson and Phillips in poetry was also the age of Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Shaw in the drama and novel. How can one account

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5J. Griffyth Fairfax, "William Watson: the Poet of Public Affairs," Poetry Review, 1 (1912), 163. In subsequent footnote references the title of this journal will be abbreviated to PR.
for the apparent vitality and popularity of the Edwardian novel and drama and the corresponding decline of poetry? One explanation is simply that the die had been cast during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. By 1900 the trend toward realism in prose fiction and on the stage had been set, while poetry had turned in the opposite direction, having increasingly withdrawn itself, during the closing years of the old century, into its aesthetic cloister to burn with the gem-like flame of its brief moments of ecstasy. Ibsenism had come in the late 'eighties and 'nineties with the successful assault upon the moribund English stage by Archer, Pinero, Jones, and Shaw. When Galsworthy turned to the drama toward the end of the Edwardian era, he was already, so to speak, old hat, a second-generation Ibsenite. And so in the novel: the realism of Arnold Bennett, politely Edwardian though it was, owed its existence (a fact which Bennett frequently acknowledged)\textsuperscript{6} not only to the militantly naturalistic French models of Zola and the brothers Goncourt, but also to Bennett's nineteenth-century British predecessors in naturalism, George Moore and Gissing. Both of these men had struck their most effective blows in the realistic cause by the mid-'nineties. And so the dramatists and novelists had made some attempt to adjust their art to the world they lived in by means of social protest and the techniques of representational realism. Not so the poets. By the turn of the century, poetry, having turned a nobly resolute back on "the troughs of Zolaism," had succeeded only in becoming increasingly private. Worse, poetry had gone to the

\textsuperscript{6}E.g., in the preface to \textit{The Old Wives' Tale}. 
opposite extreme, aestheticism. As the 'nineties drew to a close the spirit of the fin de siècle had so attenuated English poetry that the once robust, vital Romantic-Victorian poetic stream had dwindled to a mere trickle of ennui and languor, of inert pessimism and spiritless hedonism, and exquisite small verses on the vanity and nothingness of human existence. Aestheticism was well nigh dead of its own anemia, and the slender verses that were wrung out of the phosphorescence of decay were as remote from the attitudes of the would-be poetry reader of the Edwardian age as Cynara was from a Floradora Girl. Despairing of a poetry which had despaired of itself, the literate Edwardian was almost forced to turn to stage and novel for literary sustenance.

A second, and perhaps more compelling, reason for the flowering of the novel and drama and the withering of poetry lies in the fact that the novel and drama gave the Edwardian reader precisely what he demanded. In the Five Towns novels and Tono-Bungay, in Major Barbara and Strife, he was getting primarily a literal, representational art fit for a fundamentally prosaic age, a serious art uncluttered by any confusing talk about "Art," free from the disconcerting attitudes of the aesthetic poseurs of the 'nineties. Though Shaw did his best to obscure the fact by his wit, his gleeful iconoclasm, and his innate sense of good theater, even his plays, pleasant or unpleasant, were not comedies. They were fundamentally serious plays in which more often than not humor was only the means to an end. And though the Edwardian theater-goer often paid Shaw
the compliment of violent antipathy, he came out of the theater more thoughtful and perhaps even better informed than he was when he went in. Shaw's best plays were directly in the Ibsen-ite tradition of the drama of ideas, but Shaw had the wit to discern that to be serious one does not necessarily have to be solemn.

Realism as a fictional and dramatic mode was an almost perfect reflection of the timbre of the Edwardian mind. Like Victorian England before it, Edwardian England too was in large part a literal-minded, middle-class society wholeheartedly devoted to pursuit of the worldly. By the turn of the century the state of affairs foreseen by the great Victorian social prophets, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, had come to pass: the nation's cultural traditions had largely atrophied. Culture had given way to anarchy. At the top of the social scale the Barbarians, moneyed or merely titled, had little cultural tradition and less taste. At the bottom were the Populace, the manual laborers "always in danger of sinking into the festering poverty of the slums."7 Between the extremes stretched the Philistines ranging all the way from the new-rich to the small house-agent's clerk. Normally conservative where literature was concerned, virtually illiterate in any but the barest sense of the word, utterly lacking in taste, the majority of the Edwardian middle class lived out their lives among the cricket clubs and garden societies of what one historian has succinctly called "suburban villadom."8 It is small wonder that poetry

8Ibid., p. 116.
failed to prosper among the Edwardian middle class or that the blank verse of Stephen Phillips or the pseudo-Wordsworthian odes of William Watson were received, if not with ecstatic gratitude, certainly with as much favor as was accorded any poetry in Edwardian England.

To say that the Edwardian middle class had no literary traditions is perhaps incorrect. Worse, they were the traditions of an age long gone.

They had literary traditions, but especially in the field of poetry, these were overlaid by a thick veneer of conservatism that was at once academic and puritanical. Poetry was regarded as something inseparable from the worship of the classics, and especially the Victorian classics, Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. Kipling was an exception, but he was tolerated because of his imperialist politics, though his best verse was regarded as rather vulgar and not 'poetry.' Poetry had to be pleasant, dignified, moral, not difficult or introspective, and based on the pretense that the rhythms of suburban life were still those of old England of the feudal countryside.

No doubt the Edwardian age had glitter and superficial brilliance aplenty. It was perhaps the last amusing age in history, an interlude before the grim decades of recurrent wars and crises. According to the evidence of one who experienced it, the Edwardian "concert was a mad one while it lasted."

In the midst Bernard Shaw sang solos in minor blasphemy, while Chesterton wrung fantastic fugues from a Gothic organ.... Belloc...became the herald of Philo-Gallicism. Masefield variegated the slum novel in heroic verse. Galsworthy wrote like a depressed Police Court Missionary, and Wells hoisted the Gonfalon of the Polytechnic. If readers remained sane, it

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De Sola Pinto, p. 117.
was because they no more took literature seriously than the writers thereof.... They needed rest more than change, and it must be confessed that it was out of sheer vertigo that Kipling, Chesterton, and Belloc began to hymn such English simplicities as Sussex, Chalk, and Beer. ¹⁰

But for all its glittering counterpoint, the Edwardian melody had gone stale; the dancers were wearying of the waltz. Beneath the surface brilliance the age was essentially barren. It was for England a Hellenistic period, a time of endings, not beginnings.

Even the vitality of the novel and drama was perhaps more apparent than real. The Edwardian novel particularly seemed to have come to a cul de sac from which there was no outlet except by a battering down of walls. On the one hand, representational realism had taken fiction as close to reportage as it could get and still claim to be fiction. On the other, the rage for cleverness had resulted in a kind of Alexandrinism. In short, the Edwardian novel, for all its technical polish, lacked inspiration, or, in the phrase of a latter critic, "heart." ¹¹ Like the era out of which it came, Edwardian fiction was superficial, clever, amusing, and smart. Perhaps Henry James' comment on Wells' Marriage may be allowed to stand as an adequate short summary of the major indictment against the Edwardian novel: "Strange to me...the co-existence of so much talent with so little art, so much life, with (so to speak) so little living. But...I really think him more interesting by his faults than he will probably manage to be in

any other way; and he is a most vivid and violent object lesson.\textsuperscript{12} "So much talent with so little art": the dead end reached by the novel, in spite of its apparent vitality, seems no less real than that reached by poetry in Edwardian England, though both genres reached it by the application of opposite artistic principles, the novel partly from an excess of realism, poetry from an excess of derivative romanticism gone to seed.

In the case of the novel a revolt was brewing at the end of the first decade; new and exciting vistas both in technique and subject matter were shortly to be opened before the startled eyes of readers of Bennett and Wells. New writers, obscure, most of them unpublished in 1910, were shortly to revolutionize twentieth-century British fiction: James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield. And two older men were to be recognized as prophets of the new schools, revolutionaries before their time: Joseph Conrad and Henry James.

In the closing years of the first decade, then, the time was ripe for a general literary revolt, for fresh starts, larger vistas, new aims. And a revolt was brewing in poetry as well as in other genres. Beginning in late 1911 poetry set out to catch up to the novel and drama and to regain some of the audience it had lost during the 'nineties and the Edwardian decade. The result was a poetic renascence which once again sent new lifeblood coursing through the enfeebled body of British verse.

\textsuperscript{12}Quoted in Cruse, p. 224.
The dominant political liberalism of the Edwardian age cannot be discounted as one of the possible causes of the poetic renascence of the Georgian. The middle class, dismally conservative in literary tastes, succeeded in dissociating its artistic from its political convictions and became the mainstay of the Liberal Party from 1904 to 1914. The social reforms of the Campbell-Bannerman and the Asquith governments were made possible, in fact, only by the strong support of the middle class. And many of the young poets came down from the Universities around the turn of the decade enthusiastically pledged to Fabian Socialism— one thinks of Brooke, Flecker, and Monro, for instance. Many others not so fortunate in their formal education— Gibson, Hodgson, Davies— were equally liberal in their political views. Most of them were idealistic, dedicated Socialists; a few, like Monro, even tried to put some of their Fabian tenets into practice. But one recognizes too that the profession of Socialism had become almost de rigueur in Edwardian intellectual and artistic circles by 1910. As the Times Literary Supplement pointed out from the vantage point of 1920, during the first decade "it was the happy fashion of clever undergraduates, 'deadly serious' but 'disreputably young,' to profess an epigrammatic ardour for the tenets of Socialism; and where twenty years previously it would have been proper to play the aesthete, treasure a chaste copy of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' as your bedside literature,... public taste [now] decreed that you should attend Fabian summer schools with vegetarians and suffragettes, and sit at the
feet of Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Mr. Bernard Shaw.\textsuperscript{13}

If political liberalism and poetic revival were not linked in a causal and temporal relationship—and evidence for such a claim is far from convincing—perhaps they had a fraternal relationship. They were children of the same parent, for a spiritual revival fathered both. "The resurgence of liberal England," as one historian claims, "was the political aspect of a spiritual awakening which [also] found expression in a remarkable literary revival."\textsuperscript{14} An anti-authoritarian spirit pervaded the age. The first decade had scarcely been free from political and social ferment. There had been serious strikes, suffragette agitation, and a recurrence of that perennial English problem, Irish tension. There was a general "sense of rebellion in the air, against convention, against accepted codes of morals, and with Bernard Shaw in the van, against almost every accepted idea."\textsuperscript{15}

For whatever reasons, by late 1911 the poetic pot had clearly begun to simmer. A poetic renascence was beginning to take shape. Before its distinguishing features can be described, however, an important semantic distinction must be drawn. The terms most frequently used to describe what happened to British poetry between 1911 and the early war years have been the "Georgian revival" and the "Georgian

\textsuperscript{13}TLS, Nov. 11, 1920, p. 729.
\textsuperscript{14}De Sola Pinto, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{15}Edith Batho and Bonamy Dobrée, \textit{The Victorians and After} (New York, 1938), p. 73.
Unfortunately the terms themselves are not only ambiguous, but they have also been used interchangeably. In truth they describe two very different aspects of the same event. By "revival" one intends to describe only an upsurge in the interest of the general reading public in poetry. By "revolt" one intends to describe not a change in the public's attitude toward verse but rather a change in the nature of poetry itself. In this restricted sense both a Georgian revolt and a Georgian revival did in fact occur, but the revolt was predominantly a prewar event whereas the revival assumed significant proportions only after the First World War had begun.

There is no doubt that a poetic revival began during the prewar years. With the benefit of hindsight, one can even date it with some accuracy: it began in late 1911 with the publication of Masefield's *Everlasting Mercy*, the seminal work of the new realistic school, which achieved almost instant, wide-spread popularity because it was the first book of verse since *Barrack Room Ballads* to succeed in shocking the British public by poetry which managed to be at the same time both ribald and polite. But the extent of the revival during the prewar years can easily be overstated. Among con-

16The term "Georgian," as it is used in this context, and as I shall use it henceforth to the end of this chapter, has no implications of a poetic coterie or school. It is used in its widest and most literal sense, i.e., as a historical tag to describe that poetry written after the accession of George V. Cf. "Edwardian." In this use of the term, obviously Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington are to be considered as much "Georgian" poets as Rupert Brooke or W.H. Davies. As will be made clear below (Ch. 6), the term is susceptible of a more restricted definition, namely to describe those poets who were contributors to any of the five volumes of Edward Marsh's anthology.
temporary observers perhaps Edward Shanks came nearest the truth. The resurgence of public interest in poetry, he conceded, "began before the war and was already in existence to be fostered by war conditions." Throughout 1912 and 1913 critics were hailing the revival, the public's curiosity had been aroused, "people began to argue, and even to quarrel, about poetry as though it were really of some importance, and—what is always a significant sign—the charlatan began to lift an alert and interested head." But, Shanks concluded, the prewar years marked only the barest beginning. The most significant spurt in the public's interest in poetry occurred only after the war started; it occurred, in fact, only after the death of Rupert Brooke in 1915, and "with the presentation of Rupert Brooke to the popular imagination as a romantic figure. For many persons, in some queer way, his life and death did seem to rehabilitate poetry, to give it once again some sort of standing as a serious, not a trivial, human activity."\(^{17}\)

In spite of many perfervid claims of widespread interest in poetry which came from over-enthusiastic critics in 1912 and 1913, an analysis of publishing statistics seems to bear out Shanks' contention. Not until about 1916 did the annual publication of new volumes of poetry begin to show any significant increase. In 1911 books of poetry and drama (British publishing statistics at this period invariably linked the two genres together) accounted for 5.2 percent of the total

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books published in Great Britain. In 1912 the figure rose to 5.97 percent. From 1913 through 1915 the percentage actually dropped to an average of 5.48 percent. In 1916, however, poetry and drama accounted for 6.02 percent of all the books published; by 1917, 6.69 percent; and by 1918, 8.3 percent. Meanwhile, for purposes of comparison, the publishing of fiction in Great Britain was showing a steady decline. In 1911, 20.3 percent of all books published were fiction; in 1912, 20.4 percent. From 1913 through 1915 an average of 18.1 percent was devoted to fiction. In 1916, 1917, and 1918, the years in which publication of poetry climbed toward its height, fiction, on the other hand, declined. By 1918, the same year in which publication of poetry had reached its highest point of the decade, fiction had reached its lowest: only 13 percent of all books published were devoted to fiction. The point is not to compare poetry and fiction, or to surmise that poetry's gain was fiction's loss, but rather to underscore the contention that widespread interest in poetry, i.e., the poetic revival, was primarily a wartime and not a prewar phenomenon.

A glance at the kinds of volumes of poetry being published serves to reinforce the contention even more conclusively. If public interest in the verse of the prewar Georgians had been as widely aroused as some contemporary observers claimed, it is reasonable to assume that this interest should have been reflected in publication of an increasing number of new titles vis-à-vis new editions of old titles. Up until 1916 again, precisely the opposite seems to have been the case. In 1911, 58 percent of all poetry and drama published
in Great Britain were new titles. In 1912, only 55.3 percent were new titles; in 1913, 57.5 percent; and in 1914, 55.7 percent. In 1916, however, it appears that not only did the publication of all poetry jump significantly upward, but also the publication of new poetry; for in that year 75.3 percent of all poetry published were new titles. The upward trend continued, moreover, through 1917 and 1918. In 1917, 81 percent were new titles; and in 1919, a high of 87.8 percent was reached. From such evidence, and from the testimony of a few critics like Edward Shanks who showed themselves less easily deceived than most, one must conclude that, far from being a prewar phenomenon, the revival of the public's interest in poetry occurred on a significant scale sometime during 1916 and continued for about three years. The extent of the poetic revival in the prewar years was frequently overstated by those who were too eager to take the wish for the fact.

But if the poetic revival was largely a wartime phenomenon, there is evidence to show that the Georgian revolt was in fact a prewar event. In the brief period from 1911 to, say, 1915, outmoded poetic habiliments were being cast off; a new poetic suited to a new age was being created.

Like most revolts, in its beginnings the Georgian revolt was essentially negative, an "anti-" movement. Moreover, in

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18 The figures on which these percentages are based are reproduced below. All figures were taken from the Publishers' Circular, XCVI (1912), 7; XCVIII (1913), 9; C (1914), 7; CII (1915), 5; CIV (1916), 5; CVI (1917), 7; CVIII (1918), 4; CX (1919), 3; CXII (1920), 3; CXIV (1921), 3.
the prewar years it appeared to be more a spiritual than a poetic revolt; it began around 1911, that is, with a perceptible change in the spiritual climate. Though its sources were vague, the feeling was unmistakable. It was one of happy expectancy, or, as Sir Osbert Sitwell described it, the consciousness of a new release of energy within the arts, an intuition widespread among artists of all kinds, that they were on the

**Publishing Statistics in Great Britain: 1910-1920**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Poetry and Drama</th>
<th>New Titles, Poetry and Drama</th>
<th>New editions of old Titles, Poetry and Drama</th>
<th>Fiction</th>
<th>Total of all Books Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>10,804</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>10,914</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>12,067</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>12,379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>11,537</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>10,665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9,149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8,131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7,716</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>8,622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>11,004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.b. The figure for any given year in col. 2 is usually not the total of the figures in cols. 3 and 4. This apparent discrepancy is explained by the fact that the total of books published in the field of Poetry and Drama was arrived at by adding together not only new titles and new eds. of old titles, but also pamphlets and translations.
verge of something new and momentous. There was "a fresh breeze in the air, ...a general feeling of confidence," Middleton Murry wrote; and though, as he claimed, he took no personal part in the "general exaltation," he was "conscious of its existence, ...affected by the feeling of confidence, of faith in the future, which was general among [his] coevals at that time." Harold Monro experienced the same kind of exhilaration. By 1911, he wrote, "the numbing effect of the Victorian period [seemed] finally to have relaxed its pressure on the brain of the rising generation," and hopeful young poets thought they foresaw the coming of a new age, one which would be related neither to the Age of Tennyson nor to the fin de siècle.

Though poet after poet among the rising generation testified to feeling the "fresh breeze in the air," perhaps D.H. Lawrence gave most eloquent tongue to the "general exaltation." Vigor was his cry, a spiritual vigor which, according to Lawrence, had created a rich, and new, and energetic modern poetry, a poetry whose most characteristic tone was "a note of exultation after fear, the exultation in the vast freedom, the illimitable wealth that we have suddenly got." Modern poets, he wrote, are casting off the ennui of the fin de siècle:

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...we are waking up after a night of oppressive dreams. The nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people—Ibsen, Flaubert, Thomas Hardy—represent the dream we are waking from. It was a dream of demolition. Nothing was, but was nothing. Everything was taken from us. And now our lungs are full of new air, and our eyes see it is morning, but we have not forgotten the terror of the night. We dreamed we were falling through space into nothingness, and the anguish of it leaves us rather eager.

But we are awake again, our lungs are full of new air, our eyes of morning...

This great liberation gives us an overwhelming sense of joy, joie d'être, joie de vivre.

Nor did the existence of new vigor escape the more perceptive among the older literary generation. Speaking specifically of Rupert Brooke and of the group of poets who surrounded him, Henry James clearly recognized that a new spirit was animating the young poets in the idyllic years before the war. "They were all young together," he wrote:

they were all fresh and free and acute and aware and in 'the world,' when not out of it; all together at the high speculative, the high talkative pitch of the initiational stage of these latest years, the informed and animated, the so consciously non-benighted, geniality of which was to make [Brooke] the clearest and most projected poetic case...that it was possible to conceive. He had found at once...an England breaking out into numberless assertions of a new awareness, into liberties of high and clean, even when most skeptical and discursive, young intercourse; a carnival of half anxious and half elated criticism.23

The awareness of spiritual reawakening naturally fostered a certain vigorous self-consciousness among the young prewar poets. For reasons never quite explicit they felt that the new age dawning would be different from any which had preceded

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it. It was to be "modern." "What with modern science, modern philosophy, modern religion, modern politics, and modern business," wrote Lascelles Abercrombie in 1912, "the present is a time fermenting with tremendous change; the most tremendous of all changes, a change in the idealistic interpretation of the universe."

To any man with brain and spirit active and alert in him, the present is a time wherein the world, and the destiny of man in the world, are ideas different from anything that has ever been before. If there is any resemblance at all, the present resembles more the time of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers...than any other time. These disturbing periods, indeed, seem to recur regularly, in vast pulsations, through man's history. They are exciting but fearfully exacting times for the poet.24

As one looks back upon it from the vantage point of almost fifty years, the spiritual renascence of the second decade seems to have occurred suddenly and almost inexplicably, with a speed which seemed to surprise even those who experienced it. Whether it did actually occur so quickly or whether it was merely the florescence of a state of mind which had been building slowly through the Edwardian decade, is a moot question. What did occur with unmistakable rapidity at a point in late 1911 and early 1912 was, if not the reawakening itself, certainly the widespread conviction of one among artists of all persuasions. Among poets particularly there suddenly occurred, as J.C. Squire wrote, a "new exuberance and enthusiasm, in individuals and the generality. And you got a new generation of young men just before the war: an

imperceptible alteration had taken place...and automatically preciousness, self-consciousness, poetic sectarianism, had largely gone, and you had a great crowd of youths all willing to expose the best and truest in them and spontaneously aware that they must do it in musical language."

Ultimately, however, the event that must be described is a poetic, not a spiritual, revolt. The Georgian poetic revolt must finally be explained in its own terms. What, then, were its lineaments?

In the first place, seen in its broadest historical terms, the prewar revolt of the younger generation against poetic standards which had governed since the Romantic Revival was part of a larger and more widespread intellectual revolt against Humanism (or, to use Professor Fairchild's word, "Romanticism"). One of the most significant events in the intellectual history of the twentieth century and one which was to gather force and sweep across large areas of Western thought and art in the postwar years, the reaction against Humanism among modern artists and thinkers was essentially

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26 Again a reminder is perhaps called for: the word "Georgian" at this point has no implications of a poetic school or coterie. It is intended solely as a historical tag, describing here primarily the poetry written by the young poets, of whatever coterie, approximately during the years 1911-1915.

27 Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, IV (New York, 1957), 4. Professor Fairchild argues that in the sense in which the terms are used here they are virtually interchangeable. Both pertain to "man's desire for limitless expression of self-sufficiency."
a revolt against "that anthropocentric view of life which had supplanted the theocentric conception of the Middle Ages. The leaders of the revolt maintained that Western Europe had taken the wrong turn at the Renaissance, which made man, not God, the measure of all things, and had gone finally and fatally astray at the time of the French Revolution, when Rousseau cast adrift the last anchor that held men to the ancient faith, the doctrine, namely, of Original Sin." Among the young prewar rebels it was of course T.E. Hulme who put the case against Humanism most forcefully. In its literary phase Hulme's attack was directed in large part against the offspring of Humanism, Romanticism, the contemporary manifestations of which were insipid—"like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table"—and which had led, in Hulme's analysis, "to the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live." For the new poets who either deliberately or unconsciously followed Hulme's footsteps the Wordsworthian doctrine of the poetic had finally to be consigned to the dust bin. Poetry was not the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions." Poets could no longer apostrophize Hertha or cry "Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things." Nor could they contemplate the Grecian urn or strain after a fleeting vision of the white radiance of eternity. Indeed, in the modern world the quaint Romantic-Victorian notion of straining after infinity was

29 Professor Fairchild would say "brother" (Religious Trends, IV, 4).
only—in Harold Monro's words—"harmlessly ridiculous." 31
No longer required to attempt a feat which was not only
positively harmful to the poet but also in the nature of
things utterly unattainable, modern poetry, Hulme claimed,
must limit its aspirations. It must deal with the thing itself;
it must become hard, dry, sophisticated. 32

Secondly, the prewar poetic revolt was part of a general
revolt in all the arts, especially the pictorial and the plastic,
against the dead hand of "Academism," a pejorative term used
generically by young artists to describe the "enemy," i.e.,
almost any group which insisted upon even a modicum of formality,
convention or tradition in art. The early Georgian era
was one of those recurring periods in the history of English
literature when the pictorial and the literary arts drew close
together. For a brief while in the prewar years, "the Fine,
the Plastic and the literary arts touched hands with an unusual
intimacy and what is called one-ness of purpose.... The
Sculptors, Painters and Poets and Prosateurs of that Movement
happened to synchronize in a discovery." 33 Like the age of
the pre-Raphaelites sixty years earlier, the prewar Georgian
era was a time in which new strains—as well as curious,
ephemeral mutations—were created out of a healthy cross-
pollination among the arts. Painting was perhaps the first
to become infected with the rage for newness. At the turn

32 Grierson and Smith, pp. 499-500.
of the second decade, both on the continent and in England painters had been seized, as Laurence Binyon said, by "a kind of fever, an almost exasperated craving for the violent, the elemental, the barbaric, for energy and self-assertion at all costs. Virility and vitality became the cant words of praise in criticism." This urge for self-assertion most clearly manifested itself among painters and sculptors in such movements as Post-Impressionism, Futurism, or Cubism. The one common denominator of all these avant-garde movements was a thorough-going revolt against representational art. "We are educated in the appetite for fact. Our vision is thickened and confused," cried Binyon. "How long have we been sitting down before Nature and letting her impose herself upon us! Our imaginations have been schooled into passivity. Unconsciously enslaved, we were growing benumbed. And now we want to stretch our feet, to move, to dance, to feel our life-blood running again.... Our art is dissatisfied with itself."

Modern art must not only be non-representational; it must also be highly individualistic. It must embody and express the artist's unique personality. The fin de siècle attitude that art was an impersonal conjuration of Beauty was as abhorrent as the Victorian notion that art should be moral or didactic. The modern artist was required to fly in the face of both conventions; he had to affirm "not only that the old beauty is as dead as the old ugliness, but that beauty and ugliness have nothing whatever to do with the creation of a

34Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry, English Association Pamphlet No. 63 (1926), pp. 5-6.
work of art. The artist simply discusses life in whatever media he may work...apropos of himself." Far from suppressing their personalities in their work, then, modern artists must set out to advertise—even to dramatize—their selves.

The Cubists, Vorticists, Imagists, Vers Librist... said simply: 'All this attempt to hypnotise the Public is a mere waste of time. An Artist attracts; gets a public or royalties for sales because he is a clever fellow. Let him begin by saying: "I am a clever fellow...." And let him go on saying: "What a clever fellow I am!" Conspuez le Subjet! A bas all conventions of tale-telling! We the Vorticists, Cubists, Imagistes, Symbolists, Vers Libristes, Tapagistes are fine, young Cocks of the Walk! We and we only are the Playboys of the Western World. We and we only shall be heard.'

Seeing painters and sculptors like Epstein and Wyndham Lewis, Wadsworth, Fry, and Gaudier-Brzeska noisily but successfully kicking their way out of the shackles of Academism, it seemed only natural that poets too should have begun to fashion a new, modern poetic to attempt to reproduce in their own medium the new effects which the artists were striving for. By late 1912 an agitation for newer and more striking forms was sweeping over British poetry. Such a movement naturally attracted the charlatans and invited extremes.

One experimentalist published a volume called Cubist Poems and many more indulged in individual flourishes on the inane, crying on Picasso, Bomberg, and Mr. Roger Fry, by way of making it perfectly clear what they were about. But the matter was by no means as simple as it appeared.

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Too many of these poets saw no more in the new pictures than a startling difference from the old; and they believed that by writing verses absurdly at variance with what had hitherto been accepted as poetry, they would achieve a similar result. It did not matter whether they followed serious artists or charlatans; their verses betrayed too plainly the fact that they aimed at nothing but oddness.

So strident and insistent had the young poets and avant-garde critics become by the end of 1912, in fact, that the Times Literary Supplement was moved to utter a few words of caution ex cathedra. Having seen "Futurism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism rousing rage, or laughter, or bewilderment," the journal admitted, poets naturally wanted to kick over the traces too. But was the contemporary situation in poetry entirely analogous to that in painting? "Is it quite certain that nothing more can be got out of the means already at hand? What must strike any reader of modern poetry is this, that not the best use is being made of the myriad forms which the diverse poetical practice of ages has put at our disposal.... It is originality of character and thought, not of form, which modern poetry lacks."39

Thirdly, the Georgian revolt, as the young poets themselves looked upon it, was a revolt against Victorianism. More precisely, they saw it as a repudiation of the unbroken chain of poetic history which had extended from the Romantic Revival through the Victorian age to the inevitable cul de sac of the

39 New Statesman, IX (1917), 594. Behind the anonymity of the article from which this passage was taken one can readily detect the sarcastic tone of J.C. Squire. In subsequent footnote references, the title of this journal will be abbreviated to NS.

40 TLS, Dec. 12, 1912, p. 568.
'nineties. The prewar poetic rebel arraigned his Victorian predecessors on several counts. He claimed that with the possible exception of Browning, Victorian poetry was—to use F.R. Leavis' later phrase—"unthoughtful." It was rather emotional. "Wit, play of intellect, stress of cerebral muscle had no place: they could only hinder the reader's being 'moved'—the correct poetical response." Moreover, he concluded that the Romantic-Victorian tradition had simply run its natural course. The great Victorian poets, he argued, had "achieved a finish on which it would be ridiculous to attempt to refine. Had not the 'nineties tried with no satisfying result"? Finally, even if it were possible to gild the lily, the Victorians had strayed too far from life as the proper subject matter for poetry. In the new twentieth century poetry must either perish as anachronism or return wholeheartedly to strength and truth to life as it is lived. Poetry of the study must go: "before anything else can be achieved," wrote John Millington Synge, "our poetry must learn again to be brutal." Modern poetry can no longer evade life, the young poet of 1911 claimed; it must rather be "an acceptance of it in all its details and peculiarities. ...the moderns have come to realise vaguely that, outside the Palace of Art, there is a world of fact and of science in which they can find virginal forests and moors with no beaten tracks." 

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44 Clark, pp. 11-12.
Against the time-honored Romantic-Victorian poetic tradition which had sung its last long roundelay in those too precious and languorous lyrics of the fin de siècle the young Georgian poets hoisted the banner of poetic sincerity. "Sincerity is the grail of the modern quest: to be a poet is to be frank even unto brutality." To be a poet was also to own to a certain "impatience of barriers, a determination to be kept out of no province of the universe," to overstep "prescribed boundaries" and to reject "traditional definitions." The results were numerous, not the least being the return of humor to poetry in various degrees and guises, "satirical in Stephens, sometimes impatient, sometimes genial in Brooke, tender and whimsical in Hodgson, supercilious in Pound." Perhaps an even more important result, however, was the willingness among the young poets to experiment with new forms and new subject matter. In an age when truth had become a more sought-after goal than beauty the quest for new forms had its obvious dangers: in an era of experimentation not all experiments were successful.45

The modern poet's task, then, as he conceived it at the opening of the second decade, was to idealize the real, or as the Times Literary Supplement expressed it, "to adopt the accurate observation of fact inherent in science, but to transcend its material limits by imaginative force and relate

particular experiences to a universal conception." He therefore deliberately set out to be a realist. He tried, that is, "to see nature and men as they are and honour them with all the resources of his understanding," not simply—as he conceived his predecessors of the 'nineties had done—"to feel vague personal emotions and spend all his intellectual powers in embellishing them." This is what the Georgian poet sought to do, the journal continued; what he achieved was often something else again. Only at its best did modern prewar poetry become "realism idealized." It often fell woefully short of its mark as the young poet encountered the lions in his path. Sometimes the brave new verse remained merely a "mental revolt from sentiment, in which the poet indulges his cleverness in conceits, or cynicisms, or frivolities"; sometimes "his fear of self-delusion and his resolute concentration" showed themselves only "in an unsympathetic hardness of expression, a brazen quality, fatal to music"; and sometimes "in his distrust of immediate attacks on the absolute" he never quite got "beyond himself," but remained "narrowly self-conscious, registering relative experiences personal to himself—a scientist not converted into a poet." But to point out the weakness of imperfect human nature does not reflect upon the modern poetic temper; it merely elucidates the perils of attempting to be poetically sincere and spiritually honest.  

A large part of the quest for spiritual sincerity lay in a deliberate renunciation of the forms and matters of the past,

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46 TLS, May 26, 1921, p. 337.
particularly of the recent past. Above all, wrote Richard Aldington (at the time a leader in the Imagist movement and therefore in the avant-garde of the poetic revolt), the young poet of 1913 must resist becoming "obsessed with the past, overborne by old masters, to the utter exclusion of present life and the death of individuality. There can be no life or interest or beauty in an art which is produced in accordance with the canons of twenty or fifty or even a thousand years ago. They simply don't fit. That is why it is ridiculous and dull to write of Hampstead Heath or of a tramcar in the language and metre which served to express the soul of Tennyson or Congreve."*  

These three general assertions can be advanced, then, partially to describe the prewar poetic revolt: it was a part of the larger twentieth-century revolt against Humanism; in the beginning it was the poetic phase of a widespread revolt against Academism among all the arts; and, specifically in the field of poetry, it was a reaction against the dead hand of the Romantic-Victorian tradition. Almost all the young Georgian rebels of whatever coterie—realists or Vorticists, Futurists or Imagists, Ezra Pound or Rupert Brooke, Richard Aldington or Lascelles Abercrombie—can be said in varying degrees to exemplify these tendencies. Beyond such common ground, however, agreement became the exception rather than the rule, for the movement toward modernism took two divergent paths. It split into two warring factions which,  

*Egoist, I, no. 13 (July 1, 1914), 247.
to borrow political nomenclature, one may designate as the parties of the Left and of the Center.⁴⁸

By late 1911 the poetic Right Wing had become negligible. It comprised a group of traditionalists, like Watson and Phillips, who denied "that there [was] anything seriously wrong with the tradition of English verse that [had] its roots in Ovid, Virgil, Sophocles, and Homer, and whose poetic charter was drawn up by Aristotle." In their poetry emotion was only to be recollected in tranquillity; the True, the Beautiful, and the Good were inevitably and ultimately triumphant in a cosmos of sin and error.⁴⁹ The Rightist was more or less violently opposed to new forms and subjects in art most frequently, one suspects, simply because they were new. Failing to adjust to his environment, he tended to become a rare avis, until at the end of the second decade his species survived only in the highly protected sanctuaries afforded by the pages of a few of the conservatively inclined English periodicals.

The really violent battles of the era raged between the poets of the Center and the Left. The first battle ground

⁴⁸Though the terms are borrowed from political diction, they are intended here to convey only artistic, not political implications. They are intended only as useful terms more or less descriptive of the positions taken by various poets and poetic coteries vis-à-vis the literary revolution of the second decade. The poets' views on political revolution are irrelevant.

⁴⁹Robert Graves, Hogarth Essay No. 8: Contemporary Techniques of Poetry (London, 1925), p. 7. The terms Right, Left, and Center are by no means my own. They were commonly used by critics of the second decade and were developed to their fullest implications by Graves in the source cited above.
was subject matter. Both parties held in common abhorrence that outmoded creature whom they called, with some asperity, the "cosmic poet"—that is, "roughly, the fellow who had read something somewhere that someone had written about Darwin or about the Nebular Hypothesis, and had developed a diseased habit of writing in an inflated manner about these cosmic matters usually without having taken the trouble, or perhaps without possessing the intelligence, to understand them." But in order to escape the onus attached to cosmic verse the poets devised two different methods: "Some decided to tolerate the old subjects, but to discover a new method of presenting, or representing them; others, not so satisfied, probed nervously the psychological recesses of the New World and dragged out all the strangest rags of fancy they could find, exhibiting them solely on account of their whimsical colours and shapes." Those who tolerated the old matter but sought the new manner were, roughly, the Centrists; those who sought novelty in both matter and manner were the Leftists. The two parties had a falling out, too, over technical matters: poetic diction, rhyme, meter, texture, and structure. The Centrist favored poetry "free from heroics and rant on the one hand, and from roughness and violence on the other." He saw some value, aesthetic or personal, in retaining certain of the traditional poetic techniques, but was nevertheless capable

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50 Harold Monro, "The Imagists Discussed," *Egoist*, II, no. 5 (May 1, 1915), 78.
51 Ibid.
52 Graves, *Hogarth Essay No. 8*, p. 11.
upon occasion of using new forms without experiencing either bad conscience or aesthetic nausea. He was attacked from both sides, by the Left for cowardice, by the Right for apostasy.

For all his interest in poetic diction, the Centrist kept his eye more consistently on the matter than on the manner of poetry. One sometimes finds him advocating the use of contemporary speech in modern verse. Occasionally he approached the Leftist position so far as to argue, like Lascelles Abercrombie, that if poetry is cast in the contemporary idiom, then modern verse can dispense with nobility, for realistic diction is more important than fundamental brainwork. But the Centrists' first regard was for the subject matter of poetry. The informing spirit of the Center party was that quality which, for want of a more precise term, one is compelled to call realism. It is the quality most apparent in the poetry of such men as Masefield, Gibson, Abercrombie, Bottomley, and Brooke; it requires of the poet "a consistent concentration on the intellectually real, a desire [as it has been said above] to see nature and men as they are and honour them with all the resources of his understanding, rather than feel vague personal emotions and spend all his intellectual powers in embellishing them." The Centrist tried to walk the razor's edge between the poets of the old guard, who refused to recognize the fact of revolt, and those of the avant-garde, who refused to recognize anything.

54 TLS, May 26, 1921, p. 337.
except revolt. His was a difficult position—and in the end, one doomed to failure—for he wished to "transfuse into poetry new blood from the romance of actuality and nature, but, at the same time...try never to forget its high and noble traditions inherited from the great ones of the past." 55

It was from the curious coalition of parties which formed the artistic Left that most of the sound and fury, the bombs and the pyrotechnics, were erupting in the prewar years. The factitious, insolent, brash, and noisy coteries which formed the Left Wing defy easy classification; indeed, their liveliness and, paradoxically, their strength lay precisely in their splendid devil-may-care diversity. Generically they were "a number of small groups loosely bound by a dislike of the Right and a scorn of the Center; agreeing amiably to rebel, but not agreeing as to the ultimate direction of their rebelliousness." 56

That it was a spirited rebellion, full of scurrilous shouts, insolent laughter, and derisive sneers, was only to be expected, for to its banners the Left attracted such enfants terribles of the Georgian age as Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Filippo Marinetti, and countless other less strident but no less dedicated soldiers of literary fortune.

If realism was the informing spirit of the Center, precision was the watchword of the Left. 57 The Leftist poet

55Clark, p. 23.
56Graves, Hogarth Essay No. 9, p. 7.
57The word "precision" is not my own, but Ezra Pound's. In a report to Harriet Monroe on the London poetic scene ca. late 1912, he applied the term specifically only to the Imagists, but it is equally applicable to most of the prewar Leftist
tended to concentrate more upon purifying poetic technique than upon expanding the subject matter of modern verse. He was more or less single-mindedly devoted to good craftsmanship, and he found the poets of the Center damnworthy not because of their subject matter or because they were realists, but because of what he considered their sloppy craftsmanship.

"I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity," wrote Ezra Pound; "in law when it is ascertainable; in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse." Among the conventions to be "trampled" were the traditional verse forms. A poem has a "'fluid' as well as a 'solid' content," Pound argued; "some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase." And although the traditional "symmetrical" forms can still be said to have "certain uses,...a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely and therefore properly rendered into symmetrical forms." The Leftist shared with the Centrist an abhorrence of archaic poetic diction. Ezra Pound, again, complained to Harriet Monroe regarding some of the poets she had published in Poetry: "Good God! isn't there one of them that can write natural speech without copying clichés out of every Eighteenth Century poet still in the public libraries? God knows I wallowed in archaisms in my vealish years, but these imbeciles don't even take the trouble to get an archaism, which might be silly

58 Prolegomena," PR, I (1912), 73 (italics mine).
and picturesque, but they get phrases out of just the stupidest and worst-dressed periods."\(^{59}\) Perhaps the diverse factions of the Left found their most extensive area of agreement, however, in their common advocacy of free verse. In the Imagist movement particularly one sees the beginning of the battle for vers libre in the prewar years. And although more or less violent arguments about the nature and the uses of free verse continued throughout the war years and even into the 'twenties, perhaps as early as 1915 the vers libristes were in full cry on the heels of the retreating traditionalists, and by 1920 they were in almost complete possession of the field.

The prewar Leftist poet was frequently doctrinaire, sometimes supercilious, and more often than not derisive. But he was no unreluctant warrior. "I've got a right to be severe," wrote Pound. "For one man I strike there are ten to strike back at me. I stand exposed. It hits me in my dinner invitations, in my week-ends, in reviews of my own work. Nevertheless it's a good fight."\(^{60}\) The Leftist was imbued with a sense of mission, even of destiny. He fought with the "tendencies" on his side and he knew it. And so in 1912, on the brink, as he thought, of a new age, he could confidently predict, along with Pound, that in the next decade modern poetry "will move against poppycock, it will be harder and saner, it will be...'nearer the bone.' It will be as much

\(^{60}\)Ibid., p. 13.
like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretive power...; I mean it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{61}PR, I (1912), 76.
CHAPTER 2

SOUND AND FURY

1

Realism

The realistic poets of the prewar poetic renascence established no recognizable school or coterie as did the Imagists, for example, or the Vorticists. Rather than a movement realism was only a tendency shared by poets of divergent persuasions. It deserves brief consideration nevertheless because an essentially realistic poem can be said to have begun the poetic renascence in 1911 and because realism largely dominated the first two volumes of Georgian Poetry.

The beginnings of Georgian poetic realism can be seen in the early works of two young men, Wilfrid Gibson and Rupert Brooke. The very titles of Gibson's first volumes are perhaps enough to suggest the derivative Tennysonian vein in which the poet started his career: Urlyn the Harper (1902), The Queen's Vigil (1902, The Golden Helm (1903), and The Nets of Love (1905). But suddenly and inexplicably, around 1907, Gibson did an about-face and turned to the lowly, the poor, and the oppressed for his poetic themes. The result was Stonefolds (1907) and Daily Bread (1910). Because of the widespread

\footnote{In an interview in the spring of 1955 Mr. Gibson himself assured me that though he recognized it, he had no explanation}
public apathy toward poetry, and because some of the poems in these two volumes were realistic only in the sense that their subjects were drawn from the works and days of the laboring classes, Gibson's poetry in the new vein can scarcely be said to have begun a trend in English poetry toward realism. Nor can that dubious distinction be claimed for Rupert Brooke. His first volume, Poems (1911), contained several poems which were a good deal more frank in their realistic details than any of Gibson's comparatively mild-mannered sallies into social verse. And they therefore achieved what one suspects was their major reason for being: they attracted public attention. With a fine insolence toward his conservative readers' sense of formal proprieties in verse, Brooke used the sonnet to describe in realistic detail the querulous old age of Menelaus and Helen: "Menelaus bold," who "waxed garrulous, and sacked a hundred Troys / 'Twixt noon and supper"; and Helen, whose "golden voice / Got shrill as she grew deafer," who "weeps--gummy-eyed and impotent," and whose "dry shanks twist at Paris' mumbled name."

Or in "Channel Passage" he used a sestet of the same form to describe a young man aboard a channel steamer who suffers at once from sea-sickness and love-sickness:

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

for the sudden shift in his verse around 1907. That he lived on a very small private income in a garret in Glasgow--and therefore was in daily contact with the kinds of people who were to become the subjects of his verse--may have had some effect upon the shift. But Mr. Gibson could recall no conscious "influence" at work upon him at this time.
"Sickly animalism," cried one reviewer; mere "swagger and brutality," cried another.\(^2\) But the effect of Brooke's Poems in 1911 was limited primarily to the critics and reviewers; the British reading public remained largely unperturbed.

It was John Masefield's Everlasting Mercy (1911) which can fairly be said to have set the prewar poetic renascence in motion. Published first in Ford Maddox Hueffer's English Review in October, 1911, and then as a separate volume, this poem was the seminal work of the renascence's realistic phase. Masefield should have been no stranger to the British poetry-reading public in 1911, nor should his colloquial, haphazardly constructed narrative verse have been particularly a novelty. It is difficult to understand why Salt Water Ballads (1902), Ballads (1903), and Ballads and Poems (1910) had not considerably prepared British readers for The Everlasting Mercy. But the public read the poem not only with surprise but with pleasure and a generous admixture of curiosity. Recalling the effect of its publication ten years later, even Harold Monro, never a devotee of Masefieldian art, was forced to admit:

Here was the stuff that the general public could appreciate without straining its intelligence. People who thought that English poetry had died with Tennyson suddenly recognized their error. The blank verse of Stephen Phillips was a mere echo of the Victorian manner, but the rapid free doggerel of 'The Everlasting Mercy,' its modernity, its bald colloquialism, and its narrative interest awakened the curiosity of the public in 1911, and a revival of the dormant interest in poetry was at once assured.\(^3\)


\(^3\)Some Contemporary Poets, p. 23.
Almost fifty years after the event, and at an incalculably distant spiritual remove, one finds it difficult now to account for the British public’s reaction to *The Everlasting Mercy* in 1911. A long narrative cast in irregular, often doggerel, meter, the poem recounts in some detail the lurid and sinful life of a drunken village poacher. The protagonist, Saul Kane, is allowed to state the bill of particulars against himself: "I drunk, I fought, I poached, I whored," he says. And Masefield is careful to include ample details to substantiate Kane’s claim to preeminence in each of the four fields of activity. But in its own inscrutable way the heaven in which he disbelieved reached down to save even the veriest of sinners, for in spite of his sins Kane was also possessed of a conscience—Victorian style. As he sat inside the ring being prepared to fight a grudge-match with a one-time friend, his eyes hit upon the place where he had recently seduced "poor Nell":

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My corner faced the Squire's park  
Just where the fir trees make it dark;  
The place where I begun poor Nell  
Upon the women's road to hell.  
I thought of't, sitting in my corner  
After the time-keeper struck his Warner....  
And while my seconds chafed and gloved me  
I thought of Nell's eyes when she loved me,  
And wondered how my lot would end,  
First Nell cast off and now my friend.
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Goaded by his conscience, and having been led to a final vision of his own revolting state by the ministrations of a Quaker lady who made the rounds of the village pubs daily "To bring the drunkards' souls to grace," Kane was converted to the ways of high living and clean thinking and presumably ended his days nobly tilling the soil.
The poem is interlarded with some vague and somewhat sentimentalized social criticism as Masefield allows the drunken Kane to expatiate to the parish priest on the evils of the social and economic system as seen from the lower classes. It also contains several lengthy and would-be bitter comments upon the evils of organized religion and the hypocrisy engendered by middle-class social conformity. But in the mouth of such a protagonist strictures against religion and conformity have a hollow ring; and in the social sphere Masefield allows the measured liberalism of the clergyman clearly to win the day over Kane's drunken radicalism. "You think the Church an out-worn fetter," says the priest;

Kane, keep it, till you've built a better.
And keep the existing social state;
I quite agree it's out of date,
One does too much, another shirks,
Unjust, I grant; but still...it works.

And he sums up his argument against Kane in what must surely be one of the most atrocious couplets in English poetry: "Put these two words beneath your hat, / These two: securus judicat."

In short, The Everlasting Mercy contains a moralistic flavor, a kind of heavy sentimentality, even didacticism, which makes it more redolent of Tom Hood than of the twentieth century.

The feature which apparently caught the public eye in the poem was not so much the matter as the manner. In The Everlasting Mercy Masefield "called a new tune which set the muse dancing, not very classically, in full view of the man on the street for the first time since the days of Tennyson."4

It was not only the rapid, free, doggerel meters but also Masefield's colloquial poetic diction and the mild oaths with which his poem was studded that attracted the attention of the public. Such a passage as the one in which Saul Kane encounters a fellow-poacher was certainly new—and to some degree, one supposes, even daring—in 1911, though a multitude of shocked voices quickly arose to point out that it was not "poetic."

By Dead Man's Thorn, while setting wires,
Who should come up but Billy Myers,
A friend of mine, who used to be
As black a sprig of hell as me,
With whom I'd planned, to save encroachin' Which fields and coverts each should poach in.
Now when he saw me set my snare,
He tells me 'Get to hell from there.
This field is mine,' he says, 'by right;
If you poach here, there'll be a fight.
Out now,' he says, 'and leave your wire;
It's mine'
'It ain't'
'You put.'
'You liar.'
'You closhy put.'
'You bloody liar.'
'This is my field.'
'This my wire.'
'I'm ruler here.'
'You ain't.'
'I am.'
'I'll fight you for it.'
'Right, by damn.'

At this late date it requires an impossible stretch of the critical imagination to conceive of what the British reading public found either particularly interesting or more than mildly shocking in such a piece of bad poetry. Witness one black rhyme, "encroachin'-poach in"; the banal phrase "who should come up but..." (of which the best that can be said is that it fits the metrical pattern); and the lapse from character as Kane uses the most unlikely "with whom" con-
struck. Even the profanity seems too obviously forced. As Robert Lynd observed, "One may amuse oneself by fancying that there is something of the manner of St. Francis even in Mr. Masefield's attitude to his little brothers the swear-words. He may not love them by nature, but he is kind to them by grace. They strike one as being the most innocent swear-words in literature."  

Moreover, Masefield was neither the first nor the only practitioner of realistic verse in modern times. By 1911 both Alfred Noyes and Henry Newbolt had had their fling at the kind of verse Masefield was attempting; and of course he had been long anticipated by Kipling. Compared to Kipling's realistic verse, indeed, Masefield's seems too obviously sprung from the forcing house, too self-conscious, too clearly contrived. "When Mr. Kipling repeats a soldier's oath, he seems to do so with a chuckle of appreciation. When Mr. Masefield puts down...oaths..., he does so rather as a melancholy duty. He swears, not like a trooper, but like a virtuous man. He does not, as so many realists do, love the innumerable coarsenesses of life which he chronicles; that is what makes his oaths often seem as innocent as the conversation of elderly sinners echoed on the lips of children."  

What, then, are the reasons for the almost instant and widespread popularity of The Everlasting Mercy? One cannot be certain, but perhaps the reasons alleged by Harold Monro are as sound as any. For the first time in many years, in

5Old and New Masters (New York, 1919), p. 155.
6Ibid., p. 150.
Masefield the general reader found verse which he could "appreciate without straining his intelligence." Moreover, to the public delight Masefield stretched traditional poetic forms to the breaking point. No more exquisitely jeweled lyrics, no more triolets or double ballades on the nothingness of things; rather, the "rapid, free doggerel," the "bold colloquialism," and the "narrative interest" of *The Everlasting Mercy*. But perhaps an even more convincing—though admittedly less demonstrable—reason for the poem's startling success lay in its timing. It was published at precisely the right time to act as a focus for some of the new forces of discontent stirring beneath the surface of British poetry in late 1911. And, like the naturalistic novel and the realistic drama, *The Everlasting Mercy* suited its age. In the liberal though not radical social ethos with which it was infused, in its racy, colloquial diction, in its eschewal of the traditionally poetic for the rigidly realistic, the English reading public thought it had tangible evidence that poetry had finally caught up, so to speak, with the contemporary novel and the stage.

For whatever reasons, publication of *The Everlasting Mercy* may be said to mark the beginning of the prewar poetic renascence, for, as Edmund Blunden observed, Masefield's poem "energized poetry and the reading of it, no matter what extremes of feeling it then aroused or now fails to arouse."

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Masefield followed up the success of *The Everlasting Mercy* with other narrative poems of the same order, *The Widow in the Bye Street* (1912), *The Story of a Roundhouse* (1912), and *Dauber* (1913). And in 1915, when Edward Marsh staked the considerable critical reputation of *Georgian Poetry* on two long works entirely in the Masefieldian realistic tradition—Abercrombie's *End of the World* and Bottomley's *King Lear's Wife*—he made amply evident what was in fact true: the kind of realism first popularized by Masefield was one of the major facets of the prewar revolt against the dead hand of poetic tradition.

**Futurism**

The most spectacular Continental revolutionary movement to strike England with something like a major impact at the beginning of the second decade was Futurism. Originally a revolt confined almost entirely to pictorial art, Futurism began around 1908 when a small revolutionary group of Milanese painters—Marinetti, Buzzi, Palazzeschi—with that splendid Latin penchant for artistic coteries, creeds, and fiery pronouncements, declared themselves henceforward free from the chains of artistic Academism. The movement quickly caught on in both Italy and France, and its implications for poetry were soon recognized by some of its founders, principally Marinetti. On February 20, 1909, Marinetti published the first Futurist "Manifesto" in *Le Figaro*, a document which, as Harold Monro wrote, launched Futurism not only as an artistic but
but also as a poetic movement. It was followed by a spate of manifestos during 1909 and 1910, most of them addressed to the artist—though one was addressed to musicians and another was concerned with motion pictures—and in 1911 the tenets of the movement were summed up by Marinetti's *Le Futurism*. In 1912 Italian Futurist verse was collected in an anthology which, according to Harold Monro, had sold thirty-five thousand copies by late 1913.

There could scarcely be a more convincing example than Futurism of the desire for the violent, the self-assertive, the primitive, and the barbaric which was beginning to engulf Continental art, and from art spilling over into poetry. "We will sing the love of danger, and the habit of energy and fearlessness," wrote Marinetti in the manifesto of 1909.

The foundations of our poetry shall be courage, audacity, and revolt. We announce that the splendour of earth has become enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of Speed.... All Beauty is based on strife. There can be no masterpiece other than aggressive in character. Poetry must be a violent assault against unknown forces to overwhelm them into obedience to man. We will sing the great multitudes furious with work, pleasure, or revolt; the many-coloured and polyphonic assaults on the revolution in modern capitals;...stations, those ravenous swallowers of fire-breathing serpents; factories hung by their cords of smoke to the clouds....

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9 *Poetry and Drama*, I (1913), 263. In subsequent footnote references the title of this journal will be abbreviated to PD.
11 PD, I (1913), 264.
Futurism lauded war, it praised violence for its own sake; taking a page from Henley's book, it idealized the machine, especially the automobile; it stood for speed, love of danger, noise, and the unrestrained ego.

If there was any organized rationale at all in Futurism, it argued fundamentally from the premise that twentieth-century sensibility had been completely changed by scientific discovery and its stepchild, invention. In his "New Futurist Manifesto" of May 11, 1913, Marinetti claimed that modern communication and machinery had brought about a change in man's psyche which, were he courageous or wise enough to admit it, must also cause a complete and violent change in his art. Explaining what he meant by "The Futurist Consciousness," Marinetti claimed that twentieth-century life had effected at least fifteen specific results, chief among them: acceleration of living, speed; horror of the old, the familiar, the known; abhorrence of the quiet life, love of action and danger; destruction of "the feeling of the beyond"; "multiplication and inexhaustibility of human desires and ambitions"; equality of the sexes; "depreciation of love (sentimentalism and luxury)—produced by greater erotic facility and liberty in women"; a new sense of fusion of men and machines; "nausea of the curved line... love of the straight line and of the terminal."13

13 Trans. Arundel del Re, PD, I (1913), 319-21. The "New Futurist Manifesto" of May 11, 1913, as translated and printed in PD is one of the most significant single documents in the history of Futurism, for it not only contains the Futurist "metaphysic," but also the Futurist poetic which was based upon it.
Upon such a tenuous foundation Marinetti erected the framework of the Futurist poetic. Twentieth-century poetry, he claimed, if it would accurately reflect the realities of twentieth-century life, must embody several Futurist precepts:

1. "Words at liberty." Lyricism has nothing whatever to do with syntax; it is simply "the exceptional faculty of intoxicating and being intoxicated with life." The poet must communicate by using "essential" words only, "and those absolutely at liberty."

2. "Wireless imagination." By which Marinetti meant "entire freedom of images and analogies expressed by disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax.... Poetry must be an uninterrupted sequence of new images."

3. "Semaphoric adjectivation." Qualifying adjectives must be cut to the bone in Futurist verse. They should be considered only as "semaphores" serving "to regulate the speed and pace of the analogies."

4. "Verb in the infinitive." Finite verb forms must be avoided at all costs because they tend to make units of meaning (i.e., sentences). The infinitive form is far preferable, indeed indispensable, because it "negates in itself the existence of a sentence and prevents the style from stopping or sitting down at a determined spot."

5. "Onomatopoeia and mathematical signs." Modern verse must have "a most rapid, brutal, and immediate lyricism, ...a telegraphic lyricism." To this end it must have the courage to introduce "onomatopoeic chords, in order to render all the sounds and even the most cacophonous noises of modern life."
And it must make copious use of mathematical and musical symbols "to regulate the speed of the style."

6. "Typographical revolution." The typographical harmony of the normal printed page of verse must be rigorously eschewed. Typography must rather show "the flux and reflux, the jerks and bursts of style" represented on the page. Therefore the Futurist poet may "if necessary" make use of three or four colors of ink and twenty kinds of type on a single page.

7. "Free and expressive orthography." Words must continually be made and unmade ad libitum; they must be formed, reformed, and deformed in the process of every poem. No syntax is allowable by any stretch of permissiveness. We must have "words at liberty"!14

Perhaps the most charitable course at this late date is thus to allow the Futurist poetic to speak for itself. Though it undeniably opened the door to all sorts of further experiments with verse forms, few English poets appear to have taken it very seriously as a specific guide for writing verse, if for no other reason than the English poet's fundamental mistrust of Latin extremism.15 Among poetic circles Futurism was more symptomatic than influential. It made few poetic converts in England, but the interest it evoked and the hue and cry it raised afforded additional evidence, if more was needed, that a feeling of discontent and incipient revolt was pandemic among young English poets. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that even the most

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15E.g., Vorticism, another Leftist movement, prided itself upon its fundamentally English quality. See below, pp. 64-65.
ardent poetic revolutionary in London in 1913 could have considered such a poem as Marinetti's "Bataille" as much more than mildly amusing.

**BATAILLE**

**POIDS + ODEUR**

Midi 3/4 flûtes glapissement embrasement
toumtoumb alarme Gargaresch craquement crépitation
marche Cliquetis sacs fusils sabots clous canons
crinières roues caissons juifs beignets pains-à-
huile cantilènes échoppes bouffées chatoiement chassie
puanteur cannelle
fadeurs flux reflux poivre rixe vermine tourbillon
orangers-en-fleur filligrane misère dés échecs
cartes jasmin + muscade + rose arabesque mosaïque charogne
herissémen t + savates mitrailleuses = galettes
+ ressac + grenouilles Cliquetis sac fusil canons
ferraille atmosphère = plombs + lave + 300 puanteurs
+ 50 parfums pavé matelas détritus crottin char-
ognes flic-flac entassement chameaux bourricots
tohubohu cloaque.16

The major impact of Futurism upon London came not from the Futurist poetic but in the person of its incredible founder and publicist Filippo Marinetti. Marinetti lectured frequently in London from 1912 through 1914. A man of considerable wealth, he was "a flamboyant person," as Douglas Goldring recalled, "adorned with diamond rings, gold chains, and hundreds of flashing white teeth." His public performances were perhaps more spectacular than edifying: during one recitation in 1914 he was accompanied by the intermittent booming of a large drum off-stage, and he sometimes made it a practice to exemplify Futurist tenets by imitating the sound of machine guns on the platform. But he spoke everywhere and to all kinds of artists and poets--

16 *PD*, I (1913), 358.
at the Lyceum Club and in Beckstein Hall, to T.E. Hulme's Poets' Club, in the Doré Galleries, and in the meeting room of Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. Not everyone was impressed. Richard Aldington recorded in December, 1913, "M. Marinetti has been reading his new poems to London. London is vaguely alarmed and wondering whether it ought to laugh or not."

Perhaps Edward Marsh had attended the same reading as Aldington; at any rate he wrote a long and lively account of one to Rupert Brooke, absent in the South Seas, on December 14, 1913.

...Did anyone give you an account of Marinetti's visit? I only attended one of his manifestations—a lecture at the Poetry Bookshop, in a kind of loft which looked as if it was meant to keep apples in, and one ought to get into it by a ladder through a trap-door. It was illuminated by a single night-light, which I thought at first must be a Futurist tenet; but it turned out to be only a fatuity of Monro's. Marinetti began his lecture by asking how he could possibly talk in a penumbra about Futurism, the chief characteristic of which was Light, Light, Light? He did very well all the same. He is beyond doubt an extraordinary man, full of force and fire, with a surprising gift of turgid lucidity, a full and roaring and foaming flood of indubitable half-truths.

He gave us two of the 'poems' on the Bulgarian War. The appeal to the sensations was great—to the emotions, nothing. As a piece of art, I thought it was about on the level of a very good farmyard-imitation—a supreme music hall turn. I could not feel that it detracted in any respect from the position of Paradise Lost or the Grecian Urn. He has a marvelous sensorium, and a marvelous gift for transmitting its reports—but what he writes is not literature, only an aide-memoire for a mimic....

Wyndham Lewis expressed his antagonism more actively. To one of Marinetti's lectures at the Doré Galleries in 1914 "Lewis

17Wagner, pp. 128-30.
18New Freewoman, I, no. 12 (Dec.1, 1913), 226.
19A Number of People (New York, 1939), pp. 295-96.
took 'a determined band of miscellaneous anti-Futurists,' including Gaudier-Brzeska, Edward Wadsworth, and T.E. Hulme (all big men). They heckled Marinetti. Gaudier 'put down a tremendous barrage in French,' while the rest 'maintained a confused uproar.' And in May, 1914, Harold Monro remarked in a letter to Marsh, "We had tremendous fun with Marinetti the other evening. He came around [to the Poetry Bookshop] and declaimed to Yeats and made the room shake." The picture is diverting: Marinetti declaiming Futurist poetry to Yeats! It is possible the room may have shaken from two directions.

Though Futurism did much to enliven the English literary and artistic scene in 1912 and 1913, by 1914 it was being replaced by other, more up-to-the-minute "-isms." Among other reasons for the decline is the fact that the very word was being diluted by too loose and too frequent use. By 1914 "Futurist" had come to be applied in art circles not so much to Marinetti and his followers as indiscriminately to anyone trying to rebel against merely representational art. Moreover, by 1914 there were many artists—especially those in rival

\[20\] Wagner, p. 130.

\[21\] Harold Monro to Edward Marsh, May 12, 1914, Marsh Letter Collection. In all subsequent footnote references both Marsh's name and the Marsh Letter Collection will be abbreviated, the former to E.M., the latter to MLC. Almost without exception the hundreds of unpublished letters which I have used in this study have been found in Edward Marsh's letter collection, by which I will be understood to mean that voluminous and immensely significant body of letters written throughout many years by most of England's twentieth-century poets to Edward Marsh. Almost the entire collection has been purchased by the New York Public Library and has been made a part of the Berg Collection. With few exceptions (notably in the case of D.H. Lawrence and Isaac Rosenberg) the letters are unpublished.
coteries like the Vorticists—who claimed that in the rush to modernity Futurism had long since been passed by; it was itself (to use their own phrase) "passéiste." Wyndham Lewis could write patronizingly in 1914 that Futurism, as bodied forth in a current exhibition of Futurist art, was only "Impressionism up-to-date," with an admixture of "Automobilism" and Nietzsche. It was "romantic," the most damning of all epithets: "a picturesque, superficial, and romantic rebellion of Milanese painters against the Academism which surrounded them." The Futurists, too, had overdone their rebellion and reached the point where extremes meet: "With their careful choice of motor omnibuses, cars,...aeroplanes, etc., the Automobilist pictures were too 'picturesque,' melodramatic and spectacular, besides being undigested and naturalistic to a fault.... Romance about science is a thing we have all been used to for many years, and we resent it being used as a sauce for a dish claiming to belong to emancipated Futures."

In its more specifically poetic phase, too, not a few critics were quick to point out that Futurism was not so new as it pretended to be. Henley had anticipated by some years the Futurist effusions on the automobile and on the beauty of speed, and Kipling had long since remarked upon the romance of the modern machine. Even so sympathetic a critic as Harold

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22 The word itself, a favorite among the avant-garde, perhaps shows in a small way the influence of Futurism, at least upon the critical vocabulary of the English. It was a French—and therefore more familiar—rendering of the Italian passatisti, lovers of the past, who were the chief whippingboys of the early Futurist manifestos (Wagner, p. 131).

23 Blast, I (1914), 143-44.
Monro felt impelled to point out to the Futurists that the poetry which they believed so startling and so new had its antecedents in the verse of a mid-nineteenth century American, Walt Whitman. In the beginning at least, much Italian Futurist verse, Monro wrote, was "no more than frenzied Whitmanism, adulterated by an excessive, if diverting, admixture of meridional eloquence." Wyndham Lewis observed that in their praise of the machine the Futurists had also been anticipated by H.G. Wells. Lewis defined Futurism caustically as "the Present with the Past rigidly excluded, and flavoured strongly with H.G. Well's dreams of the dance of monstrous and arrogant Machinery, to the frenzied clapping of men's hands." And as early as the beginning of 1912 J.C. Squire pointed out that Futurist poetry bore traces of Impressionism, the very movement which the Futurists professed so cordially to detest. "To me, at least," wrote Squire, "the Futurist verse reads like slightly more disjected Whitman or Henley with a flavouring of French impressionism."

But the rock on which Futurism finally foundered was the war. With its single-minded emphasis upon energy as a goal of art, its love of the brutal, its open desire for and praise of war, Futurism could not weather the mounting revulsion at the very real release of man's brutal energies in the very real world of trench warfare in the mud of Flanders. "What Futurist,

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24 PD, I (1913), 263.
26 NS, II (1912), 349.
either in the trenches or at home, honestly desires war to continue"? demanded the art critic of the *Egoist* in January, 1917. "What Vorticist? They advocated violence, but violence has now become too common; devastation and anarchy sweep Europe." And so a Russian Futurist, Mayakovsky, could claim with justification in early 1917, "Futurism has died as a particular group, but it has poured itself out in everyone in a flood. Today all are Futurists." 27

### III

#### Vorticism

An even more pyrotechnic phase of the prewar revolt in plastic and pictorial art which had implications for poetry was Vorticism. In a sense both an outgrowth from and a rebellion against Futurism, Vorticism was not an import from the Continent but a home-grown revolution. Vorticism was launched as a formal artistic "movement" by the second of Marinetti's lectures at the Doré Galleries on May 5, 1914, the one to which went "a small band of miscellaneous anti-Futurists"—Hulme, Wadsworth, Gaudier-Brzeska—led by Wyndham Lewis to heckle Marinetti. Their success against so formidable an opponent apparently led the small band to consider formalizing their views, and so with the addition of a few others to the group—such as Ezra Pound (who invented the word "Vorticist" 28) and Richard Aldington—


28 *Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 74. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Pound on the prewar poetic scene. He was ubiquitous. His name and influence were recorded in the pages of most of the avant-garde little magazines as well
Vorticism began its brief but lively career. 29

Little more than a month later, in June, 1914, Vorticism became vocal with the publication of that most amazing of all prewar little magazines, Blast, which ran for only two numbers, the second and final one appearing in July, 1915. Edited by Wyndham Lewis and published by John Lane at the Bodley Head, Blast was obviously out to shock both in content and format. The first number had a puce-colored paper cover, the word "BLAST" being written in huge block capitals diagonally across it. Inside appeared the inevitable manifesto printed in inch-high capitals, poems by Pound, Vorticist drawings, "Vortices and Notes" by Lewis, stories by Rebecca West and Ford Maddox Hueffer, and short pieces entitled "Vortex" by Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska. Harrying the Philistines was certainly no new aim in British letters from the mid-nineteenth century on, and Blast did the job extraordinarily well. But one also gets the feeling from Blast that the Vorticists were genuinely fired with new ideas, were inspired, indeed, to save "Art" for the artist, as in the affairs of such a Centrist organization as the Poetry Bookshop or a journal like PD. Among all the prewar poets, Arundel del Re wrote, Pound was both preeminent and unique, "the only one who without affectation lived up to the romantic tradition of the poet in looks, dress, and behavior and, though his many enemies have accused him of it, without any intention of advertising himself. A true poetic genius and a born leader, there has been no new and really vital movement in English poetry since 1910, upon which he has not exercised a clearly marked influence either directly or indirectly, for his personality is probably the most remarkable (that of Robert Bridges excepted) that has appeared in English poetry during the present century" ("Georgian Reminiscences," Studies in English Literature, II [1932], 329. The title of this journal will hereafter be abbreviated to SEL.).

29 Wagner, pp. 130, 143-44.
to rescue it at once from Philistine realism and ivory-tower aestheticism. Among other distinctions which fell to the Journal, it was in Blast that Eliot's four "Preludes" and the "Rhapsody of a Windy Night" first saw print; and Pound's small tour de force "Ancient Music" first appeared there. Pound probably took some pride in the fact that three lines of one of his more scurrilous short poems in the first number had to be inked out by a censor. And in the second number appeared a small poem of Pound's which must surely be the only published satiric poem about Rupert Brooke. Both in violence and in size, however, the second number showed a considerable falling off from the first. Though its literary quality was higher, it took a doomed, if forthright, stand toward its task during wartime: "This puce-coloured cockleshell," Lewis wrote, "will ...try to brave the waves of blood, for the serious mission it has on the other side of the World-War." And though Lewis confidently looked forward to two more issues in 1915, even going so far as to list the contents of the next projected number, Blast, like most of the little magazines which so enlivened literary London in the prewar years, became a casualty of the war.

30II (1915), 48-51. In subsequent printing the title of the latter poem became "Rhapsody on a Windy Night."
31"Fratres Minorae," I (1914), 48. The curious will discover that the years have not dealt kindly with the censor's heavy ink. In each of the three copies of Blast that I have seen it is possible precisely to decipher the censored lines with the aid of a strong light applied at a judicious angle. Sic semper tyrannus! The reward, however, is not entirely commensurate with the effort required.
32"Our Contemporaries," II (1915), 21.
33Ibid., p. 5.
As one traces its tenets through the pages of Blast, Vorticism appears to have had several strings to its bow. In a bristling statement of aims at the beginning of the first number, Lewis set forth the major principles upon which the journal would stand and upon which subsequent articles and contributors only rang the changes. "Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the centre of this town!", he began.

We stand for the Reality of the Present—
not for the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past.
We want to leave nature and men alone.
We do not want to make people wear Futurist patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers.
We are not their wives or tailors....
We believe in no perfectibility except our own....
We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism), and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.
WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel its crude energy flowing through us....
We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of a lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals wherever found.
We will convert the King if possible.
A VORTICIST KING! WHY NOT?
DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE HAS THE VORTEX WITHIN HIM?
MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND?....
AUTOMOBILISM (Marinettiism) bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes.
Elephants are VERY BIG. Motor cars go quickly.
Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing, in his romantic delight with modern lodging houses was futurist in this sense.
The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870....
We want those simple and great people found everywhere.
Blast presents an art of Individuals.34

34I (1914), 7-8.
Above all *Blast* stood for art as an individual experience both in its creation and its enjoyment. It set itself against any other school except Vorticism; it was equally disgusted by realism and aestheticism. Vorticism was an artistic coterie to end artistic coteries. Explicit in Lewis' manifesto was Vorticism's intense hostility toward Futurism. Though its credo shared several fundamental points with that of the Futurists, Vorticism took a violent and forthright antipathy toward its predecessor. Futurism had become a dead issue in England by 1914, Lewis claimed, because it was too "romantic" and "sentimental"—sentimental about the future, to be sure, but no less sentimental than such out-dated artistic movements as Post-Impressionism, which Futurism claimed to supplant. Vorticism set its face as resolutely against Impressionism as against Futurism. It had nothing but scorn for the "lean belated Impressionists at present attempting to eke out a little life in these islands.... Our vortex is fed up with your dispersals, reasonable chicken-men," wrote Lewis.

Behind the antipathy toward both Futurism and Impressionism, however, one detects a deeper hatred. Almost all the denunciations and manifestos in *Blast* are directed toward what it was pleased to call "sentimentalism," be it sentimentalism about the past or the future.

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35 *Blast*, I (1914), 143-44.
Our Vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten its existence.
Our Vortex regards the Future as as sentimental as the Past.
The Future is distant, like the Past, and therefore sentimental....
Everything absent, remote, requiring projection in the veiled weakness of the mind is sentimental....

In its emphasis on the anti-sentimental, the hard and dry, Vorticism attempted to do in art much the same thing that Imagism was contemporaneously attempting to do for poetry. In fact, both Aldington and Pound, leaders in the Imagist movement, also signed their names to the Vorticist manifestos in Blast.

Finally, Vorticism was self-consciously English. Unlike Futurism, an import from the alien, Latin shores, Vorticism took pains to distinguish itself as a native movement. Its most lengthy and in many ways most hard-hitting manifesto was devoted to this purpose. It declared itself thoroughly bored with "that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable 'intellectual' before anything coming from Paris—cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many quarters." Englishmen had so far failed to recognize the new and vivid art which was flourishing within their own island; but once enlightened, Englishmen would produce the most vital modern art. After all, Lewis protested, England "practically invented this civilisation that Signor Marinetti has come to preach to us about." There should be nothing particularly intoxicating about modern machines to an Englishman. And since "modern life is the invention of the English, they should have something profounder to say on

37II (1915), 147. See also Wagner, pp. 147-48.
The very kind of British chauvinism which he so vigorously belabored in other moods appeared in Lewis' comments on the Englishness of Vorticism:

The modern world is due almost entirely to Anglo-Saxon genius,--its appearance and its spirit....

In dress, manners, mechanical inventions, LIFE, that is, ENGLAND, has influenced Europe in the same way that France has in Art.

But busy with this LIFE-EFFORT, she has been the last to become conscious of the Art that is an organism of new Order and Will of man....

Once this consciousness towards the new possibilities of expression in present life has come, however, it will be more the legitimate property of Englishmen than of any other people in Europe.

It should also, as it is by origin theirs, inspire them more forcibly and directly.

They are the inventors of this bareness and hardness, and should be the greatest enemies of Romance.39

One runs a risk perhaps in taking Blast too seriously, with its long lists in three-quarter-inch capitals of random persons, events, and facts to be "blasted" or "blessed." Under the heading "Blast" (and one must recall the ubiquitous English use of the word as epithet) occurs such an assortment of items as English weather, "Humor (English variety)," all things Victorian, the Bishop of London (and "all his posterity"), Galsworthy, Dean Inge, Croce, Bergson, "Beecham (Pills, Opera, Thomas)," A.C. Benson, the British Academy, William Archer, and "the Clan Meynell." Under "Bless" we find "cold, magnanimous, delicate, gauche, fanciful, stupid Englishmen," the Hairdresser, English humor (Swift and Shakespeare), French vitality, skepticism, pornography and females, the Pope,

38 Wagner, p. 134.

39 "Manifesto," Blast, I (1914), 30-42. The manifesto was signed by, among others, Lewis, Pound, Aldington, Gaudier-Brzeska, and Wadsworth.
"Barker (John and Granville)," the Salvation Army, Charlotte Corday, Castor Oil, James Joyce, Lloyd George, Chaliapin, and the Commercial Process Company.\(^{40}\) One cannot take too seriously either some of Pound's poetic sorties in \textit{Blast}, full of the new insolence, attacking all manner of persons and institutions which he saw as restricting the freedom of the artist in 1914.

He hit out venomously at the conservative reviewers:

\begin{quote}
Let us deride the smugness of 'The Times';
GUFFAW!
So much the gagged reviewers,
It will pay them when the worms are wriggling in their vitals;
These were they who objected to newness,
HERE are their TOMB-STONES,
They supported the gag and the ring:
A little black BOX contains them.
SO shall you be also,
You slut-bellied obstructionist,
You sworn foe to free speech and good letters,
You fungus, you continuous gangrene.\(^{41}\)
\end{quote}

And he lashed out at his literary contemporaries in general:

\begin{quote}
You say that I take a good deal upon myself;
That I strut in the robes of assumption.

In a few years no one will remember the 'buffo,'
No one will remember the trivial parts of me,
The comic detail will not be present.
As for you, you will lie in the earth,
And it is doubtful if even your manure will be rich enough
To keep grass
Over your grave.\(^{42}\)
\end{quote}

The close relationship of Vorticism to Imagism is apparent in some of Pound's contributions to \textit{Blast}. Several of his semi-Imagist efforts were printed in the first number:

\(^{40}\textit{Blast}, I (1914), 11-28. Some of the names were deliberately misspelled (Wagner, p. 147).\)
\(^{41}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 45.\)
\(^{42}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 48.\)
L'Art

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,
Crushed strawberries! Come let us feast our eyes;

Women before a Shop

The gee-gaws of false amber and false turquoise
attract them.
'Like to like nature.' These agglutinous yellows!43

But the relationship is more clearly seen in Pound's explanation of the meaning of Vorticism for poetry. Like the Vorticist painter, the Vorticist poet too "will use only the primary media of his art," said Pound.

The primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE.
The Vorticist will not allow the primary expression of any concept or emotion to drag itself out into mimicry.
In painting Kandinsky, Picasso.
In poetry this by 'H.D.'

Whirl up sea--
Whirl up you pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
Upon our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.44

By July, 1915, when the second number appeared, Blast had a slightly less arrogant tone. One notes even, with some surprise, that Blast II had a faintly patriotic odor about it. Active service in the trenches had begun to expel the youthful arrogance from at least one of the Vorticists. Gaudier-Brzeska wrote his last "Vortex" from the trenches in France, a sympathetic and human document, warm with humility, bright with new insight, the more tragic because its gifted author was so shortly to be killed in action.

43Blast, I (1914), 49.
44Blast, I (1914), 154. The subject is covered more comprehensively in Stanley K. Coffman, Imagism (Norman, Okla., 1961), pp. 204-07.
I have been fighting for two months and I can now gauge the intensity of Life. Human Masses teem and move, are destroyed and crop up again. Horses are worn out in three weeks, die by the roadside. Dogs wander, are destroyed, and others come along. With all the destruction that works around us, nothing is changed, even superficially. Life is the same strength, the same moving agent that permits the small individual to assert himself.... This war is a great remedy. In the individual it kills arrogance, self-esteem, pride.\textsuperscript{45}

Just as surely as Futurism, Vorticism was a casualty of the War. It was a too self-conscious creed of euphuistic violence which collapsed of anemia when faced with truly brutal violence on the unparalleled scale of world war.

iv

Imagism

Another important group of rebels in the prewar poetic renascence was that oddly assorted coterie to which one may apply the roughly descriptive term Imagist. This is not the place to trace the history of the Imagist movement, to deal with the amazing personalities which it attracted, or to enter the labyrinth of personal animosities and tempestuous civil insurrections which arose within its camp. That task has been done.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45}Blast, II (1915), 33-34.

\textsuperscript{46}Glenn Hughes' Imagism and the Imagists (1931), though unsatisfactory in many respects, was long the standard work on Imagism. The subject was reopened with great profit by Stanley K. Coffman in his Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry (1951), which, in spite of its modest sub-title, comes near being definitive.
Here the Imagists must be considered primarily historically—that is, as only one of several parties to the prewar poetic revolt—and their similarities to other prewar Leftist coteries pointed out. Such a task requires that special attention be given to two periodicals, the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist*, around which the Imagists rallied and in which they assiduously whetted their knives for their enemies and greeted their friends with partisan huzzahs.

The *New Freewoman*, a feminist paper edited by Dora Marsden, appeared for the first time on June 15, 1913. Almost from the beginning it was apparent that the *New Freewoman* was to be a repository for poems of the Imagist school. Aldington's work appeared early in the life of the journal, along with verse by "H.D.," Amy Lowell, F.S. Flint, Skipworth Cannell, and William Carlos Williams. Early numbers also contained critical articles on modern poetry by Rebecca West and Ford Maddox Hueffer, as well as frequent reviews of contemporary verse by Ezra Pound.

With a slight change in format, the *New Freewoman* became the *Egoist* with the number of January 1, 1914. Like its short-lived predecessor, the *Egoist* was published fortnightly until January 1, 1915, when it became a monthly for the duration of the war. Never a journal to hide its light, the *Egoist* advertised itself as "the only fortnightly in England that an intelligent person can read for three months running." Its editor until 1915 was Dora Marsden, its assistant editors Richard Aldington and Leonard Compton-Rickett. When it became a monthly the editorship was taken over by Harriet Shaw Weaver.

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47 *Blast*, I (1914), 160.
Around the middle of 1917 the journal changed rapidly: new contributors began to appear—names like Herbert Read and T.S. Eliot appeared more frequently in its pages—and old contributors like Aldington began to fade out. In June, 1917, indeed, Eliot became an assistant editor. By 1919 the Egoist Press had been established and the Egoist staff had become increasingly interested in book publishing and less so in editing a magazine. The last number of the Journal appeared in December, 1919. Its leading contributors, Eliot, Pound, and Aldington, were shortly to turn their efforts to the more famous and influential Criterion. 48

The Egoist succeeded in putting itself in the avant-garde of literary revolt from the beginning. A partial roster of those who contributed either verse or critical articles on poetry to the journal in 1914 amply demonstrates its penchant for the new: Aldington, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, F.S. Flint, Robert Frost, "H.D.,” John Gould Fletcher, Amy Lowell, and William Carlos Williams. One of its proudest accomplishments was the serial publication of Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in 1914-15 after it had been universally rejected by publishers because it was allegedly salacious. Pound and Aldington alternated as book reviewers early in the life of the Egoist and, as one might expect, succeeded admirably in keeping things warm in their corner. Perhaps it was in the

48 It is to be hoped that a scholar of modern literature will soon undertake an extended study of the Egoist, for it is one of the most fascinating and significant journals of the prewar and war years.
correspondence columns, however, that the hottest controvers­
versies raged. The Egoist had without doubt the most lively
letters-to-the-editor columns in London. The editorial staff
and friends of the paper were sometimes not above manufacturing
letters under *noms de plume* to stir up a lagging controversy
or start a new one. T.S. Eliot did so on several occasions, and one discovers several amusingly fictitious names inscribed
to letters in 1914 which bear unmistakable traces of the deft
hand of Pound or Aldington.

What did the prominent Imagists who contributed to the
*New Freewoman* and the *Egoist* stand for? By and large they
took their stand somewhere near the middle of the Left, in
which status they both agreed and disagreed with their Leftist
compeers. They agreed with all the prewar rebels that the new
twentieth-century consciousness demanded a new poetry, that
old subjects, and particularly old techniques, were *passéiste.*
Along with the Futurists, too, the Imagists "proclaimed the
need of the modern poet for a free form of verse. Both condemned
rhetoric. Both...asserted the importance of complete freedom
of play of images and analogies." The Imagist was attracted to

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50 It is difficult to speak of "the Imagists" as a cohesive
or unified coterie, for they were neither. Aldington's brand
of Imagism differed slightly from Pound's, and both differed
from Hulme's or Flint's. Pound, moreover, was read out of
the party in 1914 when yet another brand, "Amygism," was
introduced. And so one must almost always identify the
particular Imagist one is using as an example. See Coffin,
ch. 7.
"Futurism's vigor and energy, its hatred of the stylized, sentimental, and academic, and its concentration on its own times...." Even so, the Imagist perhaps had more in common with the Vorticist that the Futurist. Like the Vorticist, the Imagist—in the person of Aldington or Pound—did not entirely accept Futurism's complete renunciation of the past. But above all he rejected the formlessness of Futurist poetry. Marinetti's poems, Aldington argued, were not only too rhetorical and bombastic but also too formless and abstract. "There is a vast disorganized energy in these poems," he wrote, "and good journalistic observations. Their great drawback to some of us is their utterly unrestrained rhetoric, their use of abstractions, their vagueness.... M. Marinetti's poems are born in confusion and may perish in it." It was in his emphasis upon the necessity for form in poetry, upon "bringing content under careful, efficient control instead of allowing it to overflow onto the page," that the Imagist clearly parted company with the Futurist.

In their opposition to representational art, again, the Imagists joined forces with both Futurists and Vorticists. The major question facing young artists in 1914, wrote Aldington, was simply, "Shall we, or shall we not have 'parochialism in art'—or to put it in different words: should artists confine themselves entirely to modern life and to the modern world for their detail as well as for the 'spirit' of their works?"

51 Coffin, pp. 196-97.
52 New Freewoman, I, no. 12 (Dec. 1, 1913), 226.
53 Coffin, p. 213.
The school of "the dust bin and the back yard" is gaining strength. "If one does not deal in the latest type of aero-plane or in the latest refinement in factories, then one is outside the pale." Too much modern art insists on modernity not only of spirit, but also of detail. And Aldington advanced three reasons why realistic art was in his eyes bad art: first, realistic detail is uninteresting per se and quickly becomes "tedious and out of date"; secondly, he claimed "the right for every artist to use any subject he damn well pleases so long as he uses it well"; and thirdly, he found the realist "a very bad artist— as a rule. To drag smells of petrol, refrigerators, ocean greyhounds, President Wilson and analine dyes into a work of art will not compensate for lack of talent and of technique." Against the dust-bin school the Imagist, in the person of Aldington in this case, broke out two banners: the banner of artistic individualism, a kind of latter-day art-for-the-artist's-sake; and, though the devices upon it are somewhat dimmer, the banner of art as private experience with all that such an aesthetic implies of the aloof, scholarly, skeptical disregard for the plain reader which was to become so thoroughly characteristic of the poetry of the 'twenties.

Finally, the Imagists shared with all the parties of the prewar revolt, Left and Center, a strong antipathy to all things Victorian. They abhorred, for instance, what they were pleased to call "cosmic" poetry. The adjective was never precisely defined, though it seems to have been coined in an attempt to

54 "Parochialism in Art," Egoist, I, no. 23 (Dec. 1, 1914), 443.
describe that segment of nineteenth-century verse which was
didactic in conception or in which the poet's aim seemed to be
more to convey a general idea than to objectify an emotion or
describe an object in the existential world. By loose extension
the word came simply to connote "Victorian" or—an even more
odious epithet—"Tennysonian." In a withering burst of youth­
ful scorn, Rebecca West, while praising the Imagists for bring­
ing austerity back to English verse, managed to condemn the
contributors to Georgian Poetry I as mere belated Victorians:

Poetry should be burned to the bone by
austere fires and washed white with the rains
of affliction: the poet should love nakedness
and the thought of the skeleton under the
flesh. But because the public will not pay
for poetry it has become the occupation of
learned persons, given to soft living among
veiled things and unaccustomed to being sacked
for talking too much. That is why from the
beautiful stark bride of Blake it has become
the idle hussy hung with ornaments kept by
Lord Tennyson, handed on to Stephen Phillips
and now supported at Devonshire Street by
the Georgian school.55

In no coterie perhaps did anti-Victorian feeling take
quite the extreme proportions that it did among the Imagists;
and in no school was the specific anti-Victorian tone which
one usually associates with the 'twenties so evident. In their
bland, offhand dismissal of all Victorian poetry as utterly
unworthy of serious consideration in the twentieth century,
in the tone of supercilious condescension which they adopted

55 New Freewoman, I, no. 5 (Aug. 15, 1913), 86. The reference
to Devonshire Street is of course a gratuitous slap at Harold
Monro, whose Poetry Bookshop (situated on Devonshire Street)
came to be associated in the general mind with the contribu­
tors to G.P. I.
toward the nineteenth century, in the very language they used for their purposes, the Imagists were a decade in advance of their time. Perhaps Richard Aldington expressed it best:

However often gentlemen from Highgate and the adjacent suburbs may write and protest it is nevertheless true that the majority of the poetry of the last century had nothing to do with life and very little to do with poetry. There was a plague of prettiness and a plague of pomposity and several other minor diseases—such as overmuch suavity, the cult of decorated adjectives. And except for Browning and a little of Swinburne there was no energy which was not bombast, no rendering of life without an Anglican moral, no aesthetic without aesthetic cant.

The Imagists were quick to seize upon the Egoist as a convenient place to argue their aesthetic and generally to trumpet their new coterie verse. In the Egoist appeared one of the rare examples of an Imagist admitting in print that at least part of the Imagist aim was to prick the British Bumbles: "Why do we call ourselves 'Imagists'? Well, why not? ...it serves to enumerate some of the principles we most firmly believe in. It cuts us away from the 'cosmic' crowd and it equally bars us off from the 'abstract art' gang, and it annoys quite a lot of fools. So there you are."57 Most of their comments about their own aesthetic were a good deal more serious. One entire issue, that of May 1, 1914, was devoted exclusively to spreading the gospel. Ferris Greenslet wrote on "The Poetry of John Gould Fletcher"; John Gould Fletcher on "The Poetry of Amy Lowell" (Miss Lowell, by this time intent upon her own special variety of Imagist verse, was not represented); F.S. Flint on "The

56Egoist, I, no. 13 (July 1, 1914), 247.
Poetry of H. D.]; and Richard Aldington on "The Poetry of F.S. Flint." One scarcely needs to add that admiration was universally mutual and the praise on all sides nothing short of fulsome. The only discordant note was struck by Harold Monro, who mildly bearded the lions in their own den, telling them in essence that their poetic was neither so new nor so startling as they believed. There is nothing new in the history of English poetry about shearing poetic language of its excess verbiage, he argued; and there is little startling in their copies of French and Italian models. The Imagists fail to admit their obligations to the past; they trumpet too loudly their own uniqueness. "They would probably benefit in their own production by recognizing themselves as one of the latest groups in the forward march of English poetry—not the only one."58 Historically the most significant article, however, was F.S. Flint's "History of Imagism." It serves as a reminder of several important facts about the movement. First, that Imagism began as early as March, 1909, when T.E. Hulme proposed to F.S. Flint that "he [Hulme] should get together a few congenial spirits, and that we should have weekly meetings in a Soho restaurant." Secondly, that in spite of the much trumpeted uniqueness of the Imagist movement, Imagism was no less a child of its time than the new realism which it so thoroughly detested, for both sprang fundamentally from what Flint called, with unusual understatement, "a dissatisfaction with English poetry

58 "The Imagists Discussed," ibid., II, no. 5 (May 1, 1915), pp. 77-78.
as it was then...being written." Finally, the article serves as a reminder of the crucial part played in the beginning of the movement by the two men whose personalities and literary views left an indelible impression not only on Imagism but also upon much subsequent poetry as well: Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme. In their detestation of romanticism, sentimentalism, and humanism, their insistence upon form and upon direct treatment in poetry of the object itself, their hatred of poetic verbiage, and their marriage to vers libre as the only modern medium of poetic expression, Hulme and Pound called the tune for one of the most lively, controversial, noisy, but nonetheless significant phases of the prewar poetic renascence. And indirectly they did more. Following the practice and the precepts of these two men, the Imagists, above all other prewar coteries, put into the hands of the poets of the 'twenties the technical charts and compasses with which to find their poetic way across the hard and dry sands of the Wasteland.

"Rhythm"

A final phase of the poetic revolt at the turn of the decade centered around the figures of Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield and the fiery though precious periodical *Rhythm* and its short-lived successor *Blue Review*. One of the earliest of the avant-garde little magazines, *Rhythm* commenced publication in the summer of 1911, continued through four quarterly issues, and with the issue of June, 1912, became a monthly. It ceased publication with its fourteenth number in
March, 1913. The Blue Review, its successor, ran for only three issues, beginning in May and ending in July, 1913. Rhythm was edited by Murray alone, Blue Review by Murry with Katherine Mansfield as Associate Editor.

Never coterie journals in the narrow sense of the word, neither Rhythm nor Blue Review adhered to any literary school to which a definite name can be given. Murry steered a decidedly independent course through the sands and shoals of literary revolt, and the pages of his journals were open to contributors of diverse literary persuasions such as Max Beerbohm, D.H. Lawrence, Hugh Walpole, Frank Swinnerton, Rupert Brooke, Wilfrid Gibson, and W.L. George. Their very eclecticism, however, plus the youthful intensity of their two editors, invest Rhythm and the Blue Review with their charm and, for purposes of literary history, their importance. Even a short analysis of these two journals may tend to make them seem more influential than they actually were in their contemporary milieu, but it serves a useful historical purpose because it both augments and reinforces one's conclusions about the nature of the literary renascence at the turn of the decade. Augments, because these two remarkable journals embody a few phases of the revolt which were either neglected or glossed over by other periodicals; reinforces, because in Rhythm and the Blue Review one frequently obtains more forthright and often more extreme statements of certain tenets of the revolt than were discernible in some of the more narrowly conceived coterie journals like Blast or the Egoist.
One of the major features of the prewar renascence, for instance, to which attention has already been called, was the primitiveness, or brutality, of the new art. One sees this quality most characteristically of course in Futurism, and in intention at least it was a feature of the new Masefieldian realism; but *Rhythm* became quite explicit on the subject. In its attempts to be strenuously modern, to revolt as completely as possible against the spineless aestheticism of the 'nineties, *Rhythm*, said Murry in his first number, will stand on these premises: "To treat what is being done to-day as something vital in the progress of art, which cannot fix its eyes on yesterday and live; to see that the present is pregnant for the future, rather than a revolt against the past; in creation to give expression to an art that seeks out the strong things of life; in criticism to seek out the strong things of that art."

Aestheticism has had its day; art must now become "brutal"; it must be "an art that strikes deeper,...that passes outside the bounds of a narrow aestheticism...to a humaner and broader field." Modern art must by definition be vigorous: "To leave protest for progress, and to find art in the strong things of life, is the meaning of *Rhythm*."

Many of the "strong things of life" seem a bit tame to one who turns the pages of *Rhythm* today, but a few of them were evidently too strong for British tastes at the turn of the decade. In 1912 Murry was forced to announce to his readers with regret that

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59 *Rhythm*, I (Summer, 1911), 36.

60 *Loc. cit.*
his printers had "strongly advised" him not to publish a certain story by W.L. George, because it was allegedly salacious. Murry reluctantly accepted the advice, though editorially deploring "that the state of public opinion in England should be such that it is impossible to obtain any degree of free expression for a serious work of art." 61

Another of the aspects of the prewar literary renaissance most strikingly evident in the pages of Rhythm and the Blue Review was implicit, if not explicit, in every literary movement and little magazine of the era: an overwhelming, self-conscious concern with "Art." Though the abstraction "Art" meant different things to different coteries during the period, most of the rebels, whether Left or Center, agreed that the status of "Art" in modern society was a matter of primary concern. One may take the position, along with Ford Maddox Hueffer, for instance, that in the prewar years a new aesthetic was consciously and deliberately being constructed for the first time since the 'nineties; 62 or with a more modern concern for the specific, one may pursue the countless arguments about Art through the little magazines of the time to a somewhat more cynical conclusion. But is it not more than a little ironic that the artistic rebel of 1912, who detested above all things fin-de-siècle aestheticism, should have failed to see in his excessive concern with "Art" as an abstraction his own close kinship to the period he thought he was rebelling against? In 1912, as

61 Rhythm, I (Summer, 1912), 34.
62 E.g., in English Review, XXXI (1920), 403–04.
In 1990, the air was full of hazy talk about the aims of Art, talk which had meaning more or less according to the connotations one attributed to the word itself. Murry's grandiloquent editorials on Art in *Rhythm* were justifiably attacked on the grounds of vagueness. But it is perhaps some defense to point out that almost every other little magazine of the time was open to similar charges. At least from the misty and often fatuous talk about Art in the pages of *Rhythm* several specific tenets of the prewar aesthetic are underscored.

First, the new art must be private art. Advocated in *Rhythm* more explicitly than in any other periodical of the time is the theory that art is a private experience to be created and fully enjoyed only by the gifted few. Writing a joint editorial, Murry and Miss Mansfield claimed unequivocally that to fulfill its function in the twentieth century art must become even more self-consciously and deliberately private. Art is not and cannot be democratic, they argued, for the spiritual qualities it demands for both creation and appreciation are not to be found in democratic society. It demands "intuition"; and "intuition is a purely aristocratic quality." It demands "freedom"; and what is freedom in the artist but a "consciousness of superiority"? And it demands "individuality."

Individuality in the work of art is the creation of reality by freedom. It is the triumphant weapon of aristocracy. It is that daring and spiritual thing which the mob hates because it cannot understand and by which it is finally subdued. Only by realizing the unity and strength

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63 *Rhythm*, I (Winter, 1911), 36.
of the individual in the work of art is the mob brought to the knowledge of its own infinite weakness, and it loathes and is terrified by it.\textsuperscript{64}

It is well to be reminded that such forthright claims for the natural superiority of the artist were being written in 1911. The cult of private art and the creed of the superior artist can by no means be considered either the hallmark of the eighteen-eighties or the exclusive discovery of the nineteen-twenties.

Such a concept of the Artist as Hero led naturally and almost imperceptibly to a pose of martyrdom on the part of the superior artist enmeshed in his own poor clay as well as in a world of clods and Bumbles. \textit{Rhythm} shows that Murry did not escape the pose of the unappreciated genius redolent of the 'nineties. "The men who try to do something new for the most part starve," he cried.\textsuperscript{65} He was willing—even eager, one sometimes feels—to be branded an artistic snob for the future glory of Art.

A second tenet of the prewar aesthetic affirmed in the pages of \textit{Rhythm} is that modern art must be both anti-religious and anti-humanistic. Again one may observe that there is little new and nothing unique in such a creed. Imagism in particular drew its very being from the anti-humanistic creed of T.E. Hulme; and one would think that the principle of the amorality of art had been sufficiently established, at least among artists, during the late nineteenth century that by 1911 twentieth-century rebels

\textsuperscript{64} "The Meaning of Rhythm," \textit{ibid.}, II (June, 1912), 18-20.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, I (Winter, 1911), 36.
were merely beating a dead horse. But in its zeal to protect Art from the unspeakable Philistines, Rhythm took up the old cudgels again. Art is against both religion and "morbid humanitarianism," Murry cried. "Art is beyond creeds, for it is the creed itself. It comes to birth in irreligion and is nurtured in amorality. Religion and morality alike mean for the Western world that this life fades away into the colourless intensity of the world to come." Unlike the art of the fin de siècle, however, the new modern art must be violently, fiercely of this world worldly. It is "movement, ferocity, tearing at what lies beneath. It takes nothing for granted; and thrusts mercilessly, pitilessly."66

It follows, too, that Rhythm should share with most of the other little magazines of the Left another tenet of the modern aesthetic: the abhorrence of merely representational, or realistic, art. In a joint plea for what they called "seriousness in art," Murry and Miss Mansfield claimed that representational realism had brought English art to the fruitless position of being "a trade instead of an art." It can be rescued, they argued, only by a new "seriousness" on the part of artist and public alike. Precisely what the new quality of "seriousness" is one cannot clearly say, for like most of their joint manifestos, this one too is nebulous and prolix. It is clear enough, however, that they set themselves uncompromisingly against realistic art, which they vaguely equated with "democratic" art; and that "seriousness" cannot be a quality of a

66Rhythm, I (Summer, 1911), 10.
democratic society. "The life of democracy depends upon absence of enthusiasm and true seriousness. For these two qualities...are the hallmark of aristocracy, the essentials of the leader.... True seriousness is a thing alive and spontaneous, liberating the artist for his art, and consciously expanding into ever wider rhythms." 67

One final quality which emerges from the pages of Rhythm and Blue Review, as from most of the little magazines of 1910-1914, is the unmistakable feeling that something was in the air at the turn of the decade. By 1912 the poetic renascence had begun to achieve self-consciousness. The young rebels were almost too aware of their own rebelliousness. The feeling for newness, indeed the glorification of newness for its own sake, was implicit in most that Murry and Miss Mansfield wrote in Rhythm and Blue Review. At its worst it led to extravagant overstatement and a cocksureness of judgment that now seem almost ludicrous. It is perhaps skirting the edge of unkindness to recall now that in reviewing the Hill of Vision, Miss Mansfield claimed unequivocally,

James Stephens is the greatest poet of our day. With this book he has stepped at once into the company of those whom we consider the greatest poets the world has ever known...Sappho, Catullus, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Reine, Villon, and Verlaine.... For 'The Lonely God' is a supreme and ultimate poem. With the clearest consciousness that we must stand or fall as critics by this judgment, we give it as our deliberate opinion that this poem, for splendid imagination, for true passion, for all the music and majesty of which the English speech is capable in a master's

67 Rhythm, II (July, 1912), 46-47.
hands, must rank immediately as one of the supreme achievements of English Poetry. 68

Nor was Murry immune to such curious lapses in his normally acute critical judgment. In an adulatory, emotional article of 1912 he claimed for Frank Harris the title of "the greatest artist alive in England." Specifically, Harris was "the greatest writer of short stories that England ever possessed." Even more: he was "the greatest creative critic whom the world has known;...he has seen where his greatest predecessors in criticism, Coleridge and Goethe, have had but a half-vision". 69 Moreover, for all its trumpeting of the brutal and the new in art, Rhythm had more in common with the Yellow Book than its editors would have liked to admit. It could publish an occasional piece which belied all its fine rhetoric about "Art," like this supremely stuffy poem with the mark and the mood of the fin de siècle upon it:

In the Cool of Evening

The day's eye shut, a malignant wink,
Sudden, before I was prepared:
I felt the earth shudder and shrink
As though her breast to a knife she bared:
My mind was in riot. I durst not think
What face of evil behind me glared
Over the shadow's awful brink!

The trees strove madly to give some cry;
The stream writhed onward in numb despair,
The birds fled sobbing from the sky,
As I turned half round with a strangled prayer.
And then I shrieked and turned to fly--
He stood there;
He was there;--and I could not die. 70

68 Rhythm, II (June, 1912), 34.
69 Ibid., II (July, 1912), 38-39.
70 Ibid., I (Autumn, 1911), 15.
In spite of occasional lapses into banality or over-enthusiasm, however, Rhythm and the Blue Review breathed the genuine spirit of newness, the awareness of revolt, not only in the frequent pronouncements of their editors, but also in the articles of most of their important contributors. Holbrook Jackson pleaded for a "revolt in attitude" toward the arts in general in 1911, a new "primitive" outlook on art on the part of Everyman. He saw England on the threshold of a new era bright with hope, an age in which "art has assumed a new adolescence; it has once more kicked over the traces, and we have got to ask ourselves precisely what this rejuvenescence means. ..." Laurence Binyon, writing on "The Return to Poetry" in 1912, also felt the sense of a new age dawning. He saw the revolt against representational art as the cardinal fact of the moment. The Victorian tradition in poetry has finally been outgrown. "Slowly we have emerged from the nineteenth century. We are breathing a different air," he wrote. The nightmare world of a mechanistic universe imposed by nineteenth-century science is passing away; the appetite for fact is ebbing. The artist, as usual, is in the vanguard; a new art which will accurately reflect the tensions of the new world is already in the process of being created. 72

Surveying literary trends a year later, in 1913, Frank Swinnerton added his approval to the feeling for newness which he sensed about him. In yet another phase of the artistic

71 "A Plea for Revolt in Attitude," Rhythm, I (Winter, 1911), 6-10.
72 Ibid., (Summer, 1912), pp. 1-2.
revolt, literary criticism, Swinnerton saw substantial evidence that in the "variety of critical standards, no less than in the variety of creative methods," English letters were embarking on a period of "new and sanguine vitality." In criticism as in poetry, consciousness of the new was achieved in large part by rejection of the old. And again the whippingboy was of course Victorianism. As the Victorian age became increasingly remote, not so much in time as in spirit, Swinnerton argued, it was beginning to take shape in the modern critical consciousness as a period in English letters. Implicit in his remarks was the characteristic anti-Victorian sentiment shared by all the young rebels of the Left and Center.

It is a clear sign of the death of the Victorian spirit that so many of our younger critics should now be saying the final word about its various exemplars.... All sorts of monographs upon the Victorian writers, artists and notabilities are appearing; and it is noticeable that, for the most part, they reveal a resolve that this new Georgian Age should really begin clear of all muddled notions of its amorphous predecessor.

From the tone of such remarks it is clear that by 1913 the new Georgian age had achieved an abundance of self-consciousness. It was a confident age, full of youthful optimism, swagger, and arrogance. And it was a smug age. For the first time, Swinnerton wrote, Georgian critics, "at the beginning of a new era," can now "examine the corpses of ancient energies by the light of distinct, unprejudiced intelligence." Be­
tween the lines of even such a relatively mild indictment

73Blue Review, I (May, 1913), 51, 55.
one reads the beginnings of that modern critical attitude, almost universal by the 'twenties and 'thirties, which considered the Victorian age as the utmost in artistic puerility and from which criticism of the Victorians is only now making a belated and richly deserved recovery.
CHAPTER 3

HAROLD MONRO

With the possible exceptions of Edward Marsh and Ezra Pound, who in their very different ways organized and directed opposite phases of the poetic renascence, no figure looms more influential in prewar poetic circles than Harold Monro. Zealously dedicated to removing poetry from the study of the aesthete or the scholar—"We desire to see a public created that may read verse as it now reads its newspapers," he wrote in one of his more sanguine moods—Monro put himself in a unique position to accomplish his crusade. He was editor successively of Poetry Review and Poetry and Drama, publisher of the works of many modern poets as well as the five volumes of Georgian Poetry, and owner of the Poetry Bookshop. An evaluation of the extent of his influence will have to await publication of the history of his unique venture, the Poetry Bookshop. But it

1PP. I (1913), 265.

Such a history is now being undertaken by his gifted and knowledgeable wife, Alida Klementaski Monro. One could conceive of no better person to write it. An editor of poetry in her own right, Mrs. Monro has an intimate personal knowledge of the major literary figures and movements of the period gained by working alongside her husband in the Poetry Bookshop from 1912 until his death in 1932. Moreover, she has in her possession unique and exhaustive records of the Bookshop's activities. Her history will no doubt make an informed and lively contribution to our knowledge of Monro and of the Georgian period. In an
is neither anticipating the conclusions of such a study nor overestimating the facts at hand to observe that from 1911 until about 1916 or 1917 the influence of Harold Monro was a dominant one in almost every phase of the poetic renascence.

To what can one attribute this influence? To Monro's position, certainly, as editor, publisher, and dean of the Poetry Bookshop circle. But perhaps more important, to the enthusiasm generated by an overwhelming ideal: Monro lived to make poetry popular. To that end he devoted his energies, his zeal, and a not inconsiderable private purse.

Monro came down from Cambridge in 1901 a fervent Fabian Socialist. Though he had gone to the University interested in nothing more serious than horse racing, while there, he had seen Shelley plain, and had become "a gloomily serious young man" who intended to read for the bar and devote himself to the Socialist cause.\(^3\) Marriage in 1903 and birth of a son in 1904 forced him to relinquish his plans for the bar, and after several unsuccessful years as a land agent in Ireland, Monro returned to England and to Haselmere, where he devoted himself to being a practicing Socialist and vegetarian. Along with a Fabian friend, the craftsman Romney Green, he founded the

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Samurai Press around 1906. "For a time," wrote one of his subsequent close friends, F.S. Flint, "he felt at home" at Haselmere because "there was a bleak side of him which he translated into a romantic idealism, one of the worst forms of self-deception, and the friendships he formed at Haselmere fostered this weakness." But only for a short time. After publishing such eminently unmarketable volumes as John Drinkwater's *Lyrical and Other Poems* (1908), the Samurai Press foundered; and Monro, disillusioned by the failure of his Fabian enterprise and disappointed as well in other, more personal matters, went abroad to live. Settling finally in Florence, he joined a colony of expatriate English writers which included, among others, Gordon Craig, Helen Bayley, "Vernon Lee" (Violet Paget), and old Edward Carpenter.

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5 In Florence, fortunately, he also met the young Arundel del Re, whom he was to take back to England with him and install as sub-editor of *PR* and, for a time, *PD*. To del Re we owe much of our information about Monro's activities from 1911 to 1914. His three-part study already referred to above ("Georgian Reminiscences," *SEL*, XII [Apr. 1932], 322-31; [July 1932], 460-71; and XIV [Jan. 1934], 27-42) is one of the two major sources of information about Monro, the other being F.S. Flint's biographical preface to Monro's collected poems referred to in fn. 3 above.

Although del Re is a good reporter, he is not an unbiased witness. His little known study is a mine of information, but when he turns from facts to conclusions he sometimes loses objectivity. Perhaps unconsciously he has set himself up as special pleader for Harold Monro as founder, dean, director, and prime mover of the Georgian movement to the almost complete exclusion of any other figure. Monro's influence on English poetry, especially during the prewar period, has too long and too frequently been underestimated, but del Re seems a bit too completely sealed of the tribe of Monro. *SEL*, however, is a publication of the Imperial University of Tokyo, and one
Monro was not a happy exile, for he was not—and was never destined to be—a genuinely happy man. In Italy as in England, he was torn between the extremes of his own nature. "All his life he was haunted, the wild Celt in him at odds with the thrifty heir of a line of cautious physicians. He was a living contradiction in terms.... It is hardly possible to state one of his characteristics without immediately being reminded that in him too was its opposite." During his stay in Florence he fell under the spell of Edward Carpenter, but though he undoubtedly shared many of the older men's views on guild craftsmanship and the virtues of the rural life, Monro's Lowland Scots sense of practicality never permitted him to get out onto some of the more extreme fringes of the Socialist movement. Even as a Fabian Monro managed to stay, characteristically, in the center.

Nevertheless, there is perhaps no more apt example than Harold Monro of that characteristic prewar marriage between the spirit of political liberalism and the zeal for poetic renascence. By 1910, from out of his creed of Fabian social and political liberalism he had begun to fashion some abiding convictions on the place of poetry and the task of the poet in the new age. He had come to believe, as one of his close friends wrote, that "It was the duty of the modern poet to give poetical expression to the ideas and feelings of the new age.

frequently encounters evidence that del Re's original meanings may have been somewhat perverted by the numerous vagaries of his Japanese typesetters.

6F.S. Flint, preface to Monro, Collected Poems, p. vi. This estimation is also agreed to by del Re (SEL, XII, 327-29).
that, he believed, was dawning; an age in which man must finally cast off worn-out beliefs and meaningless traditions and begin to live more joyously and rationally because better acquainted with the laws of nature and of his own being." Monro was never either exclusively an editor, publisher, shopkeeper, or poet. He was also deeply concerned with social, psychological, and political problems of the new century. He considered poetry not as a fine art, esoteric, remote from everyday life, but rather "as an integral part of life itself," and he believed firmly "that cultivation of the mind along broad lines is a necessary condition for the writing as well as for the proper understanding and criticism of poetry." In these respects Monro was thoroughly typical of that group of young poets who graduated from the Universities and reached their majority during the Edwardian decade, "that brief morning, unsuspicous of war, when youth was developing the programme by which it meant to reform the world..., a time oppressed by the gigantic shadows of the Victorians, but not yet come into its own daylight, when everyone feared to play the under-butler to Tennyson, and rushed in horror from sentimentality into realism, from aestheticism into self-realization...."

Both his personal convictions and outward events conspired to make it inevitable that Monro should return to England. Urged on by his good friend Maurice Hewlett (who offered Monro his own considerable assistance and prestige in whatever literary venture he should undertake), Monro returned to London in the

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7Del Re, SEL, XII, 325-26.
8TLS, Nov. 11, 1920, p. 729.
fall of 1911 to embark upon his crusade to make poetry popular. The period of apprenticeship, of half-hearted, tentative trials and failures was drawing to a close. "Hitherto, Shelley, vegetarianism, romantic idealism, a vague socialism, and his own fundamental incapacity to submit to discipline had rendered him ineffective both as a man and as a poet. He was to learn about men by the experiences of them which money dealings give, and about poetry by the lash of other poets' tongues." 9

Precisely what Monro meant by the "popularization" of poetry is difficult to say. It is even more difficult to point out which elements of the "public" he wished to influence or appeal to. Monro himself was more often than not vague on both points. The central tenet of his faith, however, was that, given a proper chance, good poetry would sooner or later be taken to heart by the reading public. "No one who has any experience in the matter," he urged, "imagines that the public taste in poetry, however perverted, is instinctively bad." 10 It has merely been misguided by dilettanti, aesthetes "in velvet coats and baggy trousers," who try to trick the public with their shoddy verse and then grow angry when the public resents being tricked. "Our opinion," Monro cried, "is that the poets and professors, instead of abusing the public for its deficiency in appreciation, should, with occasional humbleness, remember rather to deplore their own inability to provide the public with the poetry it desires." 11

10 PD, I, 265.  
11 PD, I, 127.
But in his assault on public taste Monro was wise enough not to attempt to take the fortress by frontal attack. In the beginning at least, he attacked from the flank. He would never "flaunt" his purposes before the reading public, he promised. He disavowed any intention of a "conscious popularization of poetry" or of attempting to force the views of any coterie upon readers. His own creed was disarmingly simple: he believed only, he wrote, in the "persistent cultivation and discussion [of poetry], and in its interpretation through the art of speaking verse." His purpose, therefore, as he explained it at the beginning of his publishing career, was not to print large quantities of new verse or to "discover" new poets—though he did both—but to change and educate public taste. He would "aim not so much at producing poetry," he concluded, "as at stimulating the desire for it. We shall strive to create an atmosphere. We shall attempt to coordinate the bases of thought from which poetry at last emerges."\(^{12}\)

Monro became editor of Poetry Review in the fall of 1911. Earlier in the year Galloway Kyle, Secretary of the Poetry Society, had asked him to take over the editorship of the Poetry Gazette, official organ of the Society, but Monro had refused, suggesting instead that he found an independent periodical of his own into which the Gazette could be incorporated. His offer was accepted, and a relationship was begun which was to turn out pleasantly for neither the Society nor Monro. The first number of Poetry Review was published in January, 1912. Monro

\(^{12}\)PR, I (1912), 3; 499.
continued as editor until December of the same year, when his connection with the journal was terminated by a curt announcement by the Director of the Poetry Society: "Mr. Harold Monro, having decided to enlarge the scope of his periodical by issuing it quarterly under the title of Poetry and Drama, the Journal of the Poetry Society, beginning with the next number, January, will be issued under the editorship of Mr. Stephen Phillips." 

Behind the announcement lay several months of tempestuous disagreement between Monro and the Society, at the center of which was Monro's well-founded conviction that the Society desired primarily to puff the poetasters and conduct a well-mannered, safe, and uncontroversial repository for the work of amateur poetesses from Brighton, irrelevant lists of the Society's sponsors, and notices of Society meetings from the provinces. Monro saw the aims of his new journal in quite another light. He tried to make Poetry Review, among other things, a journal of modern verse, "the representative organ chiefly of the younger generation of poets," as he wrote. This course he shortly discovered to be distasteful, if not to the Poetry Society as a whole, certainly to its Director. Moreover, Monro "refused to compromise to advertisers, supporters, famous people, or friends," and he "insisted on bad verse being called bad verse as often as the occasion required." To make matters worse, in his impatience to get on with the job in the fall of 1911 Monro had, as he claimed, "practically sold [himself] to the Society." He had consented to support the new journal for one year from

13 PR, I, 563.
his own financial resources; to give the profits, if any, to the Society after deducting only interest on the capital he had invested; to incorporate the Gazette within its pages; to submit to decisions of a committee appointed by the Society to formulate both financial and editorial policies; and to respect any censure which might be passed by the Council of the Society.

The wonder is not that Poetry Review had its occasional weaknesses, but that any magazine at all was published. Opposed at every turn, hampered by the terms of his own precipitous agreement, Monro concluded by September, 1912, that "the future of the Review depended entirely upon the degree to which it could be kept clear of the influence of the Poetry Society." After a culminating disagreement over making the journal a quarterly instead of a monthly, Monro withdrew from Poetry Review to found an entirely new journal.\textsuperscript{14}

In the preface to his first number Monro clearly stated the position of Poetry Review. It would be neither conservative nor avant-garde, neither Right nor Left. Poetry Review would state the case for the Center. Monro agreed with the Left at more than one point, however. Faint echoes of Futurist tone, and even phrasing, can be discerned in his strictures against the modern "poetry of despair":

\textsuperscript{14}PD, I, 8-10. Most of the facts regarding Monro's struggle with the Poetry Society are taken from Monro's apologia found in this source. They are occasionally supplemented by information acquired during my interview with Mrs. Monro.
Today the community must disguise rather than express its emotions; the best poetry of the time is the poetry of despair, a cry of the lost: the expression of our joy has fallen into the hands of literary tinkers and pedlars, or it is muffled in the roar of cities.

Time is ripe for the forging of a weapon of criticism and for an emphatic enunciation of literary standards. Poetry should be, once more, seriously and reverently discussed in its relation to life, and the same tests and criteria applied to it as to the other arts.15

Like most of the Leftists, too, Monro was convinced that the new poetry must be a strong, vigorous expression of the artists' personality, not spineless copying from the mouldy volumes of the past. "Poetry is the finer essence of thought, the vivid expression of personality; it is never the mere product of literary skill and craftsmanship. Therefore we believe in personality before we believe in books, in life rather than in letters. We admire sincerity more than originality."16 But unlike the Leftists, Monro was not given to rant. Poetry Review was notably lacking in manifestoes, scurrility, or partisanship. "We do not believe in destructiveness," he wrote; "nor do we propose to waste our energy in deploring what is, and thundering what might be. We shall try to avoid platitudes and windy denunciations: our attitude is that of the smiling philosopher. We shall discuss, not rant and quibble: we are earnest, but not too grave. Above all we hope we shall never be dull."17

The general tone of Poetry Review corresponded closely to its stated aims. Its pages were open equally to all schools;

15PR, I, 3.
16PR, I, 4.
17PR, I, 3.
Henry Newbolt and Maurice Hewlett were contributors as well as Ezra Pound and the Futurists. And though it was sympathetic to modernism, it insisted at the same time on retention of a good measure of poetic convention. Victor Plarr, for instance, commented on the necessity for conservatism in the midst of a radical age. The modern poet, he wrote, was too much addicted to "'new scholarship,' new rhythms, and divers other futurist vagaries." That experiment was necessary went almost without saying: "Man's time-worn feet have always needed a new pair of shoes." But, he warned the Leftists, "the shoes, after all, must be made on the old lasts if they are to be shoes at all." 18

John Drinkwater, arguing the problem of "Tradition and Technique," was equally equivocal. Let us be modern by all means, he seemed to say—but not too modern. Pattern in verse may "be allowed to become irregular, but it never must be allowed to disappear altogether." 19 Such criticism was eminently safe and unprovocative, stretching a tentative foot ever so slightly first to one side then to the other of the critical fence it straddled.

Monro's own contributions to Poetry Review, while also keeping a foot gingerly on each side of the fence, leaned more unmistakably to the Left. Attacked by the New Age for "puffing the poetasters," Monro replied with a characteristic attack on extremism: "...we suffer from no illusions. Most of the best modern work is interesting rather as experiment than as achieve-

18 PR, I, 277.
19 PR, I. 298.
ment." But, he added, it is far healthier that English poetry should be rife with experimental and, consequently, bad verse than that it should merely copy the stylized, derivative versifiers of the past decade. In his views on poetic technique specifically Monro often showed himself to be well to the left of Center. In his rejection of the forms of the past as models for the present and in his insistence upon a new poetic diction he made common cause with both Futurists and Imagists.

Poetry, like Society, has its laws, dogmas, conventions—and its rebels. Reform was never, perhaps, so expedient as now. Moreover, on all sides we find experimenters breaking the old rules. A new diction is demanded, and a return to life. We love the great poetry of the past for ever; but the life of to-day claims a manner of to-day, and the modern poet will be free, at all hazards, from the conventions of his predecessors.... We love the poets of the past and the older methods of poetry, and so of our reverence we ask the modern world no longer to imitate and repeat them.

And on the question of poetic rhythms one sees portents even in 1912 of Monro's subsequent conversion to the cause of vers libre. Rhythms have become too regularized, he argued; modern poetry must turn to more fluid rhythms, those implicit in the subject, or as he called them, "primary rhythms."

As a reviewer Monro also betrayed his Leftist leanings. He found Emelia Stuart Lorimer's poems worthy of publication in Poetry Review precisely because they were difficult and because they expressed the artist's personality. Her poetry, he said,

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20 PR, I, 353-54.
21 PR, I, 59-60.
22 PR, I, 151-52.
is "not literature for the indolent or superficial reader.... It is difficult because it is close and robust." It is obscure; "Its mystery is not on the surface; it is never transparent, obvious, or too facile. Its manner is not forced; its archaisms are not affected; ... it is the raw and inevitable product of personality, or nothing."\(^{23}\) The reviewers of the Egoist or of Rhythm could scarcely have chosen any more "modern" aspects of Miss Lorimer's poetry to praise than did Monro.

In spite of Monro's critical acuity, Poetry Review could not escape the pandemic disease of the little magazines: too much discussion of Art with a capital "A," Poetry with a capital "P." Much as he may have pledged his journal to avoid windy generalities, Monro nevertheless allowed such a heady definition as this one (by Darrell Figgis) to creep into its pages:

> For poetry is something before it comes into a form of words; it is Life being true to itself and defying the clock-face of Time in a perfection of Eternal Being; it is an ecstasy and rapture that catches man away from the sordidness and ugliness of barter and exchange to a perfect realization of himself and his divinity; and it is therefore the secret of power and splendour, couching itself in rites and rhythms as power and splendour must always do.\(^{24}\)

Poetry Review also had more than its share of uncritical reviews. In attempting to keep to the Center, the journal frequently watered down its critical tenets until they had no tang at all. The nadir was reached with the fifth number (May, 1912), which was devoted entirely to women poets. One of the reviewers—a lady of kind heart but dubious critical acumen—

\(^{23}\) *PR*, I, 312-13.
\(^{24}\) *PR*, I, 62.
wrote, "the rule should be: Appreciate all you can; be as
catholic as possible. Destructive criticism impoverishes the
world, and depreciation is only permissible in so far as it
may be necessary to distinguish between the bract and the flower
lest the honey be lost, or to warn off the imitator."25 The
entire fifth number was in much the same vein. Each reviewer
bowed reverently in the direction of his subject; each tried
valiantly to find something kind to say about each poetess;
each alluded to one or two faults which had been critical
commonplaces since the first review of the subject's first
book; and each chose as praiseworthy either the kinds of passages
which were usually chosen on such occasions or passages which
were patently sentimental or inept.26

Yet upon occasion Monro himself, as well as some of his
contributors, could be delightfully trenchant. On May 21, 1912,
an American poetess, Miss Beatrice Irwin, saw fit to give a
public recital of her poems in Crosby Hall, Chelsea Embankment,
in an attempt to demonstrate the principle of "Geometric Harmony"
in poetry. One gathers that the lady considerably enlivened the
recital by accompanying her readings with divers Chinese gongs
of awesome size and formidable timbre. Monro gave her short
shrift: "If Miss Irwin's poetry has any merit, she herself is
its worst enemy.... Poetry...had very little to do with Miss
Irwin's performance."27 Edward Marsh reviewed Gordon Bottomley's

25Anna Bunston de Bary, "The Poetry of Christina Rossetti,"
PR, I, 203.
26To his credit, Monro was not blind to the deficiencies of
his journal and subsequently admitted that his fifth number
was the nadir of PR.
27PR, I, 250.
Chambers of Imagery, (Second Series) in a far more caustic manner than was customary in Poetry Review. Taking off the gloves, he attacked Bottomley's poetry for its "turbid, obscure, not to say meaningless" language; its grossly irregular stanzaic structure; and a "clumsy, prosaic, commonplace, redundant" word too frequently and obviously inserted "for the sole purpose of rhyming." And Arundel del Re dismissed Pound's Sonnets and Ballati of Guido Cavalcanti by accusing their translator (who was a fellow-contributor to Poetry Review) of "slovenliness and inaccuracy." Pound used an "obsolete and untrustworthy" text, del Re claimed; and "either Mr. Pound knows very little about the Italian language, or he is totally lacking in that critical judgment necessary to the translator." His carelessness was "nothing short of extraordinary," the glaring deficiencies of his translations "sufficient to condemn him as a serious student." Now and then amid the ambivalent reviews of Monro's journal one finds a healthy drop of acid.

By the end of 1912 Poetry Review had made a start toward achieving the aim Monro had set down for it in the first number. In spite of its deficiencies, it did stand for some "literary standards," as Monro had claimed it would. Though it was obviously experimental, its circulation had almost constantly increased throughout the first year. And though Monro himself recognized that its success was limited, his experience during the probationary year hardened his enthusiasm into a glowing

28 PR, I, 274-75.
29 PR, I, 324-25.
certainty that given the opportunity and some critical direction, the intelligent reading public would respond to good modern poetry in increasing numbers. Moreover, Poetry Review had sponsored one of Monro's most cherished projects (and one which was subsequently to grow to sizeable proportions in the Poetry Bookshop), public readings of and lectures about poetry. Monro himself delivered the first of a series of lectures on poetry on May 15, 1912. At least two others were held in June, and July, 1912, the second being given by Darrell Figgis on "The Sanction of Poetry," and the third by T.E. Hulme (advertised as "the well-known lecturer on Bergson"), speaking on "The New Philosophy of Art as Illustrated in Poetry." But the major contribution of Poetry Review to the poetic renascence lay inside its own pages. As its sub-editor pointed out, the journal did at least judge poetry on its own merits: "However tentative and even crude the critical attitude...may have sometimes been, it did consistently uphold the Crocean principle (at that time little recognized) that poetry is to be judged as poetry and not according to standards and prejudices that...have nothing to do with poetry."

The successor to Poetry Review was Poetry and Drama, the first issue of which appeared in March, 1913. It was published quarterly until December, 1914, when it announced suspension of publication for one year, a casualty of the war. It was destined never to reappear, being replaced after the war by

\[30\] PR, I, 498.

\[31\] PR, I, 202, 251, 275.

\[32\] Del Re, SEL, XII, 239.
yet another of Monro's journals, the *Chapbook*. In format *Poetry and Drama* closely resembled its predecessor, but it was rather markedly expanded over *Poetry Review* in both size and content. It contained far more new poetry and more and better critical articles. Monro took a more obviously direct hand in its critical policies, establishing an editorial section in which he frequently held forth at length on all matters poetic. In spite of the considerable sums of his own capital which Monro put into the magazine, *Poetry and Drama* ran into financial heavy weather, a fate common to every one of the little magazines of the period. In May, 1914, Monro admitted privately that his journal was perilously near insolvency, and it might have foundered had not several supporters, among them Maurice Hewlett, banded together to save it.33

Out from under the hobbling agreement with the Poetry Society, and freed from incessant squabbles, Monro could for the first time freely indulge his own critical principles and tastes. Monro set out to make his new journal, in the first place, a more representative organ than *Poetry Review* had been. A glance at the book reviewers as well as the volumes chosen for extended review in the first number of *Poetry and Drama* suggests not only its general excellence but also its catholicity: Henry Newbolt reviewed *Georgian Poetry* I; Rupert Brooke, Gibson's *Fires*; F.S. Flint, Pound's *Ripostes*; Arundel del Re, Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*; Monro himself, Goldring's *Streets*; Bonamy Dobrée, Middleton's *Poems: Second Series*; and Edward Storer, Mary Mills Patrick's *Sappho and the Island of

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33Harold Monro to E.M., May 12, 1914, MLC.
Lesbos. In the same number appeared an announcement of a £30 prize awarded Rupert Brooke for "Grantchester" as the best poem published in Poetry Review in 1912. The committee of judges which made the decision, and from which Brooke's poem received a "decided majority," was as varied a body as one could wish for: Henry Newbolt, Ernest Rhys, Edward Thomas, Victor Plarr, Edward Marsh, T.E. Hulme, and Harold Monro. 34

In Poetry and Drama, too, Monro pursued his aim of popularizing poetry, but with a slightly different method; now, instead of attempting only to create the proper environment for the florescence of poetry, Monro printed much more of the poetry itself. In view of the tentative and experimental tone of Poetry Review, in its pages Monro could, perhaps with some little justification, disavow all intentions of "conscious popularization of poetry." 35 In Poetry and Drama no such disclaimer could possibly appear. Among the more spectacular schemes broached in Poetry and Drama in 1913 was one which appeared very "conscious" indeed: the publication of broadsides and chapbooks. The removal of poetry from the street to the study, he argued, was after all, a phenomenon of the recent past. The trend could be reversed. "No one," as he said, could believe that the public's taste in poetry was "instinctively bad"; it was only "perverted." And he wanted to test his faith in the public's discrimination by printing and selling broadsides and chapbooks which would be "accessible, portable, unconfusing, and above all, inexpensive."

34PD, I, 7.
35PR, I, 499 (italics mine).
The Lowland Scots side of his nature, however, soon led to second thoughts. The time was perhaps not yet entirely ripe for such a venture, he reluctantly admitted. Perhaps the commuter to East Croydon might still prefer the Evening Standard even to Masefield. But his fundamental faith was unshaken: the immediate future was bright with hope; the poetic revival was in full cry; widespread public acceptance of good poetry could not be long delayed. England as he saw it was on the verge of possessing a large body of good poetry which could be both popular and artistically respectable. Monro had the opportunity—but only after the war—of putting his theories to the test in his Chapbook, a pocket-size monthly which, however, was not entirely what its title implied, and which came at a time (in 1919) when the poetic revival had lost much of its momentum.

He broached an even more visionary scheme privately to several of his friends in late 1912. "We've something tremendous on the carpet," he wrote John Drinkwater. "Roughly the project is to read poetry in villages without formality, payment, pose, condescension, propaganda, or parson. You just give it to them like Eastern story-tellers, who gather together at street corners.... It does not sound very much like this, but you should hear me explain it." The scheme came to nothing because it understandably failed to arouse any marked enthusiasm among Monro's friends and supporters and because it was too

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36PD, I, 265.
giddy even for Monro in a more reflective moment.

Poetry and Drama also demonstrates an intensification of Monro's swing toward modernism. He was by no means as yet sealed of the tribe of Ezra, but he had many good words to say for Imagism in general and Pound in particular because they gave short shrift to the poestasters. While characteristically warning his readers against taking Imagism and its practitioners too seriously, at the same time he professed nothing but admiration for "their conviction and their courage" in out-facing the British Bumbles. The third issue of his new journal Monro devoted almost completely to the Futurist movement, especially as it affected English poetry. The concern with this alien and strange movement, he was aware, shocked many of the readers of Poetry and Drama, but his reasons for it must have been an even greater shock to those who had failed to remark the difference in tone between Poetry and Drama and Poetry Review. We are interested in this movement, Monro said bluntly, because "we claim ourselves, also, to be futurists"! The distinction between his use of the lower case letter vis-à-vis the blatantly capital "F" habitually used by the Futurists undoubtedly escaped many readers. Monro sounded suspiciously like a genuine Futurist as he indited a "manifesto" of his own, setting forth his futurist first principles:

I To forget God, Heaven, Hell, Personal Immortality, and to remember always the earth.
II To lift the eyes from a sentimental contemplation of the past, and, though dwelling in the present, nevertheless, always, to live, in the future of the earth.

38PD, I, 128.
Lest one might suspect that his futurism was not modern enough, or that it bore the slightest trace of odious nineteenth-century Positivism, he was quick to reassure the suspicious and the dubious: he was not "hypothesising progress." The very "thought of perfectitude is odious to us: we reject it utterly." Man must turn his eyes to the future, cease his regretful, "sentimental" contemplation of the past, and "turn round and walk face forward, in love of the future."  

Monro's flirtation with Futurism was not an entirely selfless affaire de coeur. One suspects that he was not above making what use he could of the shock value of Futurist doctrine and verse in order to forward his own cause of popularizing poetry. Moreover, he himself testified that much of his admiration for the Futurists came about because he saw in them the living embodiments of his guiding principle that poetry could be popular. Impressed by the startling fact that the Italian Futurists had sold over 35,000 copies of their Book of the Futurist Poets, Monro concluded that the Italian Futurist movement at least "propagated its doctrines actually and successfully in verse." Their poetry, produced in an admirable "spirit of fun and recklessness, ...automatically thereby gains something of its popular appeal." It was the patent success of the Italian Futurist movement that Monro admired--and envied--not necessarily either its poetic ends or means. 

By the end of 1913 Monro had grown noticeably cooler to

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39PD, I, 262.
40PD, I, 265.
Futurism. His first flush of enthusiasm had subsided. He felt impelled to warn his countrymen against a too slavish imitation of Futurist models, and had begun to question the value of Futurist verse as anything beyond mere self-advertisement. By December, 1913, he could write, "We admire Marinetti's extraordinary inventiveness; we were enthralled by his declamation; but we do not believe that his present compositions achieve anything more than an advanced form of verbal photography."

Second thoughts assailed him too on the relevance of Futurism to the English poetic renascence. He began to recognize that the differences between the Italian poetic scene of 1909 and the English scene of late 1913 were perhaps more significant than the similarities. English literature, he asserted, showed little of the kind of "sentimental eroticism" of Italian literature against which the Futurists had successfully taken arms.

More important, the poetic revival had endowed England by 1913 with a poetic middle class, so to speak. The Marxist analogy is not far-fetched: by 1913 a large buffer group of young poets stood between and blunted the shocks of the struggle for eminence between the aristocratic Right and the proletarian Left which had rent Italian artistic and poetic circles in 1909. These were the Centrists, the important group of young poets who, said Monro, were "content neither to draw their inspiration from the past nor suffer its forms to pass unmodified to their needs." Italy solved its artistic problems according to its own temperament; England must work out its poetic resurrection according to the English temperament.41

41PD, I, 389-90.
Concurrently with the publication of *Poetry and Drama* Harold Monro embarked upon the venture which was to become his most famous and in many ways most valuable contribution to the poetic revival, the Poetry Bookshop. One would like to say that the founding of the Bookshop was the result of years of planning, Monro's conscious and deliberate response to the demands of the burgeoning poetic renunciation, a dream realized. Actually, the beginning of the Poetry Bookshop was a good deal less dramatic, indeed, almost fortuitous. In October and November, 1912, when Monro was making every effort to get his newly founded *Poetry Review* out from under the influence of the Poetry Society, he thought it expedient to transfer the Review's offices from 93 Chancery Street to a place farther removed from the Society's immediate scrutiny. A magnificently proportioned eighteenth-century house at 35 Devonshire Street, off Theobald's Road in Bloomsbury, captured his fancy and suited his purse. In an area of decayed grandeur, the house contained an empty shop on its first floor. Monro's enthusiasm and imagination turned the apparent defect into a virtue, for seeing the shop he was struck with the idea of making the entire house into the center of what he called "an informal guild" for poets. In the shop he would sell volumes of poetry; in several of the second-floor rooms he would edit his journal and set himself up as a publisher of poetry as well; a large garret room would be used for his cherished project of public poetry readings; and several smaller rooms would be rented to indigent poets. Such was the off-hand, almost accidental genesis of one of the most famous poetic
If the conception of the Poetry Bookshop was unpremeditated, the birth was well and deliberately advertised. Monro first published the happy news abroad in the November issue of Poetry Review. Announcing that on January 1, 1913, there would be opened at 35 Devonshire Street "a Bookshop for the sale of poetry, and of all books, pamphlets and periodicals connected directly or indirectly with poetry," he disavowed any desire to compete with recognized booksellers, claiming that his shop would deal in volumes which they would consider unmarketable or uneconomical to handle. In other ways too the Poetry Bookshop was designed to be a bookshop with a difference. Monro frankly recognized the obvious advantages of publishing a critical journal in conjunction with a bookstore: in the periodical "we shall recommend to the public what to read"; and "in the Bookshop we shall sell them what we have recommended." Monro's motives, however, were not purely financial. The Bookshop never made a profit. To the contrary, during its first ten years it cost Monro between £7,000 and £8,000 out of his own pocket. His motives were rather more selfless. The poetry-reading public, he explained, though sizeable, was scattered and unorganized. He proposed "to draw this public together and bring it into touch, through the Bookshop, with poetry as a living art, and as represented in the work of living poets."  

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42 Most of this information was derived from my interview with Mrs. Monro.
43 The estimate of both the amount of funds expended and the length of the period over which they were spent is Mrs. Monro's.  
44 PR, I, 498.
Monro intended the Bookshop to function also as an avenue for popularizing the work of the new, young poets of whatever school who were clamoring to be heard. In the prewar years the Bookshop not only published Georgian Poetry, the poetry of James Elroy Flecker and Ralph Hodgson, but also F.S. Flint's Cadences, Richard Aldington's Images, and Ezra Pound's anthology Des Imagistes. But to publish the verse of the Left did not necessarily betoken complete assent to its poetic principles. In his statement of aims Monro made it clear that the Bookshop would stand with the Center. Although it would fight for the principle that new poetic forms were necessary to meet new exigencies, Monro wrote, "formlessness is only permissible where it is absolutely necessary." The Bookshop would abhor "formalism, pose, affectation, inflation, and all kinds of false traditionalism"; it would be sworn enemy to "the monotonous jingling of the rhymed quatrain," to "flat, heavy, blank-verse," to "everlasting repetition of worn-out phrases, symbols, and images," in a word, to "cliché in all its tedious and detestable forms." Above all it would stand for artistic freedom, for the right of the artist to write on what subjects he chooses as he chooses. But again, in the name of the Bookshop, Monro warned the innovators: "Liberty in our time is too prone to become license, the desire merely to startle the public is on the rapid ascendance. Perhaps the public needs startling; yet, if so, let it be by beauty, not mere novelty; may the surprise excite wonder, not fizzle out in satisfied curiosity."45 The tone is familiar: let us by all means be modern--but not too

45 PR, I, 499-500.
The Poetry Bookshop opened its doors in December, 1912. The first public reading of poetry in its famous garret room took place in January, 1913, when Rupert Brooke read from his Poems. The locale of the Bookshop lent it a touch of Bohemia from the start. Devonshire Street was, to put it bluntly, in the slums, a fact scarcely mitigated by Monro's attempt to court respectability by advertising the Bookshop as being "only five minutes' walk from the British Museum" (which was indeed the truth, if not the whole truth). Sir Osbert Sitwell, an habitué, described the establishment as "a medium-sized house of Rowlandsonian aspect—with a pediment bearing in its centre, with an elliptical frame, an appropriate date—in Devonshire Street: a narrow street running out of Theobald's Road, rather dark, but given over to screaming children, lusty small boys armed with catapults, and to leaping flights of eighteenth-century cats." The suspicion soon grew to a certainty that in an equally Rowlandsonian house across the street from the Bookshop several ladies of pleasure plied their trade in a distinctly Hogarthian manner. Of more menace to would-be customers and

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46 Though the point is perhaps not crucial, some confusion has been occasioned by the fact that although the Bookshop subsequently advertised itself as having opened in January, 1913, evidence exists that it was in operation in December, 1912. The difficulty is resolved by distinguishing between the formal opening—which did in fact take place in January—and the actual opening of the doors of the shop for the purpose of selling books, which occurred in December. My data are taken from my interview with Mrs. Monro and corroborated by Mr. Hassall, who cites as his authority Sir Edward Marsh's diary.

congregating poets, however, were the hordes of urchins armed not only with catapults but with sharp tongues. One of their chief delights was to follow Rupert Brooke up the street to the Bookshop taunting him with shrill cries of "Buffalo Bill!", an epithet which Brooke earned by his affectation of long hair.  

In the upstairs rooms several poets took up residence, availing themselves of Monro's offer to rent rooms "at a moderate rate to those in sympathy with our aims, who are temporarily in London, and care to avail themselves of our hospitality." Among others who lived at Devonshire Street in 1913 and 1914 were Robert Frost, a temporary exile from his own land, T.E. Hulme, Wilfred Owen, and Wilfrid Gibson. Accommodations varied considerably according to availability of rooms and the prospective guest's ability to pay rent. Gaudier-Brzeska, who did not always report facts entirely accurately, reported on a visit to Devonshire Street:

I went with Marsh to see Gibson.... All the poets have joined together to hire a big house near the British Museum, where they live and work, and have underneath it a shop where they sell poetry by the pound--and talk to the intellectuals. Some of them have huge, vast rooms, while those like Gibson have only a tiny hole. He is boxed in a room, over the door of which is written, 'In case of fire, access to the roof through this room.'

One of the chief attractions of the Poetry Bookshop was its utterly informal atmosphere. "Here," said Monro in truth, "we have simply a few people gathered together, and since the

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48 Stringer, Red Wine of Youth, p. 91.
49 PR, I, 499.
English climate is bad, a house—otherwise a field or a beach might have done." Summing up the accomplishments of the first year of the Bookshop's existence, Monro astutely recognized his major asset, and he predicted that his Bookshop could become a permanent part of the literary scene only if it did "not depart from its present happy vagabond way of existence and seek to become an institution." Wisely, Monro never allowed the Bookshop to take on the aura of an "official" society for the propagation of poetry. His experience with such a society in 1912 had warned him well of their inherent limitations. The "happy vagabond way of existence" was well exemplified by the public readings of poetry. Bound into every copy of Poetry and Drama was a detachable card admitting the bearer to one of the readings, held bi-weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays at six p.m. Admissions to single readings could also be acquired by placing in a box in the Poetry Bookshop—threepence! The readings were held in a poorly lighted attic room which Edward Marsh described as "a kind of loft which looked as if it was meant to keep apples in, and one ought to get into it by a ladder through a trap-door." How many members of the general public they attracted is not recorded— one suspects not many—but the readings were well attended by all sorts of poets and were often considerably enlivened by outbursts from unexpected quarters. Incongruously, the formidable Amy Lowell came to hear Rupert Brooke read his poems. Sitting toward the back of the room

51PD, I, 387.
52A Number of People, p. 295.
and being unable to hear Brooke, whose voice had small
carrying power, she rose imperiously and shouted at the young
poet, "Speak up! Speak up!"  

Monro was almost fanatically certain that the best means
of getting poetry out of the study and into the public con-
sciousness was by sensitive oral interpretation. So important
a role did his public readings assume, in fact, that he came
to refer to the volumes of poetry for sale in the Bookshop as
merely "printed scores for the convenience of refreshing the
memory in hours of study or indolence...." Poetry could not
be allowed to become, he asserted, merely "pure literature";
rather, "it is the supreme form of verbal expression, and, as
such, is of no signification in the dusty shelves of libraries,
of no specific value until brought out into the active ways
of life."  

Another feature which the prewar poets found attractive
in the Poetry Bookshop was its catholicity. Any organization
which attracted to its meeting rooms poets of such utterly
divergent persuasions as Filippo Marinetti and W.H. Davies,
the three Sitwells and Lascelles Abercrombie, Ezra Pound and
John Drinkwater, T.E. Hulme and Robert Frost, was certainly
not narrowly secular. As has already become evident, in his
basic poetic sympathies Monro himself was not, in 1913-1914,
coterie-minded. He managed to get along with Futurists, Vorti-
cists, Imagists, and, later, with even the more or less in-
tractibly modern poets who clustered around the Sitwells'  

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53 Stringer, p. 131.
54 PD, I, 387.
Wheels. Sir Osbert Sitwell's testimony must be allowed to sum up that of many others, for its essence is repeated again and again by poets, both lesser and greater, contemporaneously and in retrospect.

The Poetry Bookshop constituted, under the most considerate and, indeed, inspired of hosts, Harold Monro, a great meeting-place: for not only was he a friend of all the poets of his generation, but new work always attracted, though it may sometimes have irritated him. He was indulgent to all poets. He liked new ideas even when they did not match his own, and in the large comfortable, panelled rooms above the shop, he would often of an evening bring together whole schools of poets of the most diverse faith, opinions, and temperament.... Sometimes there would be a battle, but always one heard the literary news and was told of small incidents which, though the world's foundations have been shaken since those days, continue even now to come to mind....

Whatever outbreaks had taken place, one left Monro's parties enlivened, and grateful to him: for he was an excellent host.55

It is too much to expect, however, that either Monro or his methods would have been universally popular. His personality, forthright and precipitate, raised the hackles of a few of his fellow poets. Others were by no means so enthusiastic about public readings as Monro. Though they felt compelled from self-interest to read their verse whenever they were requested, several began to look upon their appearances as more of a chore than an opportunity. Such an attitude is apparent in several letters which Lascelles Abercrombie wrote Edward Marsh in late 1913 and 1914 (though it is more a matter

55Laughter in the Next Room, p. 34. In this particular passage Sir Osbert is speaking of the Bookshop immediately after the war, but it was if anything even more cosmopolitan in the prewar years.
of tone than of direct statement). In one Abercrombie pleaded with Marsh to come to his (Abercrombie's) reading at the Bookshop on May 29. "Monro has asked me to supper afterwards" he added; "I couldn't but accept—tho' with a certain reluctance. I wish I hadn't now, after you mention another possible poets' dinner. However, I get on very well with Monro." In another he referred to his forthcoming reading as "a dreary affair," and in several of them he made it quite clear that he did not want to stay at the Bookshop any longer than absolutely necessary to finish what he called his "stunt." \[56\]

Monro's critical judgments also irked some of the would-be contributors to his journals. The comments which accompanied his rejection slips were likely to be blunt to the point of rudeness. Though he was determined to keep the standards of Poetry Review and Poetry and Drama on the highest level, his judgments were both highly personal and, sometimes, arbitrary. James Stephens was among those poets who received a rejection apparently accompanied by a rather too graceless comment from Monro, for he wrote Edward Marsh from Paris:

By the way, isn't Harold Monro a friend of yours? My heavy curse on him. He has just returned me the best poem I've ever written with the statement that it isn't up to his standard....

I am sometimes afflicted with the idea that poetry is all dam rot (except when it's been written by me) look at Monro [sic]! Imagine that chap turning me down and I hitting him with masterpieces. Do kill him. Kill him bloodily and painfully.... Do agonizing things to him. Read him his own poetry as long as you can stand it and then choke him with his own book. Make him eat his words.... \[57\]

\[56\] Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., May 15, 1914, and passim, MLC.  
\[57\] James Stephens to E.M., Dec. 12, 1913, ibid.
Obviously Stephens' comments were entirely in a jocular vein, but the pique at Monro nonetheless showed through his Irish good humor; he was annoyed not so much at the rejection as at the way it was done.

In spite of certain obvious shortcomings, by 1913 Harold Monro had made himself a figure to be reckoned with on the London literary scene. The precise source of his power is difficult to define. Certainly he could be expected to have wielded some influence by virtue of being editor of *Poetry and Drama*, for a good review in that journal was a considerable feather in the cap of any poet, especially a young one. But if his power lay in anything tangible, it lay primarily in the Poetry Bookshop. The Bookshop was all things to all people. To the poetry-reading public it was a unique bookstore where one could receive friendly advice and, if required, direction; and where upon occasion one could rub elbows with the great and the near-great and hear them read their own verse. To the young poet with a manuscript it was a publishing house, the only one in London which specialized in publishing the work of new poets. To the more mature poet of whatever coterie it was a meeting place where he could gather with his peers and be assured of conversation which ranged from the austerely intellectual to the merely gossipy. But above all, for Harold Monro it afforded the means of keeping his finger constantly upon the pulse of the poetic renascence. No flutter, however slight, could escape him.
EDWARD MARSH

As editor of *Georgian Poetry* from 1912 to 1922 Edward Marsh gained the kind of fame to be compared in the history of English poetry perhaps to that of Tottel. Moreover, as an influential anthologizer and as the recognized doyen of a circle which included most of the famous names of early twentieth-century British poetry, Marsh both organized and gave direction to one of the most important phases of the poetic renascence. It was largely owing to Marsh's zeal for popularizing new poets, his extraordinary talents for organizing, and

1Edward Marsh was later (1937) to become Sir Edward Marsh, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G. Richly deserved though it was, the title strikes the ear as just a bit incongruous, for the first thing one discovers in reading the literature of the period is that among friends, enemies, and mere acquaintances alike he was referred to almost without exception as Eddie Marsh. Somehow the very euphony of the syllables seems to fit the man. Not that one is therefore tempted to use such a familiar appellation in a literary history! But when one writes from inside the point of view of Sir Edward's close friends, as I must frequently do, and especially when one deals, as I must in this and subsequent chapters, with a large body of correspondence written to him by contemporary poets, the "Sir Edward" comes hard, not to say unnaturally. One comes readily to understand how the familiar and ubiquitous "Eddie" has been—unfortunately, as I believe—acquiesced in by several scholars who have preceded me in writing of the Georgian period but to whom Sir Edward was as much a stranger as he was to me. At the risk of a tone, then, which must strike one as just a shade too formal to do entire justice to the man, I have shunned the familiar "Eddie" in any circumstances whatever except, of course, direct quotation. Perhaps no race of men is more zealous to preserve British proprieties than American Anglophiles.
his literary tastes that for better or worse there came into being a new poetic coterie during the second decade. Marsh came upon the scene, of course, at precisely the right moment. By late 1912 the poetic renaissance was in full swing, but it was disorganized and sporadic. Marsh set out to organize a public reception for the new poetry. He succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of any of the poets who participated in his first venture. But he also succeeded, though unwittingly and perhaps unwillingly, in founding a poetic school as well.

At first glance there would seem to be no more unlikely figure than Edward Marsh to stand forth as champion of the new poetry. He was born in 1872, the son of an eminent surgeon and Professor of Surgery at Cambridge who ended his days as Master of Downing. His upbringing was in the best tradition of the Victorian upper middle-class. He was a day boy at Westminster and went from there to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took a Classical Tripos. Studying under the great A.W. Verrall, who, as he was later to record, had an immeasurable effect on shaping his literary tastes, Marsh learned the Classics to perfection. He was aided in his studies, as throughout his life, by an incredible memory for verse by means of which he could recite the whole of Paradise Lost or recall, years after having read the text, the precise syntax of the most obscure Latin poet.2

2His own memoir, A Number of People (1939), is the best source of information about Marsh. Most of the biographical facts in this chapter come from that single source. There is no other. Fortunately Mr. Christopher Hassall, Marsh's close friend of the later years and his literary heir and executor, has a
From Cambridge Marsh entered the Civil Service. He had become a First Class Clerk in the Colonial Office at the end of 1905, when, at the urging of several of Marsh's titled friends, Winston Churchill made Marsh his private secretary. It was in this position, indeed, that Marsh was to spend his most fruitful and important years in the Civil Service. When Churchill went to the Board of Trade in 1908, and then to the Admiralty in 1911, Marsh accompanied him, playing Ruth, as he phrased it, to Churchill's Naomi. In 1912, Edward Marsh, if he was known at all outside a very select circle, was known as Winston Churchill's private secretary, an efficient, knowledgeable, and self-effacing Civil Servant who moved in the most rarified strata of titled and upperclass England.

But to those who knew Marsh more intimately his appearance as editor of an anthology and champion of the new verse seemed neither so sudden nor so out of character as it must have seemed to the less well initiated. Marsh's tastes had always been literary; he had grown up surrounded by good books and was in all seasons of life an omnivorous reader. His inclinations and ability had led him to cultivate from among the literary figures of the time a wide circle of friends which included both his contemporaries and the authors of the older generation. The biography in preparation. A labor arising out of long years of friendship and respect, and drawn from Marsh's private records, the biography will afford an intimate insight into the character of Edward Marsh and into the literary currents and cross-currents of the Georgian age. Happily, it is being written by the one man among Marsh's friends and poetic protégés who is most eminently qualified, both by temperament and by possession of unique source materials, to do entire justice to his subject.
list of his literary friends and acquaintances before and
during the first decade of the century is impressive: Edmund
Gosse, Henry James, Robert Bridges, Sidney Colvin, G.K.
Chesterton, Bernard Shaw, James Barrie, Maurice Baring, Walter
De la Mare, John Galsworthy, John Masefield, and Arnold Bennett.

The interest in modern verse which was eventually to lead
to the editorship of *Georgian Poetry* came upon Marsh slowly and
was the result of a series of events which occurred largely in
1911 and 1912. He unconsciously prepared himself for his con­
version from ancient to modern poetry by first allowing himself
to be converted from classic to modern art. An inveterate and
perceptive collector of pictures throughout his life, Marsh
possessed at his death one of the finest selective private
collections in England. Until 1911, he had confined himself
largely to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century watercolors
and to one courageous purchase of the entire Richard Horne
collection of drawings by such masters as Rowlandson, Constable,
Gainsborough, and Blake. As Brinsley Ford said of him, "It
was inevitable that sooner or later so warm-hearted a humanist
should turn from the work of the dead to that of the living,
and we know that the 'conversion' took place about 1911 when
he bought Duncan Grant's *Parrot Tulips*. From then onwards he
collected only the works of young painters."³ In spite of the
predilection for his contemporaries after 1911, Marsh was still

³*Eddie Marsh: Sketches for a Composite Literary Portrait*,
comps. Christopher Hassall and Denis Mathews (London, 1953),
p. 17.
capable of such catholicity of artistic taste that, as John Rothenstein wrote, he often "provoked his friends to wonder whether there was any work of art which he didn't like." It was always an open question among his friends which of two motives more strongly impelled Marsh to collect contemporary works; whether he bought many of them because, like the true collector, he felt his desire for the possession of beauty aroused, or whether he purchased them in order to encourage a climate for good art. Marsh himself confessed to both motives. He was at once a patron of artists and a man of discerning tastes, who, by frequent judicious purchases from young and striving artists, became, as a colleague in the Contemporary Art Society, called him, "the greatest friend that our painters and poets have found in the twentieth century."5

From an interest in modern art it was only a short step to an interest in modern poetry. Marsh himself recorded the fortuitous event. Tiring of a life which he felt was being too single-mindedly devoted to social pleasures, he was searching in 1911, as he said, for "some other object for my spare time."6 Most opportunely he chanced to meet Francis Meynell and soon had become not only fast friends with the poet but also a welcome guest in the circle which included his mother, Alice Meynell. In 1911 both the Meynells, mother and son, had become greatly interested in contemporary verse. Until then, Marsh had scarcely dipped into that field, preferring his poetry,

4Hassall and Mathews, Eddie Marsh, p. 15.
6A Number of People, p. 319.
as he said, "vintage," but Francis Meynell "poured the new wine into my old bottle, and I drank deep." Through the ministrations of the Meynells he was brought to an awareness of the new age dawning. "The county seemed to be pullulating with new poets," he wrote later, "but there were two 'events' of that year [1911] which to my mind put it past a doubt that a golden age was beginning. One was Masefield's Everlasting Mercy, which I read in such a turmoil of excitement that I have never dared read it again, for fear of not recapturing the rapture. The other was Rupert Brooke's Poems."

Marsh's enthusiasm for Brooke's volume and his new-found poetic convictions made inevitable further and headier draughts of the new wine. In February, 1912, Harold Monro offered Marsh an opportunity to proclaim his ardor from the pages of Poetry Review: "Meynell tells me that you are enthusiastic about Rupert Brooke's poems, and that...you are willing to write a review of them for the April issue of this paper." In order that the tone of the review should be suitable, Monro explained that he had selected Brooke's Poems as "the Book of the Month," and that therefore the "article on it should be rather in the nature of an appreciation than of a criticism." Marsh acceded with alacrity, and his review of Rupert Brooke became his introduction not only to Monro but to many of the young poets who were contributors to Poetry Review and whose work tended to place them in the Center party of the contemporary poetic

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"A Number of People," pp. 319-20.

Harold Monro to E.M., Feb. 6, 1912, MLc.
scene. During 1912 Marsh further cemented his friendship with Harold Monro which, though it lacked the warmth and intimacy of his relationships with several other poets, was long and fruitful.

In addition to wide leaning and consuming zeal, Marsh had other attributes which well qualified him to take a leading hand as patron of the new poetry. As private secretary to one of the most widely discussed, if controversial, figures in the land, Edward Marsh found few important doors closed to him. He was not slow to use his influence in many quarters in behalf of his poets. Nor did he fail to take some pride, one suspects, in his wide acquaintanceship among London literary, artistic, and political lions. By means of it, at any rate, he was able to dazzle the eyes of some of the less cosmopolitan poets who habitually used his rooms in Gray's Inn as their headquarters during occasional visits to London. Returning to rural Gloucestershire after such a visit, Lascelles Abercrombie expressed to his host the mixture of awe and gratitude which many poets felt after a few heady evenings with Marsh in London:

"It is quite impossible for me to thank you for the perfectly glorious time you gave me. The time of my life, nothing less. I seem to have been in the visions of God, on a Miltonic moment of speculation, viewing the whole of modern life in an amazing succession of dazzling instants, from Henry James to Austin Harrison, from lovely ladies to Cubists. I never had anything like it before. Henceforth you stand for London to me...." 9

Indeed, for this particular visit Marsh had outdone himself.

9Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., Mar. 19 [1914], MLC.
Writing to Rupert Brooke, who was more accustomed than Abercrombie to rubbing elbows with the mighty, he ill concealed his pride as he outlined for Brooke's approval a truly impressive round of activities:

March 22nd, 1914

... I had a delightful visit last Saturday to Wednesday from Lascelles Abercrombie. I tried to show him as many aspects of London as could be got into the time, here is the programme, do you think it was good? Sat. Denis Browne and Clive Carey to tea, then Midsummer Night's Dream with a visit to Lillah [McCarthy] between the acts. Sunday, W.H. Davies and Michael [Sadleir] to breakfast--luncheon with the Dunsanys--a beauty-party at tea here, Cathleen [Nesbitt], Diana [Manners], Katharine [Horner] and Ruby Peto, all looking their very best (Lascelles almost speechless with admiration, he didn't know there were such people!), dinner with Gosse and Henry James who was magnificent, with adjournment to Cathleen's rooms (to meet Sarah Allgood and Marie O'Neill, but they didn't turn up). Monday the Ihlee show at Carfax, which is very good, Ralph Hodgson and Basil Dean to luncheon, the Palace in the evening to see Nijinsky, but alas he was suddenly ill so we only had Wilkie Bard, then Cafe Royal with Mark Gertler and Jack Squire and a distant view of Epstein. Tuesday I was no good, as it was the Naval Estimates. I got L. into the House to hear Winston's speech which was rather dull and technical, and L. had to go before the end part, which was better, to read the End of the World at the Bookshop, and we only met at T.E. Hulme's after 11--and L. had to go next morning.¹⁰

Small wonder Brooke could reply, in the face of such a muster roll of personages and events, "Even the best of the best people in Ryton--nay Dymock itself--must have seemed to him a little tame after that."¹¹ And many another poet fared

¹⁰A Number of People, pp. 299-300.
¹¹Ibid., p. 300. Abercrombie lived at the time at Ryton, Dymock, Gloucestershire.
almost as well as Abercrombie when he visited Gray's Inn. One should not suggest, however, that Marsh's activities in behalf of his poets were undertaken solely for the purpose of impressing them with the London scene. He was assiduous in cultivating what he considered proper and useful contacts for the poets he befriended. In reading the correspondence Marsh left behind, one is struck by the large numbers of letters from poets of all kinds thanking him for a valuable introduction to another poet, a critic, an editor, or a publisher.

In addition to the prestige which came from unquestioned position, Marsh possessed what one may call a collector's instinct. He collected his circle of poets, one feels, in much the same manner and for much the same motives that he collected the modern paintings which were beginning to cover his walls. There is little doubt that Edward Marsh was the kind of person who enjoyed playing the benefactor. He was always ready to befriend unheralded or impecunious poets. Several of strenuously independent mind were notably averse to being taken under anyone's wing, including Marsh's, and misunderstandings ensued. But by and large the young poets were happy to receive the Marsh benefactions, for nothing beyond friendship was requested or required in return.

Edward Marsh also had money. And he was generous to an extreme. He was never by his own reckoning a wealthy man, but as most of the poets he admitted to his circle discovered, sizeable financial aid could be counted on from Marsh at need. It would be entirely futile even to attempt to list the numbers
of poets who received loans or gifts of money from Edward Marsh when they were financially hard-pressed. Frequently the loans were repaid; more frequently, one sometimes suspects, they were not. Marsh found indirect ways of aiding his poets, too, such as paying generously for his board and room whenever he visited their homes for any extended period. Working through his friend Edmund Gosse, he was the instigator of action which eventually resulted in grants from government funds to both Lascelles Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley; and he made Abercrombie the additional beneficiary of a £25 gift deposited anonymously to the poet's account. Thoroughly characteristic, too, was his early assistance to Wilfrid Gibson. He paid £1 per week to Middleton Murry, who in turn hired Gibson, at Marsh's suggestion, to act as sub-editor of Rhythm and paid him the £1 for his services. It was typical of Marsh's arrangements in such delicate matters that Gibson did not discover the truth until Murry published his autobiography in 1935. Indeed, as Murry admitted, Rhythm itself "owed its very existence to Marsh's generosity," a generosity which included, among other things a loan of £100.

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12 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., May 15, 1915, MLC.
13 Middleton Murry, Between Two Worlds, p. 237.
14 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Mar. 21, 1935, MLC.
15 Between Two Worlds, pp. 237, 238. Like several others, Murry sometimes felt himself too greatly indebted to Marsh for his own peace of mind. Even after it had become apparent in 1914 that repayment of approximately £80 of the £100 loan would be long delayed, if not impossible, Marsh sent Murry a gift of £5. Murry was moved to express his gratitude and to ask a question of Marsh which must also have occurred to other less forthright recipients of the Marsh largesse: "I don't know why you do these things, Eddie. Is it to heap coals of fire? I'm sure it isn't--but it hit me all of a heap. My
Even though he possessed many attributes which admirably qualified him as the Georgian impresario, Edward Marsh was not the perfect anthologist. In spite of his enthusiastic advocacy of modern verse, in spite of a wide range of poetic tastes, Marsh's heart remained sufficiently with his "vintage" poets that he was unable to tolerate much of the work being done by the more experimental poets of the age. His antipathy toward Marinetti has been remarked; his antipathy toward Pound and his school was no less severe. One should not conclude, on the other hand, as too many critics have done, that Marsh's tastes were entirely hidebound. In many ways they were like those of Harold Monro, and he no doubt felt most comfortable, poetically speaking, among the group of Centrist poets who tended to gravitate toward Monro's Poetry Bookshop. Like them, like Monro, Marsh was willing, even eager, to be thought modern—but not too modern.

In his memoirs Marsh made abundantly clear the poetic tastes by which he was guided in selecting poems for Georgian Poetry. A good poem, he claimed, should have at least one, preferably two, and ideally all three, of the following attributes: intelligibility, music, and raciness. And he added a

normal state of mind toward you is one of fright because of all that money.... You see that the real trouble is that no-one has ever treated me as you have. It's outside my experience, and it makes me nervous and afraid" (undated letter, but as, mid-1914, MLC).

16A Number of People, pp. 276, 328. The antipathy may best be observed not so much in what he says of Pound as in the curious fact that he can write a four-hundred-and-ten-page memoir, much of it devoted to literary London of the second and third decades of this century, and contrive to mention the ubiquitous Pound in only two places.
fourth quality, though not as a **sine qua non**: "I was happier with it if it was written on some formal principle which I could discern, and from which it departed, if at all, only for the sake of some special effect, and not because the lazy or too impetuous writer had found observance difficult or irksome."

His first quality, intelligibility, he admitted, "is a relative term," but not intended to "exclude the poetry of suggestion."

He meant by it, rather, the opposite of obscurity, which was Marsh's poetic **bête noir**. "I hold strongly," he wrote, "that poetry is communication, and that it is the poets' duty, to the best of his ability, to let the reader know what he is driving at." The second criterion, music, is, as he said, a "still more precarious" poetic yardstick, "for the ear changes with the generations." And so he contented himself with affirming generally "that poetry which renounces the singing quality plucks its own wings." In the third quality, raciness, Marsh showed his limited modernity perhaps to best advantage. "My third adjective, 'racy'," he wrote, "is perhaps too slapdash," but by it he excluded from Parnassus with one sweep the watery verse of the Watsons and the Phillipses and the languid poetry of the 'nineties. For by that quality "I mean to imply," he wrote, that poetry must have "intensity of thought or feeling, and to rule out the vapidity which is too often to be found, alas, in verse that is written with due regard to sense, sound, and 'correctness'."¹⁷

As for form, Marsh was again with the Center party. His creed was based upon a maxim drilled into his head as a schoolboy: "nine-tenths of the Tradition might

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¹⁷A *Number of People*, pp. 322-24.
be rubbish, but the remaining tenth was priceless, and no one who tried to dispense with it could achieve anything at all.  

Although Marsh's advocacy of his principles grew more strenuous during the second decade as the tide of formlessness increasingly swept away the landmarks of traditional verse, his insistence not only upon form but near-perfection of form landed him in arguments with several poets as early as 1912. His first brush occurred with no less intrepid a champion than Sturge Moore. The specific point at issue was the inclusion of Robert Trevelyan's "Dirge" in *Georgian Poetry I*. Against Moore's strongly phrased recommendation, Marsh had decided that the "Dirge" could not be included in the anthology because it violated his canon of discernible formal pattern. Among other deficiencies, Marsh alleged, it had too many unrhymed lines. His decision resulted in one of the most outspokenly critical letters Edward Marsh was ever to receive.

I protest strongly [Moore wrote] about Trevy's Dirge. There will be very few things in your book so genuinely poetry.... As to your criticism about formally perfect. It is the very type of the criticism which I abominate that is, it refers to a mechanical criterion as ultimate [sic]. There is no reason or common sense in any such reference.

There is an unrhymed line in most of the divisions of Lycidas, and they do not occur in the same relative position.

Its not being what you call formally perfect is really in its favour, and means that the writer's mind was more dominated by real taste, than by mechanical pedantry when he wrote it....

It is certainly far finer than anything of Bottomley's, and I think as fine as the

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18 *A Number of People*, p. 32.
best of Bridges. It has grandeur....
It is very possible that it will be near
upon the best thing in the book.
In fact I don't suppose I shall ever
really forgive you if you leave it out.19

To such pressure Marsh could only bow, especially since
he was determined to include in his first volume, for diplomatic
if not poetic reasons, the work of a few older men like Moore
and Chesterton. The next letter found Moore magnanimous in
victory but still ruffled over critics who would judge poetry
as if it were an exercise in metrics.

My dear Marsh,

How fine of you! Few nowadays have
the generosity to allow themselves to be
conquered. You deserve to win next time
and I will try to remember to let you. A
perfect form may be beautiful but we know
so many impeccable ones that are not. A
broken vase may be more beautiful than a
new one uncracked, so may a broken form....
Success conforms to no standard.... Mere
conformity is never a virtue....

Yours sincerely,

T.S. Moore

I think we should not look on poets as
little boys who have or have not done
their exercise.20

Thus in spite of its formal deficiencies, Trevelyan's "Dirge"
appeared in Georgian Poetry. The result was quite different
in several subsequent cases when some of the younger or more
expendable poets attempted to argue Marsh's poetic canons with
him.

A year later Marsh became embroiled in an even more

19Sturge Moore to E.M., Oct. 14, 1912, MLC.
20Sturge Moore to E.M., undated (but ca. Oct. 20, 1912), MLC.
revealing controversy over poetic form. This time his opponent was D.H. Lawrence. The friendly argument began when Marsh returned some verses Lawrence had sent him for criticism objecting, among other things, to their being cast in *vers libre*. He undertook to lecture Lawrence on the virtues of regular meter and underscored his arguments by scanning, in conventional stress fashion, one of Lawrence's favorite poems, Dowson's "Cynara." Marsh not only goaded the poet into a cogent defense of *vers libre* but also invited an attack upon all scansion. "I rather suspect you of being a young Philistine with the poetry of youth on you," Lawrence replied.

> But I *am* being a David that throws stones....
> I only know that the verse you quote against me is right, and you are wrong. And I am a poor, maligned, misunderstood, patronised and misread poet, and soon I shall burst into tears....
> I think I came a real cropper in my belief in metre over Shelley. I tried all roads to scan him, but I could never read him as he could be scanned. And I thought what bit of Latin scansion I did was a horrible fake: I never believed for an instant in the Sapphic form—and Horace is already a bit of a mellow varsity man who never quite forgot Oxford.21

But the greater part of Lawrence's assault was more personal. He attacked Marsh's own prosodic canons as not only outmoded but insensitive as well:

21D.H. Lawrence to E.M., undated except "Tuesday" (but postmarked "19.11.13"), MLC. The argument between Marsh and Lawrence over prosody was not confined to one exchange of letters. Lawrence's side of the epistolary controversy has been published by Aldous Huxley in his edition of the Letters of D.H. Lawrence (London, 1932), pp. 137, 153-55, 155-59, 167-69. Though Huxley's texts are both accurate and complete, I have preferred to use the original MSS in MLC.
You are wrong, it makes me open my eyes. I think I read my poetry more by length than by stress—as a matter of movements in space than footsteps hitting the earth.... I think more of a bird, with broad wings flying and lapsing through the air, than anything, when I think of metre....

It all depends on the pause—the natural pause, the natural lingering of the voice according to the feeling—it is the hidden emotional pattern that makes poetry, not the obvious form.... It is the lapse of feeling, something as indefinite as expression in the voice of carrying emotion. It doesn't depend upon the ear, particularly, but on the sensitive soul. And the ear gets a habit and becomes master, when the ebbing and lifting emotion should be master, and the ear the transmitter. If your ear has got stiff and a bit mechanical, don't blame my poetry. That's why you like Golden Journey to Samarkand—it fits your habitual ear, and your feeling crouches subservient and a bit pathetic. 'It satisfies my ear' you say—Well, I don't write for your ear. This is the constant war, I reckon, between new expression and the habitual, mechanical transmitters and receivers of the human constitution....

You are wrong, I think, about the two rhymes—Why need you notice they are rhymes?—You are a bit of a policeman in poetry. I never put them in because they are rhymes....

Your letter was jolly good to me really—I always thank God when a man will say straight out to me, what he has to say. But it is rare when one will. I call it affectionately not anything else.

D. H. L. 22

Marsh was not soon to forget Lawrence's "policeman of poetry" charge, for it was to become the essence of attacks upon his taste by poets of the Left for many years to come.

22 D.H. Lawrence to E.M., undated except "Tuesday" (but postmarked "19.11.13"), MLC.
The argument continued through 1913, but by the very nature of the contestants it could have had no decisive outcome. The old and the new, the formalist and the *vera librist*, were at loggerheads. It should be noted, however, that Lawrence was represented in four of the five volumes of *Georgian Poetry*, and though strongly disapproving of Lawrence's poetic technique in general, Marsh had sufficiently catholic tastes to reprint two of Lawrence's masterpieces, "Snake" and "Snapdragon." An amusing footnote to the controversy is formed by a poem which Lawrence sent his adversary for Christmas, 1913. Marked by utter regularity of meter and flawless rhyme scheme, it was dedicated, tongue in cheek, "To Eddie Marsh, with much affection, this poem for a Christmas card, which, albeit a trifle lugubrious, *pray God may go daintily to his ear.*"

Grief

The darkness steals the forms of all the queens,
But oh, the palms of his two black hands are red!
It is death I fear so much, it is not the dead,
Nor their grey book, but the torn and bloody scenes.

The lamps are white like Snowdrops in the grass,
The town is like a church-yard, all so still
And dark now night is here,--nor will
Another torn red sunset come to pass.

And so I sit and turn the books of grey,
Feeling the darkness like a blind man reading,
All fearful lest I find some new word bleeding--
--Nay, take my painted missal book away.

David Herbert
Son of Arthur John Lawrence
wrote this poem:
December 16--1913

Requiescat in pace

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Though Edward Marsh was in several ways admirably qualified for the editorial mantle he was about to assume, then, he possessed one serious shortcoming. In an age "pullulating" with new poetry, much of it frankly experimental and some of it downright bizarre, Marsh was barred by his essentially formal approach to verse from seeing the significance of much of the new work going on around him. Marsh was naturally fitted by training and temperament to popularize the poetry of the Center, a feat which he performed superlatively well, but one could not expect that his anthologies would become entirely representative of all phases of the poetry of the age.

The idea for the anthology that was to become Georgian Poetry came, strictly speaking, not from Marsh but (as will become evident in the next chapter) from Rupert Brooke. The story of the close friendship between these two remarkable men has been largely told by Marsh himself, and most of the significant correspondence between them has long since been printed. Anything beyond a cursory recounting of a few aspects of their relationship is now superfluous. The friendship with Brooke was for Edward Marsh the high spot in a life full of many and varied friends. Indeed, the events in Marsh's life can almost be dated pre- and post-Rupert. Brooke's death in the Aegean in 1915 was a blow from which Marsh never entirely recovered. Brooke remained for Marsh throughout his life the embodiment of all a young man and poet should be. Twenty-three years after Brooke's death Marsh could still write of him:

24See A Number of People, Chap. 12 and E.M.'s Memoir, a long, tragic, and sensitively written account of the friendship, which forms the preface to Brooke's Collected Poems (1915).
"My friendship with Rupert Brooke was certainly one of the most memorable things in my life. In his combination of gifts, of body, character, mind and spirit, he was nearer completeness and perfection than anyone I have known; intellect and goodness, humour and sympathy, beauty of person and kindness of heart, distinction of taste and 'the common touch', ambition and modesty, he had them all; and there is no telling what he might have done if he had lived."  

Marsh first met Brooke at Cambridge in 1906 and by 1909 had become a sufficiently good friend to both the poet and his parents that he was spending many of his summer weekends with them. In the beginning, Marsh scrupulously avoided asking to read any of Brooke's poems because he was fearful of being disillusioned; as Marsh wrote, "I liked him so much that I should have hated not to like his work."  

The publication of Brooke's Poems in 1911 not only thoroughly allayed that fear but also convinced him that young Brooke was a potentially first-rate poet. Indeed, Marsh's enthusiasm for modern poetry and his desire to stand forth as its champion may well have sprung as much from the fact that Rupert Brooke was writing modern verse as from all the other influences together. From 1911 on, Marsh took Brooke under his tutelage. He judiciously introduced both the man and his poetry to the proper people, and he entertained him sumptuously during his visits to London, taking care especially that he should meet on easy, informal

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25 A Number of People, p. 274.
26 Ibid., p. 276.
terms the growing circle which was forming around Marsh and which included such poets as Gibson, Monro, and Abercrombie. In short he set out to act as literary "counselor and critic" to the young poet. 27

It required considerable tact and deftness on Marsh's part, and perhaps not a little courage, to champion Brooke's poetry in 1911 and 1912, for among his contemporaries Brooke was far from being a universally popular poet. In its own place and time the early verse of Rupert Brooke was capable of shocking many readers. Even Ezra Pound, who seemed to judge a fellow-poet's worth in large part by the degree to which he was capable of shocking Bumbledom, called Brooke "the best of all that Georgian group." 28 Brooke's youthful arrogance irked even many of those who were in his poetic camp, and his over-frank realism stung some of the more conservative critics to a sharp attack on the brash young interloper who would storm Parnassus. One of his close contemporaries summed up from first-hand observation Brooke's poetic reputation in 1912:

Everybody was talking about 'Channel Passage' and 'Menelaus and Helen': the younger people admired him for daring to write a sonnet about seasickness and to describe so cynically and realistically the old age of Helen and Menelaus, but, on the whole, even those who admired him were inclined to be shocked, many were indeed frankly annoyed at his bad taste and at the way in which, with arrogant undergraduate bravado, for so they considered it, he deliberately set out to flout long-cherished poetic conventions. 29

27 A Number of People, p. 277; Stringer, p. 57.
29 Del Re, SEL, XII, 461.
Although Brooke valued Marsh's criticism and respected his tastes, on several poetic matters the two men amicably but thoroughly disagreed. Chief among these was Brooke's tendency toward realism. In public, to be sure, Marsh assiduously defended Brooke's verse from more than one attack made on the grounds of its excessive realism. But in private he was far more frank with the young poet. He heartily agreed when Brooke's publisher, Frank Sidgwick of the firm of Sidgwick and Jackson, suggested that two sonnets be eliminated from the Poems. Brooke won the day over both his formidable opponents by invoking the characteristic argument of the Centrist poet; truth to life is more important to poetry than conventional morality. To remove these poems, he wrote, "would be to over-balance the book still more in the direction of unimportant prettiness. There's plenty of that sort of wash in the other pages for the readers who like it. They needn't read the parts which are new and serious."

A satisfactory compromise was reached when Brooke agreed to change the title of one sonnet from "Lust" to "Libido" and the other from "The Sea-Sick Lover" to "Channel Passage."

Publicly Marsh made the best of the bargain. In reviewing Brooke's Poems for Poetry Review, he praised the poet's passion and liveliness in verse, his youth and exuberance; but he charily side-stepped the issue of the over-frank realism with the comment that though he himself was "a somewhat doubtful apologist" for

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30 Stringer, p. 57.
31 Reprinted ibid., pp. 97-98.
Brooke's realism, and though it was most certainly "an aspect of Mr. Brooke's achievement which many readers will find distasteful," at least a liberal-minded reader would admit that Brooke's "coarseness" was "less sardonic" and "more exuberant and rollicking" than Swift's! 32 One wonders how many prospective purchasers of the Poems in 1912 were likely to be reassured by such a comparison. In a letter to Brooke enclosing a copy of his review, Marsh warned the young poet more pointedly. When he had shown the Poems to Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson, Marsh wrote, he had "steered them clear of the ugly poems," but to his surprise they had taken exception to "Dead Man's Love," a poem which he had always "thought was quite safe." The elder poets had interpreted it as "an outpouring of youth's contempt on the love-affairs of persons past a certain age—and seem to think that you cast aspersion on their own powers!" 33 In another letter at about the same time Marsh elaborated upon his objections to Brooke's realism. In his printed review he had voiced only a mild demurrer to several of the poems "on the old-fashioned score of taste." In the letter, while he praised Brooke for having "brought back into English poetry the rapturous beautiful grotesque of the Seventeenth Century," he protested quite specifically "the 'smell' line in Libido." Turning the matter off first into a sly joke, Marsh wrote, "For one thing, it will prevent my giving away at least twenty copies of the book as Christmas presents to women." But then he added

32 I (1912), 178-81.
33 A Number of People, p. 277.
more earnestly: "and even for my own sake I think there are some things too disgusting to write about, especially in one's own language." Again, as in the argument with Sidgwick, Brooke was stung to an earnest if good-natured defense of the line on grounds of the necessity for poetic sincerity. He was too considerate of his friend's feelings, one suspects, to throw in Marsh's face the obvious implication that an Englishman might more safely write of disgusting subjects in a language other than English. Presumably erotic poetry was not to be condemned because it was erotic but because it was understandable to too many people. The critical standards which Marsh disclosed in this exchange of letters, indeed, do not bear very close scrutiny.

In fairness to Marsh it must be added that too much can be made of his objections to realistic verse. Raciness, after all—"intensity of thought and feeling"—was one of his four criteria for good poetry. One must recall, too, his admiration for The Everlasting Mercy, a poem which, in 1911, represented realism par excellence. And one can never be entirely certain whether Marsh's disagreement with Brooke over the Poems was motivated more by the dispassionate canons of poetic taste or by loyal friendship. Above all other considerations he wanted Brooke's Poems to succeed with the public, and his astute reading of English poetic tolerance in 1911 told him that several poems in the volume placed it in some danger of slipping just a bit beyond the pale. The way to public acceptance, then,

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34 Stringer, pp. 101-102.
seemed to lie in attempting to convince Brooke of the undesirability of publishing some of the more offensive verses, or at the least, in cautioning him not to repeat the error in subsequent volumes. Moreover, if Marsh's taste was beginning to have its effect on Brooke in the years immediately before the war, perhaps his friendship with Brooke was effecting some broadening of Marsh's taste as well. Surely by 1915, when *Georgian Poetry* II was published, the new poetic realism was not so distasteful to him as it had been in 1911-1912. Over the strong objections of such poets as D.H. Lawrence, Marsh gave the places of honor in *Georgian Poetry* II to Abercrombie's "End of the World," and Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife," two poetic dramas which caused a critical flurry at the time by reason of their alleged brutality and coarseness.

Because of the intimate friendship of Brooke and Marsh, and because of the considerable sway which Brooke exerted over his mentor, Brooke was perhaps the most significant single influence which led *Georgian Poetry* almost from the start to exploit one major phase of the poetic renascence, the new realism. But his influence on the anthology was to be far more immediate and direct. The very idea which led to the publication of *Georgian Poetry* was in the beginning Rupert Brooke's.
In light of the only mediocre success of his Poems, Rupert Brooke, like most other young poets in 1912, had long been musing over the British public's unwarranted neglect of modern poetry. As Marsh himself told the story, an amusing idea for wooing the public came to Brooke on the evening of September 19, 1912, as he sat undressing on his bed in Marsh's chambers at Gray's Inn. He would startle British readers into taking some notice, good or bad, of modern poetry by an audacious scheme: he himself would write a volume of verse and publish it under convincing nome de plume as selections from the work of twelve young, modern poets! He anticipated using all possible new and revolutionary forms in order more effectively to play the gadfly. Had the idea been allowed to bear fruit perhaps the result would have anticipated some of the more blatant efforts of the Leftist poets in subsequent months, for in his aim simultaneously to advertise the new poetry and to bait the public Brooke stole a march on both the Futurists and Vorticists. But his idea was to result in a literary movement more enduring than either Futurism or Vorticism, for once having heard Brooke's plan, Edward Marsh took it over, remoulded

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1A Number of People, pp. 320-21.
it nearer to his heart's desire, and edited the first volume of Georgian Poetry.

Although Marsh was instantly enthusiastic, in their discussion of the scheme during the small hours of the morning he managed to persuade Brooke to agree to one fundamental modification. "It occurred to me," wrote Marsh, "that as we both believed there were at least twelve flesh-and-blood poets whose work, if properly thrust under the public's nose, had a good chance of producing the effect he desired, it would be simpler to use the material which was ready to hand." An anthology, not a one-man tour de force, was in the making.

If the new book was to appear in time for the Christmas market, speed was of the essence, and so the next day, September 20, Marsh gathered together for a luncheon at Gray's Inn Wilfrid Gibson, John Drinkwater, Harold Monro, Arundel del Re, and Brooke. If Brooke had not been entirely won over to the anthology pattern by Marsh's arguments of the night before, the assemblage at luncheon succeeded in persuading him to "the more dignified aim of attempting to elevate instead of merely trying to startle." Drinkwater testified that all the young men present were quickly caught up in the contagious enthusiasm of Brooke and Marsh. Brooke "declared," wrote Drinkwater, "that England must be bombarded with the claims of the new poets";
and to that end he was willing to use his influence on potential purchasers of the anthology "as brazenly as a commercial traveller." Before the group left Gray's Inn late that afternoon, they had not only become zealous partisans of the as yet unnamed anthology but had appointed Monro publisher, drawn up a list of poets who were to be asked for selections, and given to Edward Marsh "sole discretionary powers...as editor."5

The aim of Georgian Poetry I remained the aim originally enunciated by Rupert Brooke—"to strike a blow for young and eager poets who felt that in the solid publicity accorded to the novel and play their own art was treated as of too little account"—but the means by which that aim was to be carried out were controlled by Edward Marsh alone. Not that he entirely rejected suggestions from others; as editor, he sometimes turned to Brooke, Monro, or Gibson for bits of advice, and he accepted some assistance too, strange as it now seems, from T.E. Hulme, "whose judgment," according to del Re, "he greatly respected."6 There rapidly came to be small doubt, however, that matters of major editorial policy were to be the province of Edward Marsh and no one else. For several of the more inflexibly modern young poets, including Brooke, Marsh's strict exercise of his editorial prerogatives may have been more fortunate than they knew, for he was far more willing than they to trim his sails

5Drinkwater, Discovery, pp. 228-29.
6Swnnerton, Georgian Scene, p. 257.
7SEL, XII, 464.
to the prevailing winds of public taste. Against the objections of several of them who wished any but their own kind rigorously excluded, Marsh insisted upon including some of the older but better known poetic names of the era. How far the inclusion of the work of such un-Georgian poets as Chesterton and Sturge Moore increased the sales of Georgian Poetry I is of course open to question. It seems reasonably certain, however, that Marsh's judicious mixture of a dram of the old with liberal portions of the new, though it may have slightly vitiated the headiness of the new wine, did much to increase its market value among those with untrained or traditional palates.

With rare exceptions—such as when he allowed Sturge Moore to win the argument over Trevelyan's "Dirge"—Marsh made himself entirely responsible for the specific poems selected from the work of chosen poets. Even Brooke appears to have had no direct hand in helping Marsh select poems for Georgian Poetry I. One would suspect that second only to Brooke, Harold Monro might have been in the best position to exert considerable influence. As publisher of the anthology, as editor of a successful and influential periodical, as a moderately close friend to Marsh by the end of 1912, Monro had as wide a knowledge of modern poets and poetry as any young man in London. Moreover, he was apparently the sole financial backer of Georgian Poetry.9

8 Loc. cit.
9I say "apparently" because in view of Marsh's generosity to his circle of poets and the keen interest in the cause of modern poetry which led him to undertake G.P., it seems incredible that he would not have invested some money in the project which appealed to him on so many counts. Yet such appears to have been the case. I can find no evidence that Marsh put any of
Nevertheless, all the available correspondence between Monro and Marsh in late 1912 seems to indicate that Marsh managed to keep the relationship between Monro and himself one strictly of editor and publisher. Marsh relied heavily on Monro's knowledge of printing, book-making, and binding; Monro handled printing bids, submitted specimens of paper to Marsh, and gave advice on how to submit manuscript poems to the printer. But that was all. There is no hint that in 1912 Monro was ever asked for advice on specific poems or poets for inclusion in the anthology.10

Marsh wasted no time in canvassing potential contributors to *Georgian Poetry* I. Only six days after the luncheon of September 20, Sturge Moore had given Marsh permission to reprint the "Sicilian Idyll."11 Within two weeks Masefield, Davies, Drinkwater, Bottomley, and Lawrence had either acknowledged Marsh's request or consented to inclusion of their work in the anthology.12 As a general rule Marsh appears to have presented most of the poets with a *fait accompli*. Having decided which of their poems he considered worthy of inclusion, he then wrote for permission to reprint those poems only. The poets did not his funds into the publishing of *G.P.* On the contrary, I have been assured by Mrs. Monro that her husband alone furnished the capital required to produce the anthology and that Marsh had no financial part in it.

10 One must add in fairness that this was not always to be the case. Marsh sought Monro's advice in editing subsequent volumes to a larger extent than he did in the case of *G.P.* I.

11 Sturge Moore to E.M., Sept. 26, 1912, MLC.

always agree with his selections. Though he gave willing
assent to the reprinting of all the titles Marsh had chosen,
W.H. Davies also appended an unsolicited suggestion: he
specifically desired his "Kingfisher" included. "It is a
better poem than any you name," to told Marsh.\footnote{13 W.H. Davies to E.M., Sept. 28, 1912, MLC.} Marsh agreed,
and "The Kingfisher" appeared in \textit{Georgian Poetry I}. From
Lawrence Marsh requested permission to use only one poem,
"Snapdragon." Lawrence readily consented, and added, "If there
is anything else that I could at any time give you, some un-
published stuff, I shall be glad. I shall love to see the book.
It will be quite profit enough in itself."\footnote{14 Letters of D.H. Lawrence. Huxley ed., p. 66.} But most poetS,
like Bottomley and Drinkwater, failed to make any further
suggestions, general or specific, contenting themselves only
with expressing their pleasure at being selected for the
anthology.\footnote{15 John Drinkwater to E.M., Sept. 29, 1912; Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Oct. 1, 1912, MLC.}

With John Masefield Marsh was willing to make a major
strategic exception. The reason cannot be far to seek: Masefield
was without doubt the most popular poet Marsh was required to
approach. By late 1912 he was riding the crest of a wave of
popular acclaim for \textit{The Everlasting Mercy} and the recently
published \textit{Widow in the Bye Street}. A "modern" anthology—and
a financially successful one—was unthinkable unless some of
Masefield's work could be included among that of his less famous
coevals. His current poetic eminence obviously demanded a less

arbitrary approach than that made to other poets. In the beginning Marsh's prospects for success appeared none too bright. Masefield agreed to Marsh's suggestion of a meeting, but his reply was couched in terms which were anything but encouraging. "As to the scheme, I would much like to talk it over with you," he wrote Marsh, "but I own that I am not very sanguine. Sir Ronald Ross had a scheme for a poetical monthly, 'Musa Miscella,' which pleased me more; but let us meet and talk over yours."\(^{16}\) The meeting was held, and Marsh apparently proved himself a superior salesman on this occasion, as on so many others. On September 30 Masefield not only gave permission for inclusion of his work in the anthology but also offered to hold back publication of his forthcoming Biography for "a few months," meanwhile giving Marsh complete discretion to print in Georgian Poetry I any poems he chose from the unpublished volume! Now Marsh had secured possibly his most important contributor; the anthology could scarcely fail. Perhaps the result did not come about entirely because of salesmanship on Marsh's part or altruism on Masefield's. As Masefield clearly saw, and probably Marsh as well, a quid pro quo had been arrived at. By postponing publication of Biography for "a few months," Masefield wrote Marsh, he would be able to capitalize on whatever popularity would accrue to his new verse by having it appear first in Georgian Poetry. And he added, "I feel that your book may be a useful fillip, as there has been nothing like it for some years."\(^{17}\) Just how useful a "fillip"

\(^{16}\) John Masefield to E.M., Sept. 27, 1912, MLC.  
\(^{17}\) John Masefield to E.M., Sept. 30, 1912, MLC.
Georgian Poetry was to be, not only to Biography but to others of his subsequent volumes as well, Masefield could not then have guessed. During the next two years, however, he was to express to Marsh on several occasions his congratulations on Georgian Poetry and to recant his initial misgivings about contributing to it.  

In addition to assuming sole responsibility for choosing poems and obtaining permission to reprint them, Marsh also assumed direction of an extraordinarily thorough pre-publication campaign to organize and insure a favorable reception for his anthology. Though he was aided by Rupert Brooke and, to a lesser extent, by others among his about-to-be-enshrined Georgians, Marsh alone was the generalissimo in charge of strategy. So skillful and thorough was his campaign that one is tempted to conclude that if there had not been a poetic renascence before publication of Georgian Poetry I, it would have been necessary to invent one after. Had Georgian Poetry I turned out to be a mediocre anthology, or even worse, it would nevertheless have been assured of creating a considerable critical splash.

Marsh's most enthusiastic lieutenant in the campaign was Brooke. Feeling a strong sense of proprietorship, the two men set out to push the volume by almost any means which came to hand. Few persons in London were better fitted both by position and temperament to succeed at such a task. Much as he disliked reading his poetry aloud, Brooke readily agreed to give public readings at the Poetry Bookshop if such a course were necessary.  

18 John Masefield to E.M., July 12, 1913; Jan. 20, 1914, MLC.
to increase interest in the anthology. 19 His letters to Marsh in November and December, 1912, were full of the subject. Indeed, they contained little else. He was lying awake nights, he wrote Marsh from Germany, trying to think of novel ways to "advertise"—the word is Brooke's own—Georgian Poetry. And he sent Marsh several pages of detailed instructions as to which journals and which reviewers should be approached to write critical notices in Germany, France, and Italy. If all his schemes were put into effect, he predicted to Marsh, "You'll be able to found a hostel for poor Georgians on the proceeds" of the anthology. 20 Perhaps the most impressive result of Brooke's strategy was to be seen in the fact that, as John Drinkwater reported, "the Prime Minister's car was waiting outside Bumpus's shop in Oxford Street at opening-time on the day of publication." 21

Drinkwater's testimony notwithstanding, it would not be surprising if that particular press-agent's coup had been the result of Marsh's rather than Brooke's strategy. If Marsh's campaign was less spectacularly conceived and more thorough than Brooke's it was still by no means pedestrian or lacking in dash. He planned it to the last detail: which journals would be asked to publish reviews; which among his influential literary friends would be given pre-publication copies and requested to mention the book publicly, either orally or in writing; and

19 Stringer, p. 130.
20 Rupert Brooke to E.M., Nov. 9, 1912, MLC.
21 Discovery, p. 229.
even what tone would be suggested for each review. Marsh was also careful to enlist the aid of his potentially most effective salesmen, the poets represented in the anthology itself. And he adhered to an astute scheme of division of labor; each poet was asked to use his influence where that influence was likely to be most effectively felt. He asked John Drinkwater, for example, to see to it that the Birmingham Post reviewed the anthology as favorably as possible. Drinkwater gladly agreed, as expected, adding, "I do a good deal of work for them, and can generally manage to direct their attention in the right way in matters of poetry...." Wilfrid Gibson, who happened to be making an opportune lecture tour through several Scottish cities immediately after publication of the book, was equally ready to use his influence in the cause. During his lectures in Edinburgh and Glasgow, he wrote Marsh, he pushed Georgian Poetry both "in season and out of season."

Among the entire field of influential British publications in which his anthology might be reviewed, none was more important than the Times. A conspicuous and favorable review in that journal was of course essential. And so to Bruce Richmond, editor of the Literary Supplement, Marsh sent a review copy in late November, 1912, and a letter suggesting a prominent review,

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22 E.M. to Rupert Brooke, Nov. 11, 1912, M.L.C.
23 John Drinkwater to E.M., Dec. 1, 1912, M.L.C.
24 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Jan. 14, 1912, M.L.C. Though the letter is dated 1912, the comments in it make such a date impossible. The correct date is Jan. 14, 1913. Probably Gibson suffered a lapse of memory familiar to all of us during the first weeks of a new year, i.e., inscribing the new month correctly but coupling it with the old year.
If possible on the first page. Unfortunately the letter reached Richmond after he had gone on holiday, but Marsh's name was apparently not without influence. Richmond replied from Italy,

I wish I had known earlier about your volume. Before I left, a fortnight ago, I planned out the next five front pages—which takes it up to Christmas (and I imagine you want if possible to catch the 'Christmas present' market)—one of the five was to be Couch's Victorian Verse—and my immediate fear is that my colleague may propose to tack you on to him.

I've written at once to try to prevent that—and hope that we shall be able to do it properly—either two cols. inside before Xmas, or a front page after.
Good luck to the venture.25

Marsh used much the same kind of approach to influential, free-lance reviewers not connected with established periodicals. Again he wasted no time. As early as the beginning of October, only a few days after the idea for the anthology had been broached, and before its final make-up could possibly have been determined, he wrote to potential reviewers outlining the concept

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25 Bruce Richmond to E.M., Dec. 5, 1912, MLC. An approach to the TLS was obviously necessary, but perhaps only Edward Marsh would have considered sending a copy of G.P. I to Punch. But send it he did, and to A.A. Milne. What he could have expected beyond the creation of good will is not clear. As Marsh must have known he would, Milne replied that he could not "review (or have reviewed) your anthology--such works not getting much of a show in Punch." But at least Marsh had aroused his friend's interest in the Georgians: "I hope I am to have the felicity of meeting you shortly chez Thorpe," Milne continued, "when you can tell me who Rupert Brooke is who writes that jolly poem about Grantchester.... Countless labours--together with the natural shock of reading what the Daily Mail thinks of us all--has [sig] prevented me from (1) writing before and (2) reading the book sufficiently carefully to accuse you of any faults of commission or omission" (A.A. Milne to E.M., undated, but see Dec. 10, 1912, MLC).
of the book and apparently requesting favorable notices should the chance to review *Georgian Poetry* I fall to them. In many cases his appeal seems to have been made more on a personal than a professional basis, not as the editor of *Georgian Poetry* writing to a potential reviewer, but as Edward Marsh writing to an old friend. With some of the recipients his approach was successful, with others less so. Alfred Noyes replied that although he was doing little reviewing at the time, he was at Marsh's service. "I will certainly do anything I can about this book," he promised. Maurice Hewlett was not quite so tractable. He had some reservations about the book and was hard put to discover among the kinds and conditions of poets and poetry projected for *Georgian Poetry* any motif around which to organize a review. He was for that reason reluctant to assent to Marsh's persuasions. Not daunted, Marsh continued the campaign, which ended with only a tentative victory. Hewlett wrote, "We are talking about different things: you about the general excellences of poetry; I about what broad lines I could find in your collection to make a review about. To write a 'notice' of a book of verses is one thing: I can stroke surfaces etc.—but a review a bigger thing. However, we'll see." By tactics which shrewdly combined the right amounts of finesse and brashness, boldness and humility, art and salesmanship, Edward Marsh assured the success of *Georgian Poetry* I. Deliberate and well planned as his campaign was, however, he worked even better than he knew, for retrospectively one can

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26 Alfred Noyes to E.M., Oct. 19, [1912], MLC.
27 Maurice Hewlett to E.M., Oct. 10, [1912], MLC.
see that it was not only the success of one volume of the anthology which was at stake. In spite of the best efforts of such dedicated men as Harold Monro, in spite of the fact that almost all the cognoscenti were convinced of an imminent burgeoning of poetic talent in late 1912, the general public still remained by and large either ignorant of or indifferent to the claims of the new generation. By his artful and pre-eminently successful direction of the reception of *Georgian Poetry* I Marsh took the first significant step toward making modern poetry popular. And thereby he began the transformation of the Georgian revolt into the Georgian revival. As orders for *Georgian Poetry* I poured in to the offices of the Poetry Bookshop at a rate which surprised Marsh and even Monro, sceptical critics and well-wishers alike were forced to admit with pleased surprise that there existed an audience for poetry the extent and size of which had hitherto been underestimated, if not unsuspected, by all but the most optimistic. The sales of *Georgian Poetry* I were the first tangible evidence that the fact of a poetic renascence had finally impressed itself upon the public consciousness and that there existed a sizeable public whose poetic tastes had not stopped with Tennyson or Dowson. One cannot but agree with Arundel del Re's judgment: without Marsh's efforts in behalf of his anthology in late 1912, "poetry would have scarcely been able to regain its rightful public position among the arts, or to preserve it through the war crisis and afterwards."28

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28 *SEL*, XII, 465.
The sales of *Georgian Poetry* went astonishingly well from the very first. According to a pre-publication agreement between Marsh and Monro, the profits from this volume—and from all successive volumes too, as it turned out—were to be evenly split, half going to the Poetry Bookshop and half being divided among the contributors. Marsh himself received no fee as editor. Monro kept all the accounts and at approximately six-month intervals transferred to Marsh's hands the half of the profits due the contributors. It was then Marsh's happy duty to divide that sum—eagerly, one presumes—among the contributors. Such an arrangement, informal as it was, had obvious advantages for Edward Marsh, for it kept him in touch with his poets in perhaps the pleasantest of ways, as dispenser of checks. By mid-July, 1913, *Georgian Poetry* had reached a sixth edition. By the end of 1913 the volume had gone into a ninth edition, and by the first of May, 1914, into a tenth (though Monro was forced to report to Marsh at this time that the ninth edition had sold rather more slowly than the previous eight). The number of editions is a slightly misleading way to reckon the popularity of *Georgian Poetry* I, however, for Monro was guilty of what he himself called "bibliographical insincerity."

Referring unquestionably to *Georgian Poetry* II, and probably to the first volume as well, Monro wrote Marsh that it was "a trade secret" that several editions were printed at once.

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29 Marsh, *A Number of People*, p. 326.
30 Stringer, p. 129.
31 Harold Monro to E.M., May 12, 1914, MLC.
Asking Marsh not to noise the fact around, Monro added, "I am rather ashamed of doing it, but under present exceptional circumstances anyway, it seemed absolutely necessary." He suggested that in the future such "bibliographical insincerity" be avoided by having inserted in Georgian Poetry I "seventh thousand" and in Georgian Poetry II "fourth thousand," as he said, "these figures being nothing shameful anyway". This practice was approved by Marsh, and notation of edition numbers henceforward disappeared from Georgian Poetry I and II.

If Georgian Poetry, in Marsh's phrase, "went up like a rocket," it was by no means so short-lived. By 1916 the first volume had reached its eighth thousand, and by January, 1920, it was in its thirteenth thousand (the second volume being in its twelfth thousand and the third in its eleventh). Only in late 1921 did Monro report that for the first time Georgian Poetry I was showing a slight deficit, a state of affairs which could not have been very long-lived, for in the same letter he recorded an order just received from a rather unusual source. The Indian Army Education Office had just written to inquire whether it was still possible to order one hundred copies each of all four volumes of the anthology! By mid-1922 all four of the volumes published to that time were once again showing

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32 The "exceptional circumstances" were the acute paper shortage brought on by the war, a situation which Monro continually fretted over during negotiations preceding publication of G.P. II and to which he alluded several times in his correspondence with Marsh during this period.

33 Harold Monro to E.M., Dec. 12, 1915, MLC.

34 Chapbook, II (Jan. 1920), 11.

35 Harold Monro to E.M., Nov. 26, 1921, MLC.
a good profit. 36

As Marsh estimated in 1939, in the final reckoning, *Georgian Poetry* I sold 15,000 copies. *Georgian Poetry* II, published in November, 1915, was even more successful: it sold 19,000 copies. 37 During the short years in which these two volumes were published the new Georgian age had emerged from its tentative springtime into a brief but fruitful summer. For better or worse, with the publication of Edward Marsh's first volume the new age became self-conscious in wide measure. The very title of the anthology and a most judiciously phrased preface were enough to convince a reading public already well prepared for the fact that a poetic renascence was at hand. Even those later critics who see in *Georgian Poetry* only a réchauffé of Victorian verse are forced to admit not only that the anthology was "warmly supported by the public," but also that the first volume was a poetic turning point. Only following its publication, one of them wrote, could it justifiably be claimed that "in general acceptance, the age was a poetical one." 38

The contributors to *Georgian Poetry* I were to a man astonished and delighted at their financial return from the venture. None of them, with the exception of Brooke, had even remotely guessed at the size of the profits that would fall to them. Rather, most of them, one suspects, shared in the beginning Masefield's initial pessimism. And so it was with

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36 Harold Monro to E.M., June 30, 1922, MLC.
37 Marsh, A Number of People, p. 329.
38 F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 62.
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a pleased and almost incredulous surprise that they wrote to
thank their benefactor at Gray's Inn for the checks that started
coming their way, as if Edward Marsh had brought off a feat of
magic—which indeed he had!—in making money from poetry. As
James Stephens wrote upon receiving a check, the anthology
had broken not one but two records, "first, in getting to a
6th edition, and, second, in paying its contributors." "The
latter," he added, "does seem like a forecast of an overdue
millennium."39 John Drinkwater was more constrained. "I
congratulate you most warmly," he wrote, "on the splendid
success" of Georgian Poetry I; "we are all your grateful debtors.
Your venture has put a good livery once again on patronage."40
W.H. Davies was more direct. He declared candidly that the
volume had succeeded "far beyond my reckoning."41 And D.H.
Lawrence wrote from Italy, "That Georgian Poetry book is a
veritable aladdin's [sic] lamp. I little thought my Snapdragon
would go on blooming and seeding in this prolific fashion. So
many thanks for the cheque for four pounds, and long life to
G.P."42 Even when the initial wonderment had worn off, the
continuing popularity of Georgian Poetry I was nothing short
of amazing to most of its contributors. As Marsh's checks
continued to reach them several times a year, a few of the
poets were moved to estimate the total of their receipts from
this single volume. "I should think by now," Walter De la Mare

39James Stephens to E.M., July 14, 1913, MLC.
40John Drinkwater to E.M., May 6, 1913, MLC.
41W.H. Davies to E.M., July 12, 1913, MLC.
42D.H. Lawrence to E.M., Jan. 24, 1913, MLC.
told Marsh in late 1916 or early 1917, "my small contribution to the 1st G.P. has brought almost as much...as 'S[ongs] of C[hillhood],' 'Poems,' and 'The Listeners' in volume form together." No small achievement indeed! Perhaps W.H. Davies most succinctly summed up the attitude of the contributors toward the editor of Georgian Poetry I. "You have performed a wonder," he confessed to Marsh--"made poetry pay!"44

One of the surest indices of the popularity of Georgian Poetry I was the alacrity with which other and lesser anthologists were ready to pay it the compliment of imitation. After the success of Edward Marsh's first volume the anthologizing idea quickly caught on. The corporate publication of verse became the vogue, particularly during the war years, when probably more poetry anthologies were rained down upon the heads of the British public than bombs from the Kaiser's zeppelin. Each poetic coterie seemed compelled to anthologize the efforts of its adherents: one thinks of such works as the Sitwells' Wheels, of the avant-garde Coterie, and of the countless anthologies of war poetry, most of them intensely patriotic, unspeakably maudlin, and thoroughly fourth-rate. Even as little

43Walter De la Mare to E.M., undated, MLC. Internal evidence dates this letter sometime shortly after publication of G.P. II (i.e., late 1915 or early 1916), for De la Mare wrote, "I hear from Monro that the 2nd volume is doing even better" than the first. Unfortunately, in his letters to E.M. De la Mare, like all the rest of the Georgians, estimated his gains from G.P. only in such general terms as these. It is therefore quite impossible to determine from MLC how many £. s. d. the anthology brought in to any one poet. Information of this kind is undoubtedly contained in both the Marsh papers owned by Mr. Hassall and the Poetry Bookshop accounts in Mrs. Monro's possession.

44W.H. Davies to E.M., Mar. 4, 1916, MLC.
as six months after the publication of *Georgian Poetry* the imitators were at work. By mid-1913 Marsh began receiving letters from many of his poets noting the fact that they had been approached by other anthologists apparently on the strength of their having been chosen for *Georgian Poetry*. The extent of the anthologizing boom can be estimated by a letter from James Stephens, who wrote, "There seems to be a number of anthologies in preparation just now; whether your magical 6th edition is responsible for them or not I don't know, but I am contributing to three and have refused to contribute to ten"!  

Another interesting, if short-lived, result of the popularity of *Georgian Poetry* I must be noted: an increase in the popularity of the Poetry Bookshop. Doubtless owing to Edward Marsh's efforts and connections, *Georgian Poetry* quickly became the dernier cri among the rich and leisured of London society, who began in 1913 to look in on the Bookshop in increasing numbers. Though Monro could scarcely have objected to an increase in sales, the new clientele must continually have ruffled the stubbornly maintained Bohemian atmosphere of his Bookshop. Nevertheless, once begun, the embarrassment of riches continued, and for a few months in 1913 "the grubby urchins who played hopscotch in Devonshire Street saw more smart cars than they had ever seen before in their lives." But the novelty wore off, and the Poetry Bookshop soon reverted to its less affluent habitues, students from the University of London, readers from the British Museum, and enthusiastic but penurious

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James Stephens to E.M., July 14, 1913, MLC.
clerks spending a lunch hour browsing among the poets.46

It is unclear whether, when Edward Marsh published Georgian Poetry I in 1912, he considered the volume a one-time venture, or whether, even at that date, he envisioned it as only the first in a series of anthologies. In view of his immediate aim of popularizing the work of modern poets, perhaps the former assumption is the more likely. The immediate success of his first volume, however, clearly posed an opportunity which Marsh could not overlook. It is inconceivable that the idea for a second volume should not have occurred to Marsh himself, but even if it had not, the prompting of the contributors to volume I would have led him seriously to consider it. Sturge Moore, for instance, was in all probability doing no more than putting Marsh's own musings into words when he wrote Marsh in January, 1914, wondering "whether a collection like the G.P. might not be possible periodically."47 Obviously a second Georgian Poetry was not only a possibility but for Edward Marsh a happy duty.

Certainly by May, 1914, and probably several months before, the decision to publish Georgian Poetry II late in the year had been taken. Plans were far enough advanced by this time that Monro and Marsh could discuss the granting of American publishing rights for the forthcoming volume.48 By the middle of July the task of selecting poets to be represented in the new volume was evidently well under way, for Marsh was receiving suggestions, mildly solicited, from his poets about new faces

46Del Re, SEL, XIV, 38
47Sturge Moore to E.M., Jan, 21, 1914, MLC.
48Harold Monro to E.M., May 12, 1914, MLC.
for *Georgian Poetry* II. An American poet was at least momentarily considered for inclusion, as both Wilfrid Gibson and Lascelles Abercrombie attempted to convince Marsh in mid-July, 1914, that the work of Robert Frost ought to be printed in *Georgian Poetry* II. The campaign came to nothing, for Marsh excluded Frost, apparently on the grounds of his not being British. Toward the end of July Marsh was also experiencing a difficulty unusual in the history of the early volumes of *Georgian Poetry*: two poets who demurred at inclusion of their work in the forthcoming volume. For reasons unknown Ford Maddox Hueffer declined to permit his "Heaven" to be reprinted in *Georgian Poetry* II; and John Masefield entirely declined, in the beginning, Marsh's request for poems of the past two years. Masefield's reasons are clearer than Hueffer's. In the first place, much of his work of the period under review was shortly to be published in a new volume, and he refused to risk decreasing the potential sales of that volume by publishing any of the same poems simultaneously elsewhere. In the second place, he argued, his best works of the period were long poems which he might wish "at some future time to revise, cut or suppress.... I feel that a writer ought not to print long poems in anthologies, for this reason, that his doing so, gives them

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49 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., July 18, 1914; Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., July 15, [1914], MLC.
50 Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., July 15, [1914], MLC. His opinion having been requested by E.M., Abercrombie criticized an unnamed poem by Hueffer. On the margin of the letter in E.M.'s hand appears the notation, "About Heaven by Ford Maddox Hueffer, wh. I wanted to put into Georgian Poetry. Hueffer refused."
51 The volume concerned was *Philip the King and Other Poems* (London, 1914).
from his control into other hands, where, in spite of the utmost good will on both sides, it may be impossible for him to correct or annul if the wish arise. I am very sorry to be disobliging to you, and to be out of such distinguished company, but with so small a body of work to choose from, and the other quite cogent reasons always in one's mind, I'm afraid I must stand aside.52 This absolute refusal did not stand long, for Marsh's persuasive powers soon softened Masefield to the point where he at least offered two of his "antique lyrics" (as he called them) first published in 1911 and 1912, for the forthcoming anthology. But Marsh could not convince Masefield that there was no essential difference between publishing one's poems in volume form and in an anthology. Against Marsh's most urgent persuasions he remained firm.53

A little less than two weeks after the argument was settled on Masefield's terms, all such disputes became suddenly and entirely irrelevant. On August 4, 1914, England went to war. Georgian Poetry II was indefinitely postponed. The initial impact of the war was no less stunning upon the Georgian poets than upon the average British citizen. In the first weeks many of the poets gave way to a pessimism over the future of poetry which was shortly to prove unfounded. The Poetry Bookshop would immediately have to close its doors, Monro reported. "Everything else" except the war "has sunk into silly insignificance," he wrote; "'business' has absolutely stopped." Perhaps

52John Masefield to E.M., July 20, 1914, MLC.
53John Masefield to E.M., July 22, 1914, MLC.
by next spring, he predicted, a second volume of Georgian Poetry could again be considered, but for the moment it was out of the question. Lascelles Abercrombie, far removed from the Bohemian atmosphere of Devonshire Street in his rural haven in Ryton, Dymock, nonetheless felt much the same spirit as Monro. "My occupation is gone, as completely as if it never were," he wrote Marsh. "God knows if anything will turn up. Meanwhile, I try to write poetry, which seems ridiculous fiddle-faddle these terrific times." And W.H. Davies wrote much more matter-of-factly though in the same vein: "The arts are out of the question now, and I don't expect to have anything in the magazines--with the exception of a war-poem accepted by the Westminster--until all the trouble's over. Of course you can't publish a second G.P. now...."

But there is no evidence that Marsh himself abandoned the idea of publishing his second volume. Rather he notified his poets merely that publication had been postponed. Marsh expressed nothing but the most cordial agreement with such of his contributors as Wilfrid Gibson, who argued that even if Georgian Poetry II were to turn out to be an unsuccessful venture it should eventually be published for two reasons: "I think it essential to do all we can to keep our flag flying during this triumph of barbarism. And, at the least, the more reasonable diversions people have just now the better."
And so the eventual appearance of *Georgian Poetry* II was virtually assured, though in the case of the second volume at least the biennial pattern of the series would have to be abandoned in favor of a triennial. If the postponement were to be too long, one of the contributors facetiously predicted to Marsh, "I expect it'll have to come out as 'Wilhelmian Poetry'!" 58

After the first few months, despite all the early pessimism, the war perceptibly quickened the demand for poetry. The "Business as Usual" signs which began appearing in windows of London tradesmen also apparently expressed the attitude of the poets. As the *Times Literary Supplement* reported in 1917, the prewar "frenzy for poetic composition" continued to "sweep through the country without abatement" during the beginning war years, a fact which "shows certainly that the love of letters in this country is not weakening, but was never more alive." In 1915 that journal had received 265 volumes of "original verse" for review (excluding anthologies, one presumes), but in 1916 that figure had leaped to 335. 59 The Poetry Bookshop failed to bear out Monro's gloomy predictions, for by mid-1915 it was serving more patrons than it had during its first year—though perhaps their cultural competence left something to be desired (e.g., the enthusiastic lady who inquired of Monro which poets would be "incarcerated" in *Georgian Poetry* II. Monro added, not unkindly, "She looked unhappy

58 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Aug. 23, 1914, *MLC.*
By mid-July, 1915, Marsh had decided to publish his second volume the following November even though he had received only three months before the most grievous blow of his life: the death of Rupert Brooke in the Aegean. The book was in a very real sense Marsh's first memorial to his friend, the dedication being to both Brooke and Flecker, who had also died (though of natural causes) in early 1915. The Georgians were delighted at positive word from Marsh on the resumption of the series, not only because of possible personal gain from a new volume, but primarily because they agreed in large measure that the time was propitious to strike a second blow for the cause of modern poetry. "Apart from my own personal interest," one of them wrote, "this does seem the one moment, while Rupert Brooke and Flecker seem still almost here, for a G.P. that would gather up the past and open out to the future, and I feel that if it is issued in the coming months it might have a drive and an urgency that would not be the same for a postwar publication." Even Monro, naturally more cautious and more familiar with publishing conditions than his editor, agreed that the volume ought to be published in November. In fact, one of the contributors to the volume, W.H. Davies, declared that it was Monro who persuaded Marsh to bring it out at that time, though such an assumption appears unlikely.

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60Harold Monro to E.M. Sept. 29, 1915, MLC.
61Gordon Bottomley to E.M., July 27, 1915, MLC.
62W.H. Davies to E.M., Aug. 31, 1915, MLC.
The pre-publication chores in the late summer of 1915 were comparatively light because most of the necessary decisions had been made the previous year, before the interruption of the war. By September 5 the volume was virtually ready to go to the printer; by mid-October the printer was at work on it. Wartime vicissitudes seem to have intervened less than might have been expected. One finds Monro fuming at one point that proof sheets were held up because a compositor had been removed from his task as midwife to the muse to set up type for a front-page advertisement for the Daily Mail! Said Monro, "They couldn't have made a more ugly excuse." But the volume appeared precisely on schedule in November, 1915. The only visible Doubting Thomas among contributors was James Stephens, who commented sourly to Marsh some four months after the volume had been published, "I doubt if your second book will break records like the first—the times are out of joint." He proved an extremely poor prophet. Georgian Poetry II not only duplicated but surpassed the triumph of its predecessor. By the end of March, 1916, the volume had sold almost 4,000 copies, and Monro had ordered a reprint of 3,000 in anticipation of even larger sales. He was not disappointed. Both the semi-yearly accountings which he rendered Marsh and an astounding total sale of 19,000 copies reinforce the assertion that Georgian Poetry II, poetically superior by far to any of the other four volumes, was also the most popular. "If there

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63 Harold Monro to E.M., Oct. 14, 1915, MLC.
64 James Stephens to E.M., Mar. 4, 1916, MLC.
65 Harold Monro to E.M., Mar. 21, 1916, MLC.
is ever a 'quotation' for English poetry on the market-place again," Gordon Bottomley wrote Marsh, "I shall always hold that it has been your doing; but beyond that, I and all your filial Georgians must always be grateful to you for your invention and happy daring that have found so many new-ways-in-one for our work to make its appeal." 66

66 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Jan. 23, 1914, MLC.
CHAPTER 6

GEORGIAN SUMMER

From the historical point of view Georgian Poetry I and II are both of a piece; their differences are largely differences in degree, their similarities inherent and fundamental. The poems in both volumes were essentially products of the prewar temper, even though the second was not published until fifteen months after the outbreak of war. Georgian Poetry II of course had first been prepared for publication in November, 1914, and the selection of poems and poets had been all but completed by August, when war had intervened.

There is no evidence to suggest that the book which finally appeared in November, 1915, was in any essential respect very much different from the one Edward Marsh had planned fifteen months earlier. To the contrary, the twelve poets whose work was the strength and sinew of the first volume remained in the second: Abercrombie, Bottomley, Brooke, Davies, De la Mare, Drinkwater, Flecker, Gibson, Lawrence, Masefield, Monro, and Stephens. Five peripheral poets whose work had appeared in Georgian Poetry I were excluded from II. G.K. Chesterton, Sturge Moore, and Sir Ronald Ross, having served Marsh's purpose by lending a note of respectability and tradition to the chorus
of new voices, were not to be found in *Georgian Poetry II* because, as Marsh explained, "they belong in fact to an earlier poetic generation, and their inclusion must be allowed to have been an anachronism." Edmund Beale Sargant and Robert Trevelyan were not represented in the second volume because, Marsh charitably observed, "they have published nothing that comes within its scope."¹ Only two new names appeared in *Georgian Poetry II*, Ralph Hodgson and Francis Ledwidge.

It seems reasonable to expect, moreover, that an anthology which purported to exhibit the best achievement of British poetry from 1913 through 1915 might have contained a fair sprinkling of war poems. But *Georgian Poetry II* ignored the war almost completely. Turning its pages, one sees almost no evidence that fifteen months of war had even slightly ruffled British poetic sensibilities. Among the fifty-two poems and two poetic dramas which appeared in *Georgian Poetry II*, only three poems dealt directly with the subject of war, Brooke's "The Soldier," Drinkwater's "Of Greatham," and Flecker's "The Dying Patriot."² By the calendar of *Georgian Poetry II* the time was still early 1914.

From the critical point of view *Georgian Poetry I* and II also appear remarkably similar. Though the pattern is far clearer in 1915 than in 1912, both volumes were cut from the same cloth. Taken separately, to be sure, *Georgian Poetry I*

¹"Prefatory Note," G.P. II.
²Gibson's "The Going," a short poetic tribute and farewell to Rupert Brooke, might possibly be added to this category.
appears tentative, even random. There is certainly no evidence in it alone which would lead one to doubt Edward Marsh's disavowal of any intention in 1912 "of founding a school, or tracing a course for Poetry to follow." Between the covers of Georgian Poetry I was poetry to satisfy a wide range of tastes: a fragment of Chesterton's Ballad of the White Horse; the first part of Sturge Moore's Sicilian Idyll, as "traditional" a bit of verse as one could wish for; two of Flecker's symbolic poems in the Parnassian tradition; Abercrombie's "Sale of St. Thomas" and Bottomley's "End of the World," both excellent examples of the new realism; Lawrence's "Snapdragon," an emotionally charged poem which blinds by a fine excess; Davies' finely chiselled nature lyrics; or De la Mare's "Listeners" and "Arabia," haunting evocations of the far-away and the strange. In view of such diversity, one can readily believe that Marsh's "sole and simple object," as he said, "was to provide a means by which writers whose work seemed to me to be beautiful and neglected might find a hearing from the reading public--to get the light out from under the bushel." 3

With the benefit of hindsight, however, one comes to see that in spite of its apparent lack of direction, Georgian Poetry I had sufficient homogeneity to act at least as "a symptom and a rallying point of the new tendencies" in prewar verse. 4 But it is only from the vantage point of 1915, with Georgian Poetry II in hand, that one can recognize where these "new tendencies" were leading, for in Georgian Poetry II,

3 A Number of People, p. 322.
far from being altered, several of the themes which had been only tentatively suggested in the first volume were reinforced and made more clearly evident. Taken together, then, *Georgian Poetry* I and II afford some evidence for claiming the existence of a specifically "Georgian" poetic.\(^5\)

As many a critic has discovered, however, the word "Georgian" is treacherous, for, among other difficulties, the term must be applied to an uncomfortably large number of very different poets. How can one meaningfully claim that the verse of both Walter De la Mare and John Masefield is "Georgian"? Moreover, as the history of the first two volumes of *Georgian Poetry* suggests, in the beginning at least, Georgianism was not a poetic "movement" at all. It was "not created artificially," as del Re remarked, "by the deliberate acceptance of narrow technical articles of [poetic] belief." There were no Georgian manifestoes. "The term 'Georgian' indicated an attitude more spiritual than intellectual."\(^6\) And so one is suspicious when a critic like Herbert Palmer draws up a list of fourteen specific canons by which he believes "Georgian" poetry can be defined. Among other Georgian traits he lists: restraint of diction; avoidance of archaic diction like "thee" and "thou," "o'er" and "ta'en"; avoidance of the obscure, bizarre, or vernacular;

\(^5\)Obviously the term "Georgian," as it is used here and will be used in subsequent chapters, has a more restricted meaning than heretofore (cf. Chap. 1). Here I am beginning to use the adjective not in its merely generic or temporal sense, but to describe specifically the work of those poets chosen for representation in *G.P.* I and II. Much of the present chapter is devoted to explaining what is implied, in this restricted sense of the word, by "Georgian" poetry. One more distinction in terms yet remains to be made below. Cf. "Neo-Georgian," Chap. 7.

\(^6\)Sel., XIV, 33-34.
avoidance of symbolism; avoidance of national or patriotic themes; rigorous eschewal of "all verbal cheapness and facility"; and emphasis on nature and country life. Unfortunately, major exceptions can be pointed out to each of these canons; the definition of "Georgian" is nowhere near so precise or so neat as Palmer would make it. As Edward Marsh wrote in rebuttal, in drawing up such a formidable list of canons Palmer "pays my lucidity and my purposefulness a compliment which they do not deserve." If it is to be defined at all, the term "Georgian" must be placed in a far less rigid—and even less literary—context than Palmer's, for from 1912 to 1915 it connotes not so much a poetic coterie as a state of mind held in common by poets of utterly divergent aims and methods. It describes "an attitude more spiritual than intellectual."

What did it mean, then, to be "Georgian" in 1912-1916? It is not begging the question to answer simply, in the first place, it meant to be "modern." For Georgian Poetry I and II were clearly children of their age—just as clearly as Blast, the Catholic Anthology or Des Imagistes. However tepid and old hat they may appear to a later generation, in their own place and time they were deemed fresh and exciting precisely because they were thought to share many of the "new tendencies" of the prewar poetic renascence. They shared, for example, that sense of spiritual buoyancy common to most of the poets of Left and Center. They had "left behind," they thought, "the paralyzing skepticism that was so characteristic of many young writers

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8A Number of People, p. 322.
of the late Victorian day." They were possessed of definite beliefs about life and art; they had passions. And as one of them wrote, "any belief is better than none, and any passion is better than a languid devotion to absinthe."\(^9\)

"Good morning, Life—and all / Things glad and beautiful," cried W.H. Davies. The characteristic tone of *Georgian Poetry* I, its cohesive force, wrote D.H. Lawrence, was "a note of exultation in the vast freedom,...we have suddenly got." One sees it in poems so diverse as Abercrombie's "Sale of St. Thomas," where "the deadly sin is Prudence, that will not risk to avail itself of the new freedom"; and "Dining-room Tea," where Brooke sees

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every glint
Posture and jest and thought and tint
Freed from the mask of transiency
Triumphant in eternity,
Immune, immortal;
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and even in Masefield, who, though he "seems nearest to the black dream behind us," can still "trust the happy moments" and write,

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when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments.
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Nor was the new "exultation" to be confused with the joy which arises from desperation, the snatching at golden moments only because nothing gold can stay. "There is no 'carpe diem' touch," Lawrence wrote. "The joy is sure and fast. It is not the falling rose, but the rose for ever rising to bud and falling

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to fruit that gives us joy. We have faith in the vastness of life's wealth. We are always rich.... There is no winter that we fear."¹⁰

Again, the Georgian poets shared with all the "modern" prewar poets the conviction of standing at the beginning of a poetic renascence. While freely admitting that their age had no Wordsworth, no Tennyson, no one poetic luminary sui generis, still most Georgians, critics and poets alike, agreed in the main with one of their number who claimed that "for mass of good work fit for the anthologies and produced by many hands I do not see any age since the Elizabethan which can compare with ours."¹¹ The very appearance of Georgian Poetry I, to say nothing of its astutely phrased preface, was confirmation enough in the eyes of many observers that something new and vital was stirring the poetic air in late 1912. And its immediate success convinced all but the most skeptical. There were a few who, even after the demonstrable success of Georgian Poetry I, remained unconvinced. The poetic renascence was in fact too well organized to seem entirely genuine or spontaneous, they argued; it smacked too much of a stunt and was based on synthetically stirred-up enthusiasm.¹² There were also those who did not entirely share Edward Marsh's confidence in either the new age or the new verse, who pointed out that no quantity

¹²Mel Re, SEL, XII, 465.
of "good work fit for the anthologies," however new, could make up for a certain lack of quality. The new poetry, "like everything else in the democratic age, seems to be more remarkable for extent and size than for distinction," wrote one of them. But such Jeremiahs were the exception. Even when Georgian Poetry II was published, in November, 1916, there is no evidence that the war had as yet caused many Georgian readers, critics, or poets to question the continuance of the poetic renaissance. Indeed, Edward Marsh's second volume, wrote one reviewer, affords fresh evidence of the vitality of the new poetry. It demonstrates again that the modern reader of poetry will no longer "tolerate shams, travesties, sentimentalism," that he will require "directness of expression and...simplicity of diction.... Our modern poetry, to satisfy our inmost cravings, must be simple, direct, musical, filled with a love of the beautiful and a hatred of the ugly." Confidence in a renaissance, a new surge of creative energy in poetry, marks the spirit of the times into which both Georgian Poetry I and II fell, as it marks the spirit of the volumes themselves.

To be "Georgian" in 1912-1915 meant also to share in the prevailing anti-Victorianism of the age. When Ezra Pound claimed in 1912 that "modern" poetry must "move against" Victorian "poppycock"—that it must no longer "try to seem

forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot," must have
"fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it," and must be "direct, free from emotional slither"—he was speaking not only for the Leftist poets but for most of the Georgians as well.  The Georgians too resolved to liberate their poetry from what they considered the two major nineteenth-century vices: Victorian lushness—the "cult of the decorated adjective," as Richard Aldington called it—and fin de siècle enervation. This resolve was reflected in the tone, form, and diction of much Georgian verse.

Contemporary critics accepted the anti-Victorian tone of Edward Marsh's first two volumes almost as a matter of course. One of them even argued that *Georgian Poetry II* had bent over so far backwards in its attempt to escape odious Victorian flaccidity that it had become "Futurist." To see Futurism in *Georgian Poetry II* is to carry its anti-Victorian proclivities to absurd extremes. Robert Bridges rather more correctly analyzed the real nature of the Georgians' anti-Victorian bias while at the same time pointing out the principal danger it posed to the new poets. "I do not wish to criticise," he wrote Marsh after having read *Georgian Poetry I*, "but I may say that I think I am mainly sympathetic with the psychological tendency of the 'school,' which is generally, I suppose, a

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15*I* (1912), 76.
16*,* *Land and Water*, Dec. 4, 1915, p. 17. Absurd as the accusation may sound, one nevertheless recalls the assertion of Mayakovsky regarding the wide generic use, or misuse, of the term by 1916: "Futurism has died as a particular group, but it has poured itself out in everyone in a flood. Today all are futurists." See above, p. 59.
reaction against intellectualism. As far as a new moral position is deduced from this, I feel that the necessity of its being subordinated to aesthetic beauty is in danger of being lost sight of. I feel sometimes as if I were being reminded of post-impressionists' pictures. You know however that I am not opposed to novelties and that I welcome any assault against dead conventional bondage. Bridges made no mistake. In its time and place Georgian Poetry I was an "assault"—albeit a polite one—"against dead conventional bondage." It was also an implicit "reaction against intellectualism," against the kind of "intellectualism" displayed in Marius or the "Conclusion" to the Renaissance, and which had produced the infirm verse of the 'nineties.

The anonymous reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement remarked much the same tone in Georgian Poetry I, though he chose a different way to describe it. In view of their obvious diversity, he observed, the only basic, cohesive trait by which the Georgian poets might be defined was their common revolt against the enervation of letters in the fin de siècle. For the first time in many years, as Georgian Poetry I demonstrated, poets had again become the active shapers of experience, not merely delicately tuned receivers of impressions. Modern poetry will be something more than a passive record of subtle impressions and ephemeral emotions. It will be a product of spiritual and mental activity. It will be written from out of experience imaginatively seized and moulded; it will be reality

\[17\] Robert Bridges to E.M., Feb. 6, 1913, MLC.
not merely recorded, but given meaning and direction. Poets were again trusting their heads, not their hearts, the reviewer claimed: "A poet who is afraid to use his brains seems nowadays to be as rare as was a poet twenty years ago who trusted anything but his sensibilities.... The desire, however wild its aim may be at first, to clarify and shape experience, rather than set receptivity awaiting its impact, promises more for poetry than the power of writing now and then an exquisite lyric."18

The revolt against late-Victorian tediousness was reflected not only in a Georgian tone but also in a characteristic Georgian form: the dramatic poem, "the dramatic handling, in some form or other, of life and character."19 Almost all the Georgians were intent upon restoring drama to poetry. Several also attempted to restore poetry to the drama. It is no accident that in the work of such Georgians as Abercrombie and Bottomley the verse drama was revived in the prewar years, for the Georgian temper was essentially dramatic. Victorian and fin de siècle verse, as many Georgians thought, had been written too exclusively for the study; it had been allowed to become too cerebrated, too nearly inert. Poets of the modern world "must decide whether they are writing for the stage or the study," cried Harold Monro; they cannot do both. He left little doubt about which kind of poetry he preferred: "Poets of the modern world! write us plays, simple, direct, dependent for their beauty, not on outward decoration, but on inward force of the

18TLS, Feb. 27, 1913, p. 81.
19Loc. cit.
spirit that convolves them." The verse play gets "closer to 'life'" than the prosaic drama currently in fashion, claimed Lascelles Abercrombie, because the prose play seeks primarily to "diagnose the diseases of life, and suggest cures...putting...problems--economic, moral, sociological--into concrete and impressive form." The aim of drama is not thus to inform or to preach, but to "intoxicate" us into a heightened consciousness of "spiritual reality,...emotional reality." Only by using poetry can drama assert its "fundamental power...of forcing us into a state of astonishment--astonishment that glows to perceive with unexpected force that terrific splendid fact, the fact that we do exist." Poetry on the stage is "the alcohol to which the human organism answers with an intoxication of sense, mind, and emotion, bringing them into a unity of triumphant and delighted self-consciousness...."

Even when not writing specifically for the stage--and only a few of them did--the major Georgian poets habitually wrote dramatic verse. In Georgian Poetry I, Rupert Brooke's "Old Vicarage, Grantchester" and "Dining-room Tea" are conceived within the framework of a dramatic situation skillfully woven into the fabric of each poem. Walter De la Mare's "Listeners" and "The Sleeper" depend for their ultimate effects largely upon the reader's awareness of a small, suggestive, though fully imagined, dramatic situation. Wilfrid Gibson's "Devils' Edge" and "The Hare" are more fully developed pieces. Long narrative-dramatic poems phrased in the first person, they

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20PR, I, 132.
21PR, I, 112-116.
both relate one episode in sequence from beginning to end. Lascelles Abercrombie's "Sale of St. Thomas" is an even more apt example. In conception it is a rudimentary poetic drama, with one setting and three characters who converse in poetic dialogue. It also poses a specific dramatic problem: shall St. Thomas carry the Gospel to India in spite of his fear of the land and of the barbarities practiced upon foreigners? In more general terms, Thomas' problem is the problem of Everyman: shall one face life guided by prudence, or shall he, "Knowing the possible, ...try beyond it / Into impossible things, unlikely ends"? Thomas decides upon the prudent course but as an ironic result, is immediately sold into slavery. The stranger who buys Thomas speaks Abercrombie's characteristically Georgian theme:

Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear; Easily may a man crouch down for fear, And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face The hailing storm of the world with graver courage. But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin, ... For this refuses faith in the unknown powers Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all Their inspiration of strange eagerness To a judgment bought by safe experience; Narrows desire into the scope of thought. But it is written in the heart of man, Thou shalt be no larger than thy desire.

The tendency toward dramatic poetry was even more pronounced in Georgian Poetry II. In addition to short dramatically conceived poems like those which had appeared in the first volume, Georgian Poetry II contained two full-fledged poetic dramas, Abercrombie's "End of the World" and Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife." That Georgian Poetry I and II should have shown such a marked predilection for dramatic poetry was not simply
a matter of individual poetic temperament nor even of Marsh's
taste. Dramatic poetry was rather, one feels, the natural
result, in the realm of form, of the Georgians' self-conscious
attempt to escape as thoroughly as possible from the poetic
enervation of the late-Victorian age.

Another facet of the Georgian revolt against Victorianism
is to be discerned not so much in tone or form as in poetic
diction. The Georgians were by no means such extreme innovators
as the Imagists or the Futurists, but in diction they showed
themselves to be blood relatives to their more extreme con­
temporaries. Or so, at least, many of the observers of the
time took them to be. Not that all the young poets in Georgian
Poetry I and II wrote in an identical style; but whether the
poet was De la Mare or Masefield, Davies or Brooke, common to
most of the Georgians was an attempt to achieve truth of diction.
They consciously contrived to write in the accents of common
speech while at the same time avoiding for the most part an
unattractive and unpoetic flatness. In spite of its un-Georgian
"ere" and "doth," Davies' "Days Too Short" caught a moment of
perfection in words as simple and uncomplex as the experience
itself.

When primroses are out in Spring,
And small blue violets come between;
When merry birds sing on boughs green,
And rills, as soon as born, must sing;

When butterflies will make side-leaps
As though escaped from Nature's hand
Ere perfect quite; and bees will stand
Upon their heads in fragrant deeps;
When small clouds are so silvery white
   Each seems a broken rimmed moon—
When such things are, this world too soon,
For me, doth wear the veil of Night

(Georgian Poetry I, p. 60)

Wilfrid Gibson caught for an instant the ironic juxtaposition
of poverty and beauty in the modern city in language (and
images) which precisely fitted his theme.

Geraniums

Stuck in a bottle on the window-sill
In the cold gaslight burning gaily red
Against the luminous blue of London night
These flowers are mine: while somewhere out of sight
In some black-throated alley's stench and heat,
Oblivious of the racket of the street,
A poor old weary woman lies in bed.

Broken with lust and drink, bleary-eyed and ill,
Her battered bonnet nodding on her head,
From a dark arch she clutched my sleeve and said:
'I've sold no bunch to-day, nor touched a bite...
Son, buy six-penn'orth; and't will mean a bed.'

So blazing gaily red
Against the luminous deeps
Of starless London night,
They burn for my delight:
While somewhere, snug in bed,
A worn old woman sleeps.

(Georgian Poetry I, p. 106)

Walter De la Mare could not only capture the sense of the strange,
touched even by the macabre in such poems as "The Listeners" and
"The Mocking Fairy," but was also capable of the utmost sim-
plicity of diction.

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

("Full Moon," Georgian Poetry II, p. 82)

As Henry Newbolt wrote in reviewing Georgian Poetry I, the Georgians almost to a man eschewed "pretty" poetry. They have "no temptation to a false and embarrassing aesthetic.... They express themselves, and seem to steer without effort between the dangers of innovation and reminiscence.... They speak in tones so natural, so characteristic, and so flexible that the reader may easily fail to note the degree of mastery implied." Prettified, insincere, or archaic diction is finally dead: "That eighteenth-century dodo, the pseudo-Miltonic Diction, with its half-bad varieties, has made a long struggle for existence, but it would seem to be extinct at last.... The new English is to be one with life itself: to slip like running water over rock, sand, or weed with the same swift adaptability but with ever-varying sound." In their diction, as Newbolt observed, many of the Georgians were successfully reviving one of the primary articles of the preface to Lyrical Ballads. The secret of their diction was an open one; it was "their birthright, inherited from those predecessors who from Wordsworth and Coleridge onwards have worked for the assimilation of verse to the manner and accent of natural speech." 22

To be Georgian in 1912-1915, then, connoted several things. It meant to be "modern," in the sense that the Georgian shared

with most prewar poets the prevailing spiritual euphoria and the confidence that poetry was being infused with a new, vital release of creative energy. It meant also to be anti-Victorian, to write poetry which, in tone, form, and diction, was free of both fin de siècle weariness and Victorian "painted adjectives." But above all, Georgianism in 1912-1915 was synonymous with realism.

Poetic realism was the one feature which distinguished Georgian Poetry I and II from other contemporary anthologies and which gave the Georgians their most nearly unique hallmark. As it was exemplified in Georgian Poetry I and II, realism connoted two qualities, the first a state of mind in the poets themselves, the second a technique of writing verse. As a state of mind among the Georgian poets, realism came to mean primarily anti-sentimentalism. As a technique of verse writing it came to mean the inclusion in poetry of details, however nasty, which presumably possessed truth to reality as it was perceived by the five senses.

Georgian Poetry II stirred up a critical storm because of the alleged coarseness and brutality of some of the selections Marsh chose for inclusion; but although many critics in 1915 were shocked, they could scarcely have been surprised, for Georgian Poetry I had already pointed the way. In early 1913 the Times Literary Supplement had taken the Georgians to task for their "affected and self-conscious brutality"; and using almost the same words, J.C. Squire had observed that the chief tendency of the first volume "seemed to be...toward the realism, sometimes informed with a conscious brutality, of Mr. Masefield,
Mr. Gibson, and Mr. Abercrombie. "Biography," the Masefield poem Marsh chose for his first volume, certainly contained no "conscious brutality," but here and there in a flashing scene one sees the realist's eye—in the description of London, for instance:

Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old
With stinking doors where women stood to scold
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born.

Gibson's contribution, "The Hare," recounted the adventures of a young moorlands wanderer with a gypsy girl. If realism is to be described only as truth to detail or the faithful rendering of scenes from the lives of the lower classes and social outcasts, perhaps "The Hare" fits the description; but nowhere in the poem does one encounter any "self-conscious brutality."

Gibson's realism in Georgian Poetry I was rather more infused with a love of the beautiful than of the ugly, the sordid or the brutal.

Lascelles Abercrombie was perhaps the foremost practitioner of the more brutal kind of realism. In his "Sale of St. Thomas" in Georgian Poetry I Abercrombie's realism centered around several particularly repellent pictures of India. The ship's captain described the sadistic pleasure of the Indian King, for example, in this passage:

There was a merchant came
To Travancore, and could not speak our talk;
And, it chanced, he was brought before the throne
Just when the king was weary of sweet pleasures.
So, to better his tongue, a rope was bent
Beneath his oxters, up he was hauled, and fire

23. London Mercury, I (1919), 201; TLS, Feb. 27, 1913, p. 82.
Let singe the soles of his feet, until his legs
Wriggled like frying eels; then the king's dogs
Were set to hunt the hirpling man. The king
Laught greatly and cried, 'But give the dogs
words they know,
And they'll be tame.'

Or he described the fate meted out to missionaries like St. Thomas in this passage:

Another stranger
Who swore he knew of better gods than ours,
Seemed to the king troubled with fleas, and slaves
Were told to groom him smartly, which they did
Thoroughly with steel combs, until at last
They curried the living flesh from off his bones
And stript his face of gristle, till he was
Skull and half skeleton and yet alive.

But the passages which called greatest attention to themselves
were those in which Abercrombie described the flies of India,
for in them it became apparent that the poet was using realistic
detail with "self-conscious brutality," for no well defined
artistic effect, that is, but rather simply for its own sake.

And flies! a land of flies! where the hot soil
Foul with ceaseless decay steams into flies!
So thick they pile themselves in the air above
Their meal of filth, they seem like breathing heaps
Of formless life mounded upon the earth; ...
I abhor flies,—to see them stare upon me
Out of their little faces of gibbous eyes;
To feel the dry cool skin of their bodies alight
Perching upon my lips!

Georgian Poetry II brought the issue of poetic realism to
a head. The tendency toward disagreeable descriptions of animal
life begun by Abercrombie continued. In a poem which managed
to be extremely effective in spite of its realism, Ralph Hodgson
described a wild bull, deposed leader of a herd, awaiting death
at the edge of a jungle lake.
Pity him that he must wake;
Even now the swarm of flies
Blackening his bloodshot eyes
Bursts and blusters round the lake,
Scattered from the feast half-fed,
By great shadows overhead.
And the dreamer turns away
From his visionary herds
And his splendid yesterday,
Turns to meet the loathly birds
Flocking round him from the skies
Waiting for the flesh that dies.

("The Bull," Georgian Poetry II, p. 142)

And into an otherwise unobtrusive long poem Wilfrid Gibson managed to inject a mildly revolting description of camels. A deformed, crippled stableman was given the lines:

And then consider camels: only think
Of camels long enough, and you'd go mad—
With all their humps and lumps; their knobbly knees,
Splay feet, and straddle legs; their sagging necks
Flat flanks, and scraggy tails, and monstrous teeth.
I've not forgotten the first fiend I met:
'Twas in a lane in Smyrna, just a ditch
Between the shuttered houses, and so narrow
The brute's bulk blocked the road; the huge green stack
Of dewy fodder that it slouched beneath
Brushing the yellow walls on either hand,
And shutting out the strip of burning blue:
And I'd to face that vicious bobbing head
With evil eyes, slack lips, and nightmare teeth,
And duck beneath the snaky squirming neck,...
I felt that muzzle take me by the scruff,
And heard those murderous teeth crunching my spine,
Before I stooped—though I dodged safely under.

("Hoops," Georgian Poetry II, pp. 121-22)

Most of the attack and parry, however, centered around the two verse plays that the volume contained, "End of the World" and "King Lear's Wife." The former had been published in early 1914 in the second issue of New Numbers, but the latter was published for the first time and even given the place of honor in Georgian Poetry II. Most of the objections to Abercrombie's "End of the World" were directed not so much to the poet's use
of realism per se as to its artistic irrelevancy and the
apparently deliberate brutality of Abercrombie's conception.
Such passages as that in which one of Abercrombie's rustics
described how frogs were crushed under cartwheels seemed only,
as D.H. Lawrence said, "nasty efforts at cruelty."

When I was young
My mother would catch us frogs and set them down,
Lapt in a screw of paper, in the ruts,
And carts going by would quash 'em, and I'd laugh.
And yet be thinking, 'Suppose it was myself
Twisted stiff in huge paper, and wheels
Big as the wall of a barn treading me flat!'

(Georgian Poetry II, p. 200)
The objections to Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife" were of much
the same order: the brutality was too deliberate, too conscious.
The clearest evidence of this tendency lay in the corpse-
washer's song Bottomley had inserted at the end of his play.
The body of Hygd, Lear's queen, lay newly dead on a bed at the
front of the stage. Two women, one young, one elderly, were
assigned to lay out the corpse for burial. While the younger
woman straightened the Queen's feet, tied them together, and
knotted the hair, the elder sang a particularly revolting
parody of the nursery song "A Frog He Would a-Wooing Go":

A louse crept out of my lady's shift—
Ahumm, Ahumm, Ahee—
Crying 'Oi! Oi! We are turned adrift;
The lady's bosom is cold and stiffed,
And her arm-pit's cold for me.'

'The lady's linen's no longer neat;'—
Ahumm, Ahumm, Ahee—
'Her savour is neither warm nor sweet;
It's close for two in a winding sheet,
And lice are too good for worms to eat;
So here's no place for me.'
The louse made off unhappy and wet;—
Ahumm, Ahumm, Ahee—
He's looking for us, the little pet;
So haste, for her chin's to tie up yet,
And let us be gone with what we can get—
Her ring for thee, her gown for Bet,
Her pocket turned out for me.

(Georgian Poetry II, pp. 41, 42, 47)

Not that Marsh had been without warnings that in publishing such plays he was likely to bring the critical roof down on his head. When "End of the World" had been published in New Numbers, from the Gulf of Spezia had come a blast from D.H. Lawrence that might have served to make Marsh more cautious had he not possessed such complete faith in his own poetic tastes. "The other day I got the second 'New Numbers'," he wrote Marsh. "I was rather disappointed because I expected Abercrombie's long poem to be great indeed. I think I have never seen him at worse advantage than in this quarter. And it's no good your telling me Lascelles' 'End of the World' is great, because it isn't. There are some fine bits of rhetoric, as there always are in Abercrombie. But oh, the spirit of the thing altogether seems mean and rather vulgar." Lawrence's objections were precisely those which Marsh was to hear again and again after Georgian Poetry II was published: in conception Abercrombie's poem was crude; it was full of realism which was merely nasty and deliberately brutal.

No, but it is bitterly disappointing. He who loves Paradise Lost, must don the red nose and the rough-spun cloak of Masefield and Wilfrid. And you encourage it--it is too bad.... I hate and detest his ridiculous imitation yokels and all the silly hash of his bucolics; I loathe his rather nasty efforts at cruelty, like the wrapping
frogs in paper and putting them for cartwheels to crush; I detest his irony with its clap-trap solution of everything being that which it seemeth not; and I hate that way of making what Meredith called Cockney metaphors:—moons like a white cat and meteors like a pike fish.

But Abercrombie's most serious disability was not merely artistic; it was spiritual. He was afflicted with a sickness of soul, Lawrence declared, which had made his poetic creations "cheap and wicked."

What's the matter with the man—there's something wrong with his soul. Mary and the Bramble and Sale of St. Thomas weren't like this. They had a certain beauty of soul, a certain highness which I loved:—though I didn't like the Indian horrors in the St. Thomas. But here everything is mean and rather sordid, and full of rancid hate. He talked of Sons and Lovers being all odi et amo. Well, I wish I could find the 'amo' in this poem of his. It is sheer odi, and rather mean hatred at that. The best feeling in the thing is a certain bitter gloating over the coming destruction. What has happened to him? Something seems to be going bad in his soul.... The feelings in these late things are corrupt and dirty. What has happened to the man?24

Marsh chose to ignore Lawrence's prophetic criticism and persisted in publishing not only "End of the World" but also the even more controversial "King Lear's Wife." There is every evidence that he published the latter not because he thought it in any sense an anthologist's duty to do so, or because he thought that it might be unusually popular, but simply because he admired the play and was more enthusiastic about it than about the work of any other Georgian poet--Brooke excepted--in the whole history of the anthology. Upon reading the play for the first time in April, 1914, he even felt impelled to

24D.H. Lawrence to E.M., May 24, 1914, MLC.
send the poet a telegram of praise. Bottomley wrote in reply, "I pirouetted on a velvet-pile for several hours after your telegram came; and when your letter came I was still more excited and happy to know that you think so well of my play." Immediately upon reading it Marsh had set about devising means of getting the play on the boards in London, and he approached both Granville Barker and Basil Dean as possible producers. But above all he was eager to distinguish his anthology by printing the play within its covers, to which end he offered Bottomley a double share of the profits which would normally have accrued to him if the poet would permit publication of his play for the first time in Georgian Poetry II. Bottomley could but gratefully accept.

The war put a stop to Marsh's efforts to have the play produced in London, however, and the premier production of "King Lear's Wife" eventually took place in Birmingham on September 25, 1915. John Drinkwater, who in 1915 was assisting Barry Jackson with the Birmingham Repertory Company, had obtained Bottomley's permission to produce the play in the summer of 1915. A foregathering of Georgian poets was planned to celebrate the production. Though Marsh proposed to join the group, he was kept in London by official business. Bottomley, Abercrombie, and Gibson were on hand, however, and knowing Marsh's consuming interest in the play, each poet wrote him in some detail about the performance. Without exception each declared himself greatly impressed. The producer, Drinkwater, wrote:

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25 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Apr. 30, 1914; June 23, 1914, MLC.  
26 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Aug. 23, 1915, MLC.
'King Lear's Wife' duly made her appearance on Saturday night, and very proud I am to have been the cause of it. I only wish you could have been here.... We had a great tea-party Wednesday, with Gordon and his wife and Wilfrid and his.

You will have accounts of the performance from there and from Lascelles who comes to-morrow, but I know your keenness about the play will stand another.... I feel that our people played it with greater sympathy than perhaps any other company in England could bring to it, with a great deal of beauty and without bad tricks. That Gordon and Wilfrid were delighted there is, I think, no doubt, and in work of this kind it is the opinion of the two or three that outweighs the world.27

"Lear's Wife went extraordinarily well," Lascelles Abercrombie wrote Marsh. "...its power came out in an amazing way. It seemed to me the high water mark of modern drama, apart from its lovely poetry. The interest is so astoundingly various and shifting, yet so superbly unified." But the acting was not quite up to the play. Mrs. Drinkwater as Queen Hygd "spoke magnificently," he admitted, but Margaret Chatwin's efforts as Goneril left something to be desired: "Goneril, for some strange reason, assumed the costume and the manners of an Irish washerwoman with a broken heart. I kept expecting her to break off her long speech about her hunting with—'Of course it's the drink, sir. I'm not always like this, but it's the drink comes over me: I can't put it by somehow'—or something of that kind."28

The author declared himself entirely satisfied. "We had a charming time on Wednesday," he wrote. "Mrs. John [Drinkwater] grew better and better, and I wrote to the B'hamp Dly Post to

27 John Drinkwater to E.M., Sept. 27, 1915, MLC.
28 Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., Oct. 2 [1915], MLC.
abuse it for abusing her, and Goneril was fairly adequate. I sat in a box with my feet upon purple cushions, and Lascelles and John and Barry Jackson supported me below. With an additional week's reflection he seemed even more pleased as he wrote to Marsh of how his play "had built itself up into such a rich romantic thing under John's producing hands" and of how delighted he felt that "Lascelles and Wilfrid and John were praising it so splendidly."

In spite of the fact that the poets rallied around "King Lear's Wife" in the first remarkable demonstration of a coterie spirit among the Georgians, Marsh might also have read some danger signals in their comments. The play was, to say the least, controversial from the beginning. The corpse-washer's song was too much for the stomach of the censor, who refused permission for its performance in the acted version of the play. The press notices were unanimously unfavorable. And the house was disappointingly small. "The audience loathed the play," wrote Abercrombie succinctly. Drinkwater met the obvious obtuseness of the Birmingham public with the time-honored attitude of the poet in the theater: "The houses have been bad, but that's not surprising. A 'fit audience find though few'—to do this is all the poets can yet hope to do in the theatre, but it doesn't matter. Those who do care, care very much."

Both author and producer shook off the bad press in much the same spirit as they discounted the small house. Commercial

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29 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Oct. 3, 1915, MLC.
30 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Oct. 7, 1915, MLC.
31 Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., Oct. 2 [1915], MLC.
32 John Drinkwater to E.M., Oct. 1, 1915, MLC.
failure, they argued, was virtually convincing evidence of artistic success. Drinkwater wrote:

The papers to-day are brutal and obscene, to poet and play and instigator of this event alike. No one escapes, tho' the hardest duty falls on Gordon and Kathlene [i.e., Mrs. Drinkwater]. But he had fortified her against this by writing the most lovely lyric in honour of her performance...[33] Gordon himself laughs at them out of his great beard, and I console myself by blaspheming in my loudest voice. And we are all a contented party in the middle of it all. The Censor added to our gaiety by sending horrified protests on Saturday about the louse and the lady's shift, in a letter which I have given as an heirloom for ever to the clan Bottomley.34

Though his protestations had an occasional hollow ring, Bottomley professed himself nothing but amused by his bad press. "I feel sure you will be as delighted as I have been," he wrote Marsh, "to know that Mrs. Lear is a gifted mistake, a beastly drama of blood and lust—, that it has dragged Shakespeare into the Divorce Court, and that it is an offense to all right-minded men in this time of national sorrow and mourning."35

33The "lovely lyric" is as follows:

You played my Queen as I had made her; Queenly and bitterly you played her: Where life in poetry rehearses Your poet heard you speak my verses; Your poet abiding, verse and Queening Enraptured me with my own meaning: Be Queen again, then, to learn how true My homage is to your poet and you.

The verse was addressed to Mrs. Drinkwater, and Bottomley's fraternal reference to "your poet" is of course an allusion to John Drinkwater (John Drinkwater to E.M., Oct. 7, 1915, MLC).

34John Drinkwater to E.M., Sept. 27, 1915, MLC.
35Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Sept. 28, 1915, MLC.
nently more important than the press notices was the continued respect of his fellow-Georgians. As he wrote Marsh, "The Birmingham press notices were too comic to be upset about. ... I am afraid the notices had a bad effect on the box office, and I should be sad if that made my friends there and on the other side of the brown curtain not like me any more.... But I couldn't have minded the press notices while I was seeing how my play had built itself up into such a rich romantic thing under John's producing hands, or while Lascelles and Wilfrid and John were praising it so splendidly. I felt it was a rare thing to be there with them." 36

In spite of the fact that warning signals were amply evident, then, Marsh continued his efforts to get "King Lear's Wife" produced in London. He was successful when, in May, 1916, it was performed along with Rupert Brooke's one-act play "Lithuania." Lady Tree took the role of Goneril, though the play was even more thoroughly Bowdlerized than it had been in Birmingham because, as Bottomley wrote, Lady Tree shrank "from expressing too many early British feelings." 37 The text that Marsh printed in Georgian Poetry II was unexpurgated. He not only printed the play for the first time but also gave it pre-eminent place as the initial piece of his second volume, which facts he was careful to call to the attention of his readers in the prefatory note. With a remarkable unanimity, the reviewers who did anything beyond stroking surfaces quickly centered their attacks on "End of the World" and "King Lear's

36 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Oct. 10, 1915, MLC.
37 Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Jan. 24, 1916; May 27, 1916, MLC.
Wife." The two most forthright and, to Marsh, distressing reviews appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New Statesman*.

In tone at least, the former was more a warning than a blast, a warning that the Georgian poets, who in 1912 had seemed so new, so various, and so noble in revolt, were likely to become quickly outdated. Starting in volume I as a more or less heterogeneous group of poets who had rebelled in various ways against Victorian sentimentalism, the Georgians of volume II unfortunately had become more homogeneous in attitude. Not that they had necessarily taken their revolt to an extreme, the reviewer argued; they had rather allowed it to solidify too exclusively in one mold. The excessive realism of *Georgian Poetry II*, though distasteful per se, was nonetheless a symptom that the Georgians, no longer content to rebel in their own individual ways, had fallen victim to "a mechanical reaction against the fashions of the past." They seemed to be in the first stages of hardening into a coterie. As the foremost examples of the "mechanical reaction" against sentimentalism, the reviewer cited the two verse plays. In "King Lear's Wife," he claimed, a characteristically "Georgian" convention was becoming apparent: nastiness purely and simply for its own sake.

Now undoubtedly [he argued] there are unpleasant people and horrible things in the real world, but we feel that there is too much method in Mr. Bottomley's madness. He is out to write a new kind of poetry, a poetry which is not romantic. He is not going to get a cheap effect, like Tennyson in the 'Idylls of the King,' by drawing blameless
prigs. But he does get a cheap effect by the opposite method.... He draws ugliness, as the Victorians drew beauty, for the sake of the ugliness, as if were interesting in itself quite apart from what it is made of. This is mere reaction from the notion that beauty is interesting in itself; and his King Lear is no more interesting, no more alive and growing, than Tennyson's King Arthur. He is as rigid and unreal in his own conventional baseness as King Arthur is in his conventional loftiness.

Abercrombie, the reviewer charged, achieved much the same effect in "End of the World": "He is determined above all things not to be sentimental. Not one of his rustics shall show a glimmer of decent feeling; and they too become rigid in their conventional baseness." In both poets the "fear of sentimentalism has gone so far, that [they] are determined to eliminate it even from their characters." The anti-sentimental reaction extended to Rupert Brooke too, whom the reviewer took to task for his "skepticism." Brooke, he wrote, was too adamantly "resolved not to give his heart away, not to let himself go, as if he were afraid that the universe with all its beauty might play a practical joke on him and behind it all there might be nothing." The result of such mechanical realism-cum-skepticism, the reviewer warned, was every bit as dull, wooden, and unreal as Victorian verse at its worst.58

Reviewing Georgian Poetry II in the New Statesman, J.C. Squire was a good deal more caustic. Although the volume contained more good poems than Georgian Poetry I, it suffered from the two poetic dramas. Abercrombie's play had "one or two good spots," Squire observed, but was by and large "lifeless"

58 TLS Dec. 9, 1915, p. 447.
by reason of its excessive realism and the "laboured strain and tension of the writing." "King Lear's Wife" was a far superior play ("even actable," indeed!), and "the language has a peculiar, clean, hard bite." But no amount of technical adroitness could cover up "the poverty of the main conception and the wrong-headedness of the general treatment." Because Bottomley applied realism simply as a décor, the play was in its final effect artificial: "his characters have no complexity, and one feels about the horror, not that it is a natural and inevitable growth, but that he is putting it there all the time." Squire clearly pointed out the major source of the trouble: "There is a curious similarity between the writing of several of these poets who are sick of stale beauties and clutching at the ugly and grotesque." The penchant for repellent descriptions of animals shared in Georgian Poetry II by such poets as Abercrombie, Gibson, and Drinkwater did not escape him. One does not object to realism, he wrote, even to morbidity; indeed, "anything is better than chrysolites and roses." One objects, rather, to artificiality in poetry. "An unconventionally ugly image is not necessarily illuminating, and descriptions of grotesques and gargoyles have their limitations like other descriptions. One hopes that the poetical pursuit of insects and bachtrians will not become a habit." 39

Such reviews piqued Edward Marsh perhaps more than he was willing openly to admit. His Georgians attempted to spread balm over their editor's wounded feelings, no doubt in the process giving Marsh renewed confidence that his judgment had

39 NS, V (1915), 281.
been sound in printing the two verse plays. Abercrombie defended himself vigorously against the Supplement's review: "I honestly did not know what the Times man was talking about in several things he said about me and Gordon. I thought my characters were very nice people, and I really do not believe that I am reacting against anything. Probably I admire the Victorians a great deal more than he does, and I certainly was not thinking of Tennyson when I thought out the conclusion to my play." He was also quick to defend Bottomley's play. The reviewer "is quite abysmally off the track," he wrote. "It is not simply Gordon's magnificent poetry, but just as much his profound psychology. Why ever should men and women be cut out to a certain prearranged pattern? I never read anything less like a mechanical reaction than Lear's Wife—never anything more like creation governed entirely by its own powers."  

Squire's review raised Georgian hackles even more successfully. Marsh corresponded at length with several of his poets regarding the review, and the opinions of those most directly concerned are abundantly clear. "Rupert once said to me," wrote Gibson, "that Squire didn't know a poem when he saw it—and I, naturally enough, am inclined to think the remark true."  

John Drinkwater was equally blunt: "I saw the N[ew] S[tatesman] article, but I have never had much opinion of J.C.S.'s judgment about poetry.... This is not querulous—I thought as a matter of fact that he meant to be civil to me.... 'Lear's Wife' and 'End of the World' are neither of them flawless,... but

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40 Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., Dec. 11 [1915], MLC.
41 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Dec. 29, 1915, MLC.
they are both rare works of genius, and a man like Squire ought to see it, and be damned glad that he has a platform from which he can cry out the good news. Instead of which he identifies himself with the poor journalists of the local press, who can't be expected to know greatness when it comes along; and that is a pity.\(^4^2\) Bottomley assumed the mantle of artistic aloofness. "If you don't mind" such criticism as Squire's, he wrote Marsh, "I truly don't. I am as proud as ever of my play having made its first appearance in G.P. and under your care, and as content as ever too. I never received so much misrepresentation and injustice from the critics before, but I find it easy to support in such noble company...." With a very practical eye fixed on receipts he candidly estimated the potential influence of adverse criticism: "...as long as plenty of people acquire the book the critics are spoilt of their only chance of hurting us." And he closed his letter with a historical comparison which must have made Marsh's heart glow with a spark of pardonable pride. "I suppose there hasn't been such an outburst," he wrote, "since Poems and Ballads and Rossetti's 1870 poems. That is something!\(^4^3\) The comparison is perhaps not too far-fetched.

Marsh was not content only to discuss Squire's review with his poets. His zeal for "King Lear's Wife" in particular led him to attempt to convert the reviewer himself to the beauties of modern realistic verse. All Marsh's protestations were fruitless. "Unhappily we shall have to agree to differ,"

\(^{42}\)John Drinkwater to E.M., Dec. 29, 1915, MLC.
\(^{43}\)Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Jan. 8, 1916, MLC.
Squire replied; "I don't think we do that very often about verse." But Marsh's attacks forced Squire to a cogent defense and an admirable summation of the position of a large body of contemporary critical opinion regarding Georgian realism.

Bottomley's failure with me was certainly not due to the fact that his characters were wicked people or that he himself expounded no views as to the flagitiousness of murder. My feeling was that the people weren't human; that I didn't care what happened to them.... The work in fact strikes me as a sombre and harmonious decoration pretending to be a play with people in it. Isolated pieces of just observation about human nature and destiny don't save it.

But if, when you hanker after an Art for Art's sake answer, you mean that we shouldn't be tolerant of slipshod and inaccurate workmanship merely because writers express worthy and congenial sentiments, I am wildly with you.... Really great art can't help being morally useful, but certainly the notion of teaching is the wrong one to start with. A man must start from a deep emotion in himself provoked by something in the outer or inner worlds, and express himself as nearly perfectly as he can.

Bottomley I don't feel started from anything of this sort. I feel he merely wanted to write a play, and invented some puppets to write it round, disguising the barrenness of his conception with the beauties of his execution and incidental riches of a penetrating mind.44

Obviously little more remained to be said. Marsh retired from the field, his opinions intact but his mission unaccomplished.

Marsh was perhaps not the only one who underestimated the critical storm warnings run up against Georgian Poetry II. After all, two influential groups of people seemed to agree with him: his own Georgians and the reading public. As long as the book continues to sell "the critics are spolit of their only chance of hurting us," Bottomley had written him. John

44J.C. Squire to E.M., Jan. 13, 1916, MLC; see also Squire to E.M., Dec. 29, 1915, MLC.
Drinkwater agreed: so long "as people are taking a proper interest in the book, let the goblins howl never so prettily, it's all one." That the public was taking a "proper interest" in the anthology seemed obvious; the reports from Harold Monro showed the second volume to be selling even better initially than the first. The high summer of *Georgian Poetry* was at hand. *Georgian Poetry II* seems precisely to have suited the taste of the public it was designed for. In the realism of Masefield or Brooke, Abercrombie or Bottomley, they could see tangible evidence that from out of the slough of aestheticism and languor poetry had finally come abreast of the times.

Moreover, always available to Marsh in the frequently expressed opinions of his Georgians were several other perfectly adequate—and within limits accurate—explanations for the chilly critical reception accorded his second volume. One could conjure up, as John Drinkwater did, the traditional picture of the literary critic as not only blind but also cowardly: "The attacks on G.P. ii...are, I think, perfectly intelligible. To say that a thing is very interesting, full of great possibilities and even of achievement up to a point is quite easy and comfortably safe, and this the critics could do about the first volume and still seem to be generous enough. But to say that here is a body of work by men most of whom will help to make their generation a famous one in poetry is quite another thing, needing uncommon courage, and of G.P. ii folks must either say this, or that it doesn't fulfill the promise of the other." Equally persuasive was the explanation

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45 John Drinkwater to E.M., Dec. 24, 1915, *MLC.*
46 *Loc. cit.*
offered Marsh by Harold Monro. A good press for *Georgian Poetry* II could scarcely have been expected, he argued, because by 1915 the critics had had time to pick out their favorites for inclusion in the anthology, and they reacted with hostility when those favorites were excluded. Moreover, Monro claimed, jealousy on the part of the excluded poets—jealousy which by 1915 "has had time and plenty of occasion to spring up"—also helped account for the dyspeptic reviews. In fact, he concluded, it would have been "dangerous" had *Georgian Poetry* II received the same kind of enthusiastic notices as the first volume.47

In spite of such attractive explanations there is no evidence that reviews like those in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New Statesman* were actuated by either jealousy or critical favoritism. They resulted rather from a sincere revulsion against the inartistic use of realism solely for its own sake. To the historical eye the realistic tendency which began in *Georgian Poetry* I and culminated in "King Lear's Wife" and "End of the World" in volume II is of considerable significance. From it, and from the critical battles it provoked, several observations can be made. In the first place, realism was the most prominent feature of the first two volumes of the anthology. It constituted the major claim of *Georgian Poetry* I and II to uniqueness in their own time and place; it was the one feature by which, in 1912-1915, the word "Georgian" may be most meaningfully defined. Though the poets in *Georgian Poetry* I and II shared several other attributes of the prewar

47Harold Monro to E.M., Dec. 17, 1915, MLC.
renascence with poets of the Left, it was realism, too, which, more than any other single trait, marked the Georgians as Centrists.

Again, Georgian Poetry II particularly showed evidence that the Georgian poets were beginning to copy each other. In their excessive reaction against Victorian sentimentalism, many of the poets had developed at least a common attitude; and several of their works were even remarkably similar. But it was the adverse reception of Georgian Poetry II, and more specifically of "King Lear's Wife" and "End of the World" which slowly and perhaps unconsciously began to harden the Georgians into a coterie. Given their baptism of fire when "King Lear's Wife" was presented to Birmingham, and again when Georgian Poetry II was published, the Georgians rallied to the defense of their injured comrades in a fashion which spoke well for their loyalty if not always for their taste. D.H. Lawrence almost alone maintained his poetic discrimination, but in doing so he became, as someone remarked, a Jonah in the Georgian boat. Perhaps the beginning of a coterie spirit among the Georgians can be seen to date from such a specific point as the adverse reception of "King Lear's Wife" in Birmingham in late September, 1915.

Finally, the realism of the second volume of Georgian Poetry made a considerable body of English critical opinion, if not hostile to the anthology, certainly on its guard against ever again doling out the kind of uncritical praise which it had accorded the first volume. No large segment of critical opinion was turned against Georgian Poetry at this
relatively early date, but from the advent of Georgian Poetry II on through 1922 each successive volume would have to prove itself on its own poetic merits. Never again, after 1915, was Georgian Poetry to have the clear weather that it had in the halcyon days of 1912-1915. The public could support the realistic verse of Georgian Poetry if it chose; the critics would not. From the point of view of public support, in late 1915 and early 1916 it was still high summer for Georgian Poetry, but there were unmistakable signs that a long and very lean critical winter would soon set in.
CHAPTER 7

WAR AND THE GEORGIANS

To the Georgians, as to most other English poets, the outbreak of war brought a sense of instant and devastating shock. It seemed to put a too cruel and ironic end to all their hopes for themselves, for poetry, and for humankind which had flowered so briefly and extravagantly in the prewar years. It put a final, malicious period to the time of youth. They expressed themselves differently but all to the same effect:

To people who were fifty when the war broke out it came as an interruption, however long, terrible and fraught with change. To us who were thirty or less, it came as an end. We had no careers or long associations behind us, only beginnings, first sortings and plans, discoveries of friendship. The war broke on us, destroying, invalidating. Our youth went prematurely, we were scarred before our time by the griefs of age, we had to face a new world when we were just beginning to be acclimatized to an old one. And for half of us the parting from youth was more bitter and final, for to those bones there is no return, even in imagination, to lost things; no remembering, with every pang and outline softened in the gold-dusty air of illusion, the joys and sorrows that were, and the faces, serious or laughing, of those who strayed through courts that strangers now inhabit and by streams that still so brightly and indifferently flow.1

Searching his heart and conscience during the first grim weeks, Rupert Brooke found unutterable grief and bewildering confusion. In an unusually revealing meditation the young poet mused upon the friends he had known in Germany such a few short months before, upon the great "primitive abyss of hatred and lust for blood" which is war; and he could find no hatred in his heart, only pain. He found a deep abiding love of England, her fields and hills, her peaceful homes, her lovely quiet beauty hallowed by time. But he found no fervent patriotism. He could only conclude half-heartedly, "Well, if Armageddon's on, I suppose one should be there."²

The shock did not last long. After the first numbness wore off, most of the younger Georgians plunged desperately into new work or volunteered for the armed services. Brooke himself joined the Hood Battalion and went off to Armageddon singing, "Now, God be thanked who has matched us with his hour, / And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping." Brooke was never quite so well matched with his hour as he was when he died in April, 1915, in the Aegean, for, ironically, he was to have a more pronounced effect on English poetry dead than he had ever had living. In Rupert Brooke dead for the homeland, buried on Scyros, the isle of Achilles, an English public eager for heroes saw not only the tragic archetype of youth sacrificing itself for England but also the epitome of the poet gone to war. Unconsciously Brooke had prepared the way for his own apotheosis

²NS, III (1914), 638-40. Brooke wrote the piece in the third person as the thoughts of "a friend of mine," but the opinions are quite obviously the poet's own.
in his war sonnets. "If I should die, think only this of me:...

Dean Inge quoted the sonnet from the pulpit of St. Paul's. Winston Churchill wrote a letter to the Times expressing in moving phrase the sense of national loss at the poet's death. Brooke's friends vied with each other to write poetic tributes to him, some—notably those of his close friends among the Georgians—genuinely moving, others merely banal and maudlin.

3Among Brooke's poetic peers Ezra Pound was one of the few who kept his head during the period of Brooke's canonization. Writing a hurried note to Harriet Monroe on April 25, 1915, he reported the news of Brooke's death and admitted that Brooke "was the best of all that Georgian group" (Letters of Ezra Pound, Paige ed., p. 59). Sometime early in 1914, however, he had written a small poem attacking Brooke and insinuating that the motive for Brooke's journey to the South Seas in 1914 was something less admirable than mere romantic wanderlust. He gave the poem to Wyndham Lewis for publication in Blast. Unfortunately it was published not in the first but in the second number of Blast, which of course appeared shortly after Brooke's death, at a time when the lionizing of the dead poet was at its height. At such a time it was considered by many to be in extremely poor taste. When Harriet Monroe rebuked her "London correspondent" for permitting the poem to be published, Pound defended himself. The poem had been written many months before Brooke's death, he pointed out; the second number of Blast was supposed to have been printed in December, 1914, when Brooke would still have been alive. Moreover, Pound wrote, "Brooke would have been amused at the lines, at least I hope and suppose he was man enough to have been entertained by them. If he wasn't, God help him in limbo." What Pound most strenuously objected to, however, were the maudlin attempts of Brooke's literary friends to deify the poet (and in the process to associate themselves in the mind of the public with the dead poet-hero). "Now that his friends have taken to writing sentimental elegies about his long prehensile toes," Pound wrote Miss Monroe, "it might seem time for him to be protected by people like myself who knew him only slightly." If Brooke "went to Tahiti for his emotional excitements instead of contracting diseases in Soho," Pound continued, "for God's sake let him have the credit of it. And for God's sake if there was anything in the man, let us dissociate him from his surviving friends. Something ought to be done to clear him from the stain of having been quoted by Dean Inge, and to save him from his friends who express their grief at his death by writing such phrases as (yes, here it is verbatim): 'in fact Rupert's mobile toes were a subject for the admiration of his friends!!'" (Letter to Harriet Monroe, Oct. 12, 1915, Letters of Ezra Pound, Paige ed., pp. 64-65).
And countless young subalterns fresh to the mud of Flanders from the public schools were powerfully moved to emulate their national poet-patriot hero. Almost alone, Brooke's death resuscitated the lagging poetic revival. But more than any other single event, it also opened the gates to a flood of amateur poetry from the sentimentalists, the stay-at-home patriots, and the soldier-poets with little more reason for writing than the uncontrollable urge to express themselves in verse. The result was an unmistakable increase in the quantity of verse published but an equally unmistakable decrease in the quality.

From the first only a handful of poets and reviewers were taken in by the deluge of patriotic verse which the war loosed upon England. To be sure, five months after the outbreak of war a reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement could still claim that the war was exerting a beneficent effect on British verse because it had made poetry "more impassioned and more manful." "There was plenty of poetry" before the war, he wrote, "but not much of it seemed the fruit of profound emotion and passionate exaltation. It may sound strange at the moment that by a monstrous brutality spirits should be finely touched and to fine issues; yet it has proved true of war and poetry in the past, and may prove true in the near future." Harold Monro was more realistic. One month after the war had begun, he declared bluntly, "The sentiment of patriotism has never produced much poetry. Modern warfare will be likely to produce less." The best that could be said was that the "emotions encouraged by war" sometimes "stimulate poetry, but they do

*TLS, Jan. 7, 1915, p. 4.
not necessarily produce it, and in a civilised age they will more probably be revealed after than during the event." At the same time J.C. Squire protested in the name of poetry the flood of shoddy patriotic verse the first month of war had produced.

What is wrong with most of these patriotic versifiers (he wrote) is that they start with a ready-made set of conceptions, of phrases, of words, and of rhymes, and turn out their works on a formula. Put England down as 'knightly,' state her honour to be 'inviolate' and her spirit 'invulnerable,' call her enemies 'perjured' and branded with the 'mark of Cain,' refer to 'Trafalgar' (which has always done good service as a rhyme to 'war'), summon the spirits of Drake and Grenville from the deep, introduce a 'thou' or two, and conclude with the assertion that God will defend the Right—and there's the formula for a poem....

The critics also withstood the temptation to confuse poetry and patriotism in reviewing the anthologies of war poetry which began to appear as early as October, 1914. Writing in the *Egoist*, John Gould Fletcher scathingly dismissed one of the earliest anthologies pretentiously entitled *Poems of the Great War* (1914), demolishing in the process some of the most sacred names of contemporary English poetry, Watson, Newbolt, Binyon,

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5 *PD*, II (1914), 250.

6 *NS*, III (1914), 737. Not long after this time Squire also wrote a short poem satirizing the manner and matter of the stay-at-home amateur poets who habitually published in the editorial pages of the daily press. Appended to a letter to E.M. (Apr. 16, 1915, *MLC*), the poem read:

O to be in Flanders
Now that April's there
Where the water's drying up in the trench
To make more room for the summer stench
With General Joffre and Marshall French
In Flanders now.
Noyes, Chesterton, and Bridges. In December, 1914, the Egoist also published what must surely have been the earliest satiric poem to come out of the war. Written by "Herbert Blenheim," it made exquisite use of the very meter, versification, and diction of the correspondence-column poets:

Song: In Wartime

At the sound of the drum,
Out of their dens they come, they come,
The little poets we hoped were dumb,
The little poets we thought were dead,
The poets who certainly haven't been read
Since heaven knows when, they come, they come
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.

At the sound of the drum,
O Tommy, they've all begun to strum,
With a horrible tumty, tumty tum;
And it's all about you, and the songs they sing
Are worse than the bullets' villainous 'ping,'
And they give you a pain in your tumty-tum,
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.

At the sound of the drum,
O Tommy, you know, if we haven't all come
To stand by your side in the hideous hum,
It isn't the horrors of war we fear,
The horrors of war, we've got 'em right here,
When the poets come on like waves, and come
At the sound of the drum, of the drum, drum, drum.

Critics like Fletcher and Squire were perhaps a short step ahead of their time, but by mid-1915 the triviality of most wartime verse had become apparent to all but the most obtuse.

By July the Times Literary Supplement had experienced a change

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7 Egoist, I (Nov. 2, 1914), 410-11. See also a review of a second war-poetry anthology by Fletcher written two weeks later in which he attacked, among others, Kipling and De la Mare (Egoist, I (Nov. 16, 1914), 424-26).

8 Egoist, I (Dec. 1, 1914), 446. I have been unable to penetrate the pseudonym, though I suspect the deft hand of Richard Aldington. At any rate, the matter is scarcely crucial.
of heart. Far from repeating its earlier claim that the war had produced poetry which was "more impassioned and more man­ful," a reviewer could now grant that to date most war poetry had been unspeakably shoddy: "With a few exceptions, rhetoric and invective, loftiness of aim and an inadequate expression of it, have been the mark of the verse that has been poured out in such abundance." It is not in the fires of war but "in the peace that is surely coming that poetry, we may hope, will renew its youth." But the wartime reading public was not to be deterred from its plunge into bathos. By mid-1916 book-sellers were reporting that the public was eagerly buying slender volumes of works by the less well-known poets, especially if the authors had been killed in action. Unfortunately, "the spectacle of 'whom the gods love' dying young has always fasci­nated mankind," wrote J.C. Squire; and in spite of the best efforts of critics, reviewers, and professional poets, the public was apparently eager to sentimentalize over "these memories of promise unfulfilled, ambition frustrated, high hopes and ardent passions effaced at a breath."^9

One of the effects of the first two years of war, then, was to quicken the poetic revival which had begun in the prewar years. But the war also worked a change upon the essential character of the prewar renascence. It created a large body of amateur would-be poets, in and out of uniform; and it created an emotional culture in which the virus of bad popular verse could multiply apparently unchecked. But the spirit of the

^9TLS, July 1, 1915, p. 217.
^10NS, VII (1916), 377.
times was perhaps only partially to blame. Faced with a wartime paper shortage, publishers liked the notion of small volumes at high prices and so encouraged talk of the poetic revival. And literary critics in their editorial armchairs told the public so frequently that it was manifesting a "revived interest in poetry" that the public began to believe it. By 1916 there were still prophets abroad in the land to cry shame on their times, "a few obstinate people who," as Douglas Goldring wrote, "declined to allow their critical faculties to be chloroformed by popular sentiment, who continued to believe that although death on the field of battle might gain for the hero instant admission to Valhalla, it was not necessarily a qualification for Parnassus. Such ironsides clung to the notion that it is quality, not quantity, which makes a golden age in literature." But they were prophets without influence. Even in late 1915 and 1916, and certainly by 1917, when Edward Marsh began to contemplate the possibility of a third volume of Georgian Poetry, there seemed some danger that the serious work of professional poets would be swept from public view by the flood of puerile rhymes from public school subalterns and patriotic effusions from armchair patriots and bloodthirsty old ladies from Bath.

But poetry--serious, professional poetry--was not to die so easily. To be sure, the wartime efforts of the older generation, whose reputations had been established before the war began, were almost universally third-rate. From the pens

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of such poets as Watson, Hardy, Bridges, Noyes, and Kipling only a handful of war poems seem worthy of recall: Hardy's "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'," "The Pity of It," and "A Christmas Ghost Story"; Noyes' "Victory Dance" and "The Wine Press"; and perhaps Kipling's "Nativity." In fact, many of Kipling's excursions into war poetry were so feeble and archaic in both matter and manner that a practical joker was able to hoax the Times into publishing a burlesque of them in good faith that the poem had been written by Kipling himself. ¹² But fortunately the work of the older generation did not come within the purview of Georgian Poetry. And so when Edward Marsh set out to edit Georgian Poetry III in mid-1917, he had before him the work of three significant groups of younger poets from which to choose. First, there were Marsh's "regulars," the poets who had formed the hard core of the first two volumes, men like Bottomley, Davies, De la Mare, Hodgson, or Monro. Then, there were the war poets. This group comprised the poets in uniform, men like Graves, Rosenberg, Nichols, and Sassoon, who were even younger than Marsh's original contributors—second generation Georgians, so to speak, whose serious work could scarcely be denied admission to an anthology published in the midst of wartime. Finally, there was a considerable group of new, young stay-at-home poets just beginning to emerge into some prominence in the middle war years. Contemporaries of the Graves-Sassoon-Rosenberg group, for one reason or another most of them had not put on the uniform by mid-1917. Though

¹²Goldring, Reputations, p. 112.
cast in a rather different vein from the work of either the Georgians or the war poets, their work seemed promising enough to entitle them to a hearing. This group was composed of men like Turner, Freeman, and Squire. Since part of Marsh's aim in publishing *Georgian Poetry III* was to demonstrate that in spite of the war English poetry was continuing to put on "new strength and beauty," he would obviously have to choose verse representative of at least these three groups.

Good poetry is not a luxury in wartime, but a necessity, wrote the author of a leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1915. "The best things of life, all that is generous and beautiful, and unearthly and endurable, are things of peace.... And poetry keeps them in remembrance. It is itself the naked impulsive expression of them." Such a statement expresses the most characteristic attitude of the Georgians toward the rôle of poetry in wartime. By mid-1917 none of the poets in Marsh's first two volumes had turned his talents exclusively to war poetry, and only two had even published a volume of predominantly war poems. John Drinkwater's *Swords and Ploughshares* (1915) was only mediocre; far more considerable as war poetry was Wilfrid Gibson's *Battle* (1915). The majority of the Georgians turned their backs on war as a direct subject for poetry and preferred to keep alive the art of poetry in wartime by writing resolutely peacetime verses. In keeping before the eyes of wartime England the values of peacetime, the work of such poets as De la Mare, Lawrence, Davies, and

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Hodgson made in its own way an indirect but devastating commentary upon the degradation of the human spirit in war. And it was perhaps the more effective because it was more subtle than the hammer blows of the patriotic versifiers.

The most impressive poetry in Georgian Poetry III was to come, however, not from the Georgian regulars, but from the second group represented in the volume, the soldier poets. In late 1913 many young poets still in their 'teens, and thus belonging to a poetic generation even younger than that which had been enshrined in Georgian Poetry I and II, had sought the advice and friendship of Edward Marsh. He had befriended them in many ways and had given unstintingly of his advice and experience in poetic matters. When war came these poets—Graves, Sassoon, Nichols, Rosenberg—were among the first to go. Fortunately, they corresponded frequently with Marsh, and in letter after letter written from the trenches of France, they recorded how the essential personality of the poet was preserved amid the gigantic impersonality of war. As early as 1915 and 1916, long before Sassoon's ultimate burst of white-hot anger in Counter-Attack or Wilfred Owen's quintessential statement of the tragedy and pity of war, the letters to Edward Marsh gave evidence that the initial upsurge of patriotism as expressed by Rupert Brooke or Julian Grenfell had worn off. Months of first-hand contact with the brutality of trench warfare had effectively dispelled whatever noble notions the soldier-poet may have begun with. The problem of the poet in the trenches in the middle war years was far more basic: how
was he to manage to keep alive at all a poet's awareness of a spiritual world or a sensitivity to the unremembered beauties of this world upon which the creation of any poetry ultimately depended? The letters to Edward Marsh show how the impossible was achieved.

The young Graves perhaps best expressed the keen sense of unreality which initially beset the poet in the trenches. He wrote:

I feel exactly like a man who has watched the 'Movies' for a long evening and then suddenly finds himself thrown on the screen in the middle of scalp-hunting Sioux and runaway motor cars: and rather surprised that I am not at all frightenened, and that the noise doesn't disturb me at all yet. You may disbelieve the following, but I swear to you, Eddie, it's a true bill, that a violent artillery duel going on above my dugout two nights ago simply failed to wake me at all though I was conscious of the whole place rocking but, when this had ceased, I was awoken by a very persistent lark which hung for some minutes on my platoon trench swearing at the Germans.

Even in such an environment, however, he was writing poetry, for in the next paragraph he quoted three stanzas of "a recent improvisation" which eventually turned out to be the first and the final stanzas of "A Queer Time," and he enclosed for Marsh's criticism what must have been most of the text of "The Poet in the Nursery." And then the abrupt switch from poetry back to war as Graves closed his letter:

Tomorrow we go, they say, into some trenches where we and the Boches are sitting in each other's pockets, the whole place mined and countermined, complete with trench mortars, gas, and grenade throwing parties. So now
for a little sleep.

Yours in the Muses
Robert Graves

Graves frequently found the physical dangers of war less onerous than the spiritual aridity it engendered. In a desolate, angry letter to Marsh he complained of the isolation he felt among his fellow-officers, whom he called "offensive, quarrelsome and bumptious." The fortunes of war frequently threw Graves and his friend Siegfried Sassoon together. Even in the brief intervals when they were assigned to the same battalion and when, consequently, the poetic shop-talk could have flowed freely, the two poets were inhibited by the determinedly chilly attitude of their fellow-officers toward the arts. Graves recorded the subterfuge in which the poets had to indulge in order not to seem unduly strange to their mess-mates:

S.S. [i.e., Siegfried Sassoon] and I have great difficulty in talking about poetry and that sort of thing together as the other officers of the batt. are terribly curious and suspicious--If I go into his mess and he wants to show me some set of verses he says 'Afternoon, Graves, have a drink,... by the way I want you to see my latest receipe [sic] for rum punch.' The trenches are worse than billets for privacy. We are a disgrace to the batt. and we know it: I don't know what the C.O. would say if he heard us discussing the sort of things we do. He'd probably have a fit. His saying is that 'there should be only one subject for conversation among subalterns off parade.' I leave you to guess it. It's a great standby to have S.S. here in such society.16

14Robert Graves to E.M., May 22, 1915, MLC.
15Robert Graves to E.M., Nov. 10, 1915, MLC.
16Robert Graves to E.M., Mar. 15, [1915?], MLC.
Out of such difficulty and from such an environment came Graves' *Fairies and Fusiliers* (1917). The spirit of poetry was as stubborn as the human will to create.

Sassoon too complained to Marsh of much the same kind of intellectual isolation and spiritual aridity, and from his letters emerges perhaps even more clearly than from Graves' the poet's eye for beauty and for detail which kept poetry alive in Sassoon through almost two years in the trenches.

"I have just seen Robert [Graves]," he wrote Marsh:

> his Batt'n came along and bivouacked 300 yds away. And we sat among the thistles under the cloudy night sky lit with flashes and the hidden moon, with dull stars of camp fires burning all around in the wide dark countryside—and guns booming along the valleys. And talked of how we'd go to the Caucasus, or any old place, apres la guerre, while his men snored under their piled rifles a little way off. And there he sleeps now. And tomorrow I suppose we'll both be up in the show. Germans been pushed back another mile or two they say."

Sassoon's eye for detail which was to etch the bitterness of his war poems with a distinct and unforgettable realism is clearly evident from the start.

How I long to be a painter of some skill; everything out here is simply asking to be painted or etched: it is wildly picturesque. Soldiers in barns with one candle burning, and wintry evening landscapes with guns flashing and thudding. I put 'angry guns that boom and flash' in my poem [i.e., "To Victory"], but really they flash and thud. The flash comes first, they only boom when they are very near in some valley. The other evening up in the trenches with only 20 yards of}

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17Siegfried Sassoon to E.M., July 14 [1915?], MLC.
mine craters between us and the other side, there was an evening sky overhead with all the stars on parade and the young moon in command, (on her back!) and some owls flitting across the lines. It seemed so strange, with the men ankle-deep [sic] in clay peering from under their round steel caps, very tired after a day of strafing with trench mortars and 'oil-cans,' and the rattle of machine-guns on the left in the luminous dusk.18

For Sassoon, as for all the professional soldier-poets, the writing of poetry was a serious matter to be undertaken carefully, deliberately and consciously. It was not to be achieved, as it was with so many of the amateurs, merely by allowing powerful emotions to overflow spontaneously onto a piece of paper in whatever ragged form happened to come most readily and easily to hand. Even in the midst of trench warfare Sassoon labored over his poems, corrected, inserted, emended, to bring them to as near perfection as he was able; he constantly made notes of the scenes he saw and the emotions he experienced so that the poems he would write from them later might have the ring of authenticity; he carefully stored to overflowing both his memory and his notebooks. From the inclusion of a small excerpt from one of his notebooks in a letter to Edward Marsh one gets some insight into the self-consciousness and the sensitivity of the poet at war:

I am going up to the trenches very shortly; ...and I mean to suck in all I can when I get up there. I am always trying to impress things on my memory, and make as many notes as I can. This is the usual sort of thing, but it is good training--

18Siegfried Sassoon to E.M., Feb. 10 [1916?], MLC.
'Then I rode out toward Albert with larks carolling very clear and 2 solemn black and white dogs staring at me from outside an R.E. hut on the ridge where the reserve trenches are being finished. From the slope, looking N.W. the country rises and falls, sparse—green, and drab, and brown, to a skyline of trees in tiny, delicate silhouette with occasional dark lines of woodland,—the white seams of trenches dug in the limestone, and here and there a road climbing away to nowhere, the German territory, unexplored and sinister. Albert, with 2 or 3 chimney stacks and the ruined basilica tower, shows above a line of tall trees by the river,—a medley of roofs, looking peaceful enough from far away, but in reality a town deserted and half in ruins,—in places utterly smashed. Everywhere the rural spirit has been chased away by shells and soldiers and supply sheds and everything new: the very skies have lost their once bird-held supremacy of whiteness and clarity.'

In Sassoon too the sensitivity of the poet was kept alive, laboriously, deliberately, amid the anguish and impersonality of war. Out of Sassoon's distant view of Albert, out of his compassion for his men ankle-deep in trench mud, dog-tired under their round steel caps, came To Any Dead Officer (1917) and Counter-Attack (1918).

Surely there was no more pitiable sacrifice to the stupidity of war than Isaac Rosenberg. The most promising poet of them all, Rosenberg was the least fitted of any to become a soldier. Physically a very slight man, and suffering always from fragile health, he endured unspeakable pain in the trenches from both a chronic weakness of the lungs and severe trench-foot during over two years of active service in France

19Siegfried Sassoon to E.M., Mar. 16 [1916?], MLC.
until he was killed on April 1, 1918. Temperamentally, too, he was as thoroughly unfitted for military life as any man in the British Army. To withstand the brutality of the military system required every ounce of spiritual stamina the poet could muster. Even while still training in England, he complained to Edward Marsh: "I find that the actual duties though they are difficult at first and require all one's sticking power are not in themselves unpleasant, it is the brutal militaristic bullying meanness of the way they're served out to us. You're always being threatened with 'clink'." Unlike Sassoon and Graves, Rosenberg served in the ranks and as a private soldier was forced to endure several kinds of hardships which officers were spared. Once in France, he was to meet a new form of frustration which to a poet was disheartening in extreme: "I have been forbidden to send poems home," he wrote Marsh, "as the censor won't be bothered going through such rubbish."^ 20

Though Marsh tried upon at least one occasion to use his influence toward getting Rosenberg assigned to less strenuous duties, his efforts were unsuccessful, for Rosenberg remained on arduous and hazardous duty in France. 22 Rosenberg was not often stung to anger or self-pity in his comments about his condition. The understatement with which he usually described his trials, especially those he endured during the winter months, makes some of the more angry and violently phrased letters of

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20 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated (but 1915), MLC.
21 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated, MLC.
other war poets sound almost contrived. "This winter is a teaser for me," he wrote from France, probably in early 1917, "and being so long without a proper rest I feel as if I need one to recuperate and be put to rights again." But "I suppose we'll stick it," he said; and he added almost flippantly, "if we don't there are still some good poets left who might write me a decent epitaph." Rosenberg's attitude as one sees it in his correspondence with Marsh perhaps most clearly reflected the characteristic attitude of the English poet at war, a combination of hope and despair, pride in his work and desolation over his own and the general human condition. His letters are a pastiche of comments on the future and the present, poetry and trench foot:

My sister wrote me that you have been getting more of my 'Moses.' It is hardy of you indeed to spread it about; and I certainly would be distressed if I were the cause of a war in England; seeing what warfare means here. But it greatly pleases me none the less, that this child of my brain should be seen and perhaps his beauties be discovered. His creator is in a sadder plight; the harsh and unlovely times have made his mistress, the flighty Muse, abscond and elope with luckier rivals; but surely I shall hunt her and chase her somewhere into the summer and sweeter times. Anyway this is a strong hope; lately I have not been very happy being in torture with my feet again. The coldness of the weather and the weight of my boots have put my feet in a rotten state.24

But from out of his misery Rosenberg too was creating poetry; he too was approaching the task professionally,

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23 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated [1917?], MLC.
24 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated (but envelope dated Apr. 25, 1917), MLC.
seriously, conscious that the creation of good poetry required not only the impulse but also an act of creative will and attention to manner as well as matter. More than most of the soldier-poets—Wilfred Owen perhaps excepted—Rosenberg retained a stringently critical eye toward his own verse. He worked and re-worked his war poems. "I've written some lines suggested by going out wiring," he told Marsh, "or rather carrying wire up to the line on limbers and running over dead bodies lying about." But his first effort did not impress him: "I don't think what I've written is very good but I think the substance is, and when I work on it I'll make it fine." Work on it he surely did, and he made it "fine," for in its final form it became "Dead Man's Dump," one of the most poignant poems to come out of the war. To the extent to which he was able, through volumes sent him by his sister, Marsh, and other friends, Rosenberg also kept an alert eye on the progress of poetry back in England, and his critical faculties were in no wise dulled by his condition. "Gibson's 'Battle' was sent to me and delighted me. It is as good as Degas," he wrote Marsh. "In a way it seems a contradiction that a thinker should take a low plane as he does there instead of the more complex and sensitive personality of a poet in such a situation. Most who have written as poets have been very unreal and it is for this reason, their naturalness, I think Gibson's [war poems] so fine. The Homer for this war has yet to be found—Whitman got very near the mark 50 years ago with 'Drum Taps'."26

25 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated (but envelope dated May 8, 1917), MLC.
26 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., undated, [1915?], MLC.
Perhaps the best evidence of Rosenberg's success in keeping alive within himself the spirit of the poet and the poet's ability to mould raw experience into moments of transcendent beauty is in his final letter to Marsh. Writing only four days before his death (the letter was post-marked one day after he was killed), he spoke of having been in the trenches again and of trying to write a song for the Indian troops he had met. In the draft of a new poem which he enclosed one could find no more fitting tribute to the spirit of the English poet gone to war or to the human will to create amid times of evil:

Returning, We Hear the Larks

Sombre the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison blasted track opens on our camp—
On a little safe sleep.

But hark! joy—joy—strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering our enraptured listening faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song—
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin
lies there
Or her kisses where a serpent hides. 27

It was the poets in uniform, then, who afforded the most dramatic evidence that serious poetry would not die, for they kept the spirit and the craftsmanship of the professional poet alive under the most forbidding conditions. But in addition

27 Isaac Rosenberg to E.M., Mar. 28, 1918, MLC.
to the war poets and the original Georgians of volumes I and II, by 1917 a third group of young poets also afforded Edward Marsh some evidence that serious poetry had not been lost in the flood of bad popular wartime verse. Not all the young men of the poetic generation just behind the first Georgians had donned a uniform. Some remained at home and were writing verse which, though it was of a radically different vein from the war poems of their coevals, was to gain them access to Georgian Poetry III. Their major representatives in that volume were to be W.J. Turner, John Freeman, and J.C. Squire. Freeman had published two volumes in 1916 (Presage to Victory and Stone Trees and Other Poems), Turner had published The Hunter and Other Poems (1916), and Squire The Lily of Malud (1917). As it was to turn out, their contributions were to be more significant for the future of Georgian Poetry than even those of the soldier-poets, for it was their kind of verse which came to exert the dominant influence over the last two volumes of the anthology and made Georgian Poetry IV and V markedly different from Georgian Poetry I and II. Georgian Poetry III was the watershed volume, the one in which the dividing line between the "early" and the "late" Georgian movements first becomes apparent.

Georgian Poetry III cost Marsh more effort and worry than any other volume of the series. The enthusiasm with which he had entered upon his task in 1912 and the certainty of judgment he had displayed in his choices of poems in 1915 were notably lacking in 1917. In the beginning, in fact, Marsh himself was subject to some doubts about whether the quality of the
verse published during 1916-1917 warranted a new anthology. The *Lily of Malud*, he wrote J.C. Squire, was one of the few volumes of new verse which made him contemplate *Georgian Poetry III*. Squire remonstrated with Marsh over what he considered a too negative attitude toward the new verse. "I do hope that this doesn't mean that you had thought of stopping the series," Squire wrote. "It seems to me your bounden duty to literature to go [on]--readers 200 years hence will be hunting up the Georgian Books as we do the...Miscellanies, only more so. I think there is a good deal of stuff coming--quite enough to make a book: and an enterprise like this is a great encouragement to poets who are lonely creatures, pining for encouragement...."28

Initially Harold Monro was even less sanguine than Marsh about the wisdom of publishing a new volume. When Marsh first broached the subject to his publisher in mid-1917, Monro immediately pointed out that materials would be scarce and expensive, that advertising costs had risen steeply, and that in his opinion the book trade in general would be in a slump by the end of 1917.29 Moreover, he confirmed Marsh's own doubts about the quality of recent verse. "I heard you mention 2 or 3 names," he wrote, "but I wonder if they were of people you would really want to include much of. You've been so jolly careful in the past. It would be much better to have something completely good at the end of 3 years than open to doubt for the sake of publishing one at the end of 2 years [sic].

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28 J.C. Squire to E.M., undated (but ca. June, 1917), MLC.
29 Harold Monro to E.M., June 22, 1917, MLC.
The thing I'm thinking is that only very few of the principal people represented in the past 2 G.P.'s will have published anything of value." Such old hands as Lascelles Abercrombie also questioned Marsh's decision to publish, though more mildly than Monro. "I am interested to hear that you have thoughts of a third G.P. this year," Abercrombie wrote. "Do you think the public would stand it?—But there certainly is a good deal of quite new and quite good stuff going about."31

Despite the marked lack of enthusiasm in many quarters and his own lukewarm feelings in the beginning, Marsh resolved to piece together a third volume of his anthology and announced its publication for November, 1917. He succeeded in convincing Monro not only that the volume would be financially successful but also that the new verse from poets not represented in either of the first two volumes was sufficiently promising to warrant publishing it.32 Again Marsh proved himself an astute judge of the public temper, for to Monro's amazement, by the first part of August—three months before publication—orders for Georgian Poetry III were beginning to come in to the Poetry Bookshop.33

Georgian Poetry III was different from its two predecessors in several ways. It was a book of new poets. Of the eighteen poets represented half were new, a far larger proportion than in any other volume of the series after the first one. The

30Harold Monro to E.M., June 26, 1917, MLC.
31Lascelles Abercrombie to E.M., undated (but ca. June 20, 1917), MLC.
32Harold Monro to E.M., July 26-29, 1917, MLC.
33Harold Monro to E.M., Aug. 12, 1917, MLC.
older Georgians were quick to note the change. When Wilfrid Gibson read that the projected volume would include the verse of such men as Sassoon, Rosenberg, Squire, Graves, Turner, and Freeman, he wrote that although he had to confess ignorance of most of the work of the young men, he presumed it fitting that such "old fogies" as himself should make way for newer blood. 34 And when Gordon Bottomley read the roster for the new volume, he suggested to a fellow-Georgian, tongue in cheek, that the "old" Georgians might soon find it necessary to form "a society of George the Firsts." 35

Moreover, with Georgian Poetry III Marsh appears to have altered the principles upon which he compiled his anthology. In the preface to both volumes I and II he had specifically disavowed any intention of broad catholicity. Georgian Poetry III, on the other hand, was more nearly representative of all kinds and conditions of poetry than any other volume of the series. The question is obviously one of degree, for an anthologist is not a curator. Sooner or later he must exercise personal taste; he must define limits which by their very nature are exclusive. Obviously, Edward Marsh's poetic canons would not allow inclusion of such avant-garde poets as the Sitwells, for example. But within the limits of his own taste—and at several points, indeed, by stretching his tolerance to the utmost—Marsh made Georgian Poetry III a reasonably representative anthology.

Why should Marsh's third volume have differed so greatly

34 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Aug. 1, 1917, MLC.
35 Wilfrid Gibson to E.M., Aug. 23, 1917, MLC.
from either *Georgian Poetry* I and II, or, as it was to turn out, from IV and V as well? The answer lies, one suspects, in Marsh's reaction to the critical flurry stirred up by *Georgian Poetry* II, particularly by "King Lear's Wife" and "End of the World," in which Marsh had seen only the stark beauties of the new verse, but many of the critics only striking evidence of an incipient coterie spirit. In preparing *Georgian Poetry* III Marsh went out of his way to avoid laying his anthology open again to the coterie charge.

Marsh's new-found caution was reflected in the fact that he tolerated—and, in fact, sought out—a good deal more advice in 1917 than he had in either 1912 or 1915. To be sure, on at least one occasion he turned down an unsolicited suggestion with customary firmness. When John Freeman, about to be represented in *Georgian Poetry* for the first time, suggested that *Georgian Poetry* III would be strengthened by the inclusion of some work by Edward Thomas, Marsh politely but firmly declined, probably on the grounds that Thomas was no longer living (though the work of both Brooke and Flecker had appeared posthumously in *Georgian Poetry* II). The tone of Freeman's reply was remarkable in its restraint and in the implications of what it left unsaid:

36 Though the matter is not entirely clear, a clue leading one to believe that this was in fact the reason Marsh gave Freeman to account for Thomas's exclusion is a subsequent comment by J.C. Squire that had Thomas not died he would "inevitably" have been asked to contribute to *G.P.* III (*NS*, X [1917], 188). Squire and Freeman were close friends and, by 1917, co-workers on *NS*.
I quite understand now the difficulty with regard to Edward Thomas's work. I didn't know before the principle which restricted your choice—perhaps it's unfortunate that fine work should be permanently excluded from representation. I've had the privilege of seeing probably the whole of his verse; and I only made the suggestion because as far as my own opinion might stretch or be worth anything, it would be splendid if the next Georgian book included any other new poetry of comparable individuality and power.37

But Marsh showed himself far more complaisant in other instances. He was eager to include the work of a woman poet in his third volume, and when he approached Monro for suggestions, Monro strongly urged Charlotte Mew's "The Farmer's Bride."38 Unconvinced, Marsh sought out the advice of Walter De la Mare, who responded with a frank, and negative, opinion: he found the protagonist inconsistent ("dialectical in the first stanza and literary in the last"), the rhymes "rather doubtful" in several instances, and the rhythm unsuccessful.39 Marsh was willing to accept De la Mare's estimate and the poem was excluded from Georgian Poetry III. Monro was deeply "discouraged," he wrote; "you couldn't really want any opinion seeing that you reject it in the one case in which I give it with real emphasis."40 His conclusion was unsound; in mid-1917, far from being deaf to the opinions of others, Marsh was simply giving preference to one man's judgment over another's. Marsh also solicited opinions from Monro on a tentative list of poems

37John Freeman to E.M., Aug. 5, 1917, MLC.
38Harold Monro to E.M., July 26-29, 1917, MLC.
39Walter De la Mare to E.M., Sept. 3, 1917, MLC.
40Harold Monro to E.M., Sept. 27, 1917, MLC.
and poets for the third volume, and on this occasion editor
and publisher found themselves more nearly in agreement. Monro
took issue with Marsh only over Baring's "In Memoriam, A.H."
and Squire's "Lily of Malud." 41

Marsh also showed himself unusually receptive to the re­
peated importunities of J.C. Squire on behalf of W.J. Turner.
Squire even went so far as to suggest to Marsh several of
Turner's poems which he felt "ought certainly to be in [the]
next Georgian collection," a course of action which in 1912 or
1915 would have earned for its promoter only the firmest of
refusals. 42 Nevertheless, by the first part of August Turner
had accepted Marsh's invitation to contribute to Georgian
Poetry III. 43 Squire was delighted. "I can't tell you how glad
I am you appreciate [Turner's] stuff," he wrote. "I feel he was
a discovery. His first verse appeared here [i.e., in the New
Statesman], and I have egged and egged him on." 44

But more significant than Marsh's willingness to heed
advice regarding a specific poet or poem was his willingness
to reconsider even his own basic principles of anthologizing.
In a series of letters in April, 1917—several months before
he set about seriously collecting material for his third
volume—Marsh sought to discuss first principles with his
long-standing friend Maurice Baring, absent in France with
the B.E.F. and himself an experienced anthologist. Though

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41 Harold Monro to E.M., July 26-29, 1917, MLC. In spite of
Monro's objections, both Barings's and Squire's poems appeared
in G.P. III.
42 J.C. Squire to E.M., undated (but ca. Aug., 1917), MLC.
43 W.J. Turner to E.M., Aug. 4, 1917, MLC.
44 J.C. Squire to E.M., undated (but ca. Aug., 1917), MLC.
Marsh's side of the correspondence is unavailable, he apparently placed himself in the ironic position of arguing for representative-ness, the very canon which he had specifically disavowed in the preface to *Georgian Poetry* I five years earlier. And Baring, in arguing for intrinsic poetic merit as the anthologist's lode-star, espoused the principle upon which Marsh had deliberately constructed his first two volumes. Clearly, in 1917 Marsh was suffering from a temporary failure of nerve. "I utterly disagree with you about the Gepäck," Baring wrote Marsh.

I am certain that once you begin to try and make a peerage you are lost. That is just what you must not try and do. It is impossible because the field of choice is infinite and inexhaustible, and not limited like the peerage. Once you begin to say, 'But if you have this you must have that,' you are lost. Because this is the wrong principle. And wrong because impossible: a mirage. You do not, at least I do not, want to make a *nursery garden* or a *Museum* but a nosegay (Anthologia in fact) and when you make a nosegay, you don't say, 'If you have that rose and those violets, you must have that tuberose and that gardenia or that crocus.'

It doesn't matter what you have as long as they smell sweet and are pretty. But if you try to have a specimen of every single remarkable flower you will find that your bouquet is impossibly big and in that case it is much better not to pick the flowers at all but to leave them in the garden and the conservatories.

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45Maurice Baring to E.M., Apr. 13, 1917, MLC. In this and subsequent Baring letters I have supplied occasional punctuation and capitalization for the sake of clarity. Among all Marsh's correspondents Baring was the most noticeably deficient in punctuating his informal letters.
Evan as late as July, 1917, Baring had not given up the attempt
to save his friend from the dark wood of anthological error
into which he had strayed. "Axiom applicable to all Gefäcks," he wrote, "never to be forgotten by the Gefäck maker who should
repeat it day and night. Le mieux est l'ennemi du Bien. LE MIEUX EST L'ENNEMI DU BIEN."  

Despite the fact that he did not entirely accept the
advice of Baring—and the promptings of his own better judgment
too, one feels—Marsh was never before, and never after, so
open to suggestion or so willing to compromise as he was in
1917. "Are you a little more inclined nowadays to be influenced
by other people's views or by general opinion?" Monro questioned
Marsh in mid-summer, 1917. As if unwilling to give credence to
such as assumption, he quickly added, "It may be only an idea
I've got for the moment, partly through your mentioning several
times what other people think of the poems you are selecting.
I don't see you nowadays, but I expect you are just as strong-
minded as you were about the other two [volumes]—which is the
only way."  

Monro's first surmise was more accurate than he
knew: by 1917 Marsh was something less than "strong-minded."
How else can the inclusion of such a poem as Herbert Asquith's
"Volunteer" in Georgian Poetry III be explained? His friend
Edmund Gosse attacked Marsh in a particularly vulnerable spot
in suggesting quite frankly that in the case of Asquith some-
ting other than poetic achievement entered into Marsh's choice.

"How you can bring yourself to include Herbert Asquith in your

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46 Maurice Baring to E.M., July 4, 1917, MLC.
47 Harold Monro to E.M., July 26-29, 1917, MLC.
'Georgian' passes my comprehension," wrote Gosse. "I read him forward and I read him backward, and I see nothing. If he were a Herbert Snooks... no one would ever have looked at his verses. And people say that the 'age of privilege' is passed!!"48

At least Georgian Poetry III met with no such strictures and left-handed compliments as had attended the debut of its predecessor in 1915. To most critics it seemed precisely what Marsh had intended it should be: adequate and preeminently uncontroversial. The Athenaeum gave it an uncomfortably brief dismissal, only listing the names of the eighteen poets represented and noting that nine of them were new to this volume.49 Holbrook Jackson, writing in To-day, reached the not very startling conclusion that Georgian Poetry III was proof that good poetry exists not only in the great periods of literature which scholars label and minutely study but also in the intervals between. In a sufficiently modest fashion, he wrote, the volume fills one of these intervals. "Wise anthologists know that these spaces are full of flowers, and that fame does not always come at a bound."50

In the comments of reviewers who treated the volume at greater length one finds, understandably, a remarkable diversity of opinions. Georgian Poetry III was the most difficult of the entire series to review, for it contained little to provoke discussion and even less to provoke argument. Even from the

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48 Edmund Gosse to E.M., Aug. 20, 1917, MLC.
49 No. 4626 (Feb. 1918), p. 103
50 No. 11 (Jan. 1918), pp. 197-98.
viewpoint of the conservative *Times Literary Supplement* the volume appeared too traditional, too conservative. "If this, the third book of 'Georgian Poetry' selected by E.M., be representative," the Supplement reviewer wrote,

> there is nothing in the poetry of our young writers to alarm or distress the most conservative. Not only youth, but example and, more than either, new conditions of life might offer them the excuse for impatient rejection of the established and for the playing of all sorts of pranks in the effort to get expression for their youth and their strange and violent being. And what they are found for the most part to be doing is pouring their new wine into the old bottles; or—to use a more homely and perhaps more 'Georgian' simile—thrusting their proud young feet into old boots, and finding them good to march or to dance in.

For this lack of originality the reviewer was willing to blame the times; he charitably left unspoken the possibility that it might have arisen by design on the part of Edward Marsh. "Where, in the restlessness that heralded the war strange experiments were tried and the old means were contemptuously or angrily thrown away, the new conditions, enforcing sincerity, have maintained the old ways."51

In a remarkably inconsistent review, Edward Shanks managed to straddle the fence. *Georgian Poetry* III shows "that modern inspiration has not altered appreciably since 1912," he argued. "The new-comers to the gathering have as much in common with the original contributors as the originals have in common among themselves. They show, that is to say, curiosity, restlessness,

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51 *TLS*, Dec. 27, 1917, p. 646.
Impatience, a determination to be honest and to see clearly and to avoid the use of subjects and diction which appear suitable only because they have not been used before." On the other hand, he claimed that the nine new poets represented in the volume were conclusive evidence that Georgian Poetry III marked "a break in the continuity of the series" and should therefore disprove once and for all the allegations of coterie poetry which had begun to appear in 1916.52

T.S. Eliot was more consistent. In spite of the nine new poets in the volume, he argued, Georgian Poetry III showed essentially the same tone as its predecessors. "In Georgian Poetry there is almost no crossing visible," he wrote; "it is inbred. It has developed a technique and a set of emotions all its own." What diversity there was in the volume was confined largely to such minor matters as syntax. The characteristically Georgian attitude which Eliot professed to see in all three volumes of Georgian Poetry was "pleasantness." In Georgian

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52 NS, X (1917), 280-81. In fairness to Shanks it should be added that he labored under difficulties in writing this review. By late 1917 J.C. Squire had become literary arbiter of the NS. His conservative tastes were well reflected in those of Shanks and Freeman, both of whom became, from mid-1916 on, increasingly frequent contributors to that journal. Because each had been represented in G.P. III, obviously neither Squire nor Freeman could write the review. Squire wrote Marsh on Dec. 11, 1917, "It is obviously impossible for me to puff G.P. myself this time but I tried to do my bit beforehand" (MLC). Shanks was therefore given the review but was required to work under a handicap. When Marsh wrote Shanks thanking him for the review, Shanks replied in part: "But it is really rather absurd to criticize such a book at all. No doubt you could be as destructive about it as any reviewer. We ought to recognize your difficulties more. My chief difficulty, of course, was that I was forbidden to say anything about Squire" (Dec. 29, 1917, MLC).
poetry, he wrote, "there are two varieties of pleasantness: (1) the insidiously didactic, or Wordsworthian (a rainbow and a cuckoo's song); (2) the decorative, playful or solemn, minor-Keatsian, too happy, happy brook, or lucent sirops. In either variety the Georgians caress everything they touch." It is unfortunate that Eliot chose to distort one of the secondary qualities of *Georgian Poetry* I and II under the pretext of reviewing volume III. The charge of "pleasantness" is far more easily supportable against volumes I and II than against III. Moreover, "pleasantness" was no more than a minor tendency even of *Georgian Poetry* I and II, being confined largely to such poets as Drinkwater, Stephens, Monro, and (to a much lesser extent) perhaps Davies and De la Mare. *Georgian Poetry* III was precisely the one volume of the series in which "pleasantness" was at a minimum. It is difficult to understand what Eliot found either "insidiously didactic" and "Wordsworthian" or "decorative, playful" and "minor-Keatsian" in Sassoon's bitter war poem "They":

'We're none of us the same!' the boys reply.
For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;
Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
And Bert's gone syphilitic;

or in Graves' "It's A Queer Time"; or Nichols' "Assault," a vers librist rendering of the stream of consciousness:

Bullets a stream.
Devouring thought crying in a dream.
Men crumpled, going down....
Go on. Go.
Bullets. Mud. Stumbling and skating.
My voice's strangled shout:
'Steady pace, boys!' 
The still light: gladness.
'Look, sir. Look out!'
Ha! Ha! Bunched figures waiting.
Revolver levelled quick!
Flick! Flick!
Red as blood.
Germans. Germans.
Good! O good!
Cool madness.

With several minor exceptions, the charge of "caressing" all they touched might have set well against only one of the major groups of poets in Georgian Poetry III: the Squire-Turner-Freeman school. But curiously Eliot saw fit specifically to exempt the archetypical poem of that group from his strictures. "The Lily of Malud," he wrote, "is an original and rather impressive poem which deserves better company."53

Marsh's friends were no more successful than the reviewers in discerning the real significance of Georgian Poetry III. They confined themselves largely either to innocuous congratulations or to comments on specific poets and poems which they liked or disliked. Having received the book in France, Maurice Baring admitted that his taste did not exactly parallel Marsh's. He liked the selections from Turner, Monro, Davies, Bottomley, and Hodgson; he had reservations about Squire, Sassoon, and Rosenberg. Masefield, he declared, "bores me stiff. He always has and I think always will but I think you were right to include him for variety and width's sake."54 Edmund Gosse, to whom Georgian Poetry III was dedicated, acknowledged the honor

53Egoist, V, no. 3 (Mar. 1918), 43-44. Eliot wrote this review under the pseudonym "Apteryx."
54Maurice Baring to E.M., Dec. 14, 1917, MLC.
with a potpourri of comments. He "delighted" in Turner, chided Marsh gently for not including Graves' "Fox Hunter," hazarded that Isaac Rosenberg must surely be a young Dane because "his verses are so like those which come to me from young bards in Copenhagen," called Squire's work "rather odd to be in this galère," and disagreed over the inclusion of James Stephens because "his buttermilk is getting very thin and sour." Even those poets chosen for inclusion were not universally happy at the varied company into which they had been cast. John Freeman wrote Gordon Bottomley, "I've not seen anything in the Nation on the new Georgian book. Do you refuse any personal application and agree that the book isn't very good? Much of it I can't read, or can't read with pleasure."56

Even the most acute contemporary observers could hardly be expected to have assessed the real significance of Georgian Poetry III, for its importance emerges only with historical perspective. It was the volume which marked the dividing point between the dominance of the "old" Georgians of volumes I and II and the "new" Georgians who were to become increasingly important in volumes IV and V. One may more conveniently call these two schools the Georgians and the Neo-Georgians.57

55Edmund Gosse to E.M., Dec. 12, 1917, MLC.
57The Neo-Georgian label is not my own; it has been used by other critics, though only infrequently, with the specific intent of distinguishing between Georgian poets, 1912-1917 vintage, and Georgian poets, 1917-1922 vintage. As far as I can determine, the word was first used more or less with this intent by Alec Waugh in "The Neo-Georgians," Fortnightly
**Georgian Poetry III** was the only volume of the series which comprised the work of both groups but showed the dominance of neither.

For the moment, in 1917, the ascendence of the Neo-Georgians was blocked by the war poetry of Sassoon, Graves, and Nichols. Their work, dramatic and bitter, with its emphasis on bloodshed and death, seems at first glance to put *Georgian Poetry III* squarely in the major tradition of volumes I and II. In fact, the war poetry seems to give the screw of poetic realism yet one more turn. "Channel Passage" and "King Lear's Wife," "The Everlasting Mercy" and "End of the World," seem unreal, the result only of over-wrought poetic imaginations, when compared with the firsthand observations of genuine horror in Sassoon or Nichols. In a sense, however, the young war poets of *Georgian Poetry III* can be viewed as building upon the precedent of the realists in the first two volumes—Abercrombie, Bottomley, Masefield, and Brooke. But with historical per-

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58 Some notion of the influence of Brooke on some of the younger Neo-Georgians of realistic proclivities can be derived from a comment of Robert Graves to E.M. Graves took it upon himself to speak for his entire group as he wrote Marsh: "How wrong about Rupert: we all look up to him as to our elder brother and have immense admiration for his work from any standpoint, especially his technique upon which we all build. I know it is fashionable in some low quarters now to pretend to dislike him: but nobody does really, least of all R. N[ichols], S. S[sassoon], or R. G[raves]" (Robert Graves to E.M., Mar. 18, [1918?], MLC).
spective one is compelled to look through the more immediately striking war poetry to the quieter verse of the Neo-Georgians, Squire, Turner, and Freeman, for it was this group which was to dominate the last two volumes of the series.

At least two Neo-Georgian harbingers appeared in *Georgian Poetry* III, portents which even those who run may read: Freeman's "Happy Is England Now" and Squire's "Lily of Malud." Both were representative of a large segment of British poetry which, by 1917, was attempting either to ignore or escape from the brutality of a spiritually disastrous and too-long-protracted war. Freeman's was a war poem of sorts, but it escaped from the real war of Rosenberg or Sassoon, the war of blood and mud and trench-foot, into a sentimentalized vision of war, "a meditative rusticity" which domiciled "the western front among the lanes and fields of England."  

Happy is England in the brave that die  
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers;  
Happy in those that give, give, and endure  
The pain that never the new years may cure;  
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,  
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

Perhaps Freeman's spurious view of war may be said to have had some precedent in *Georgian Poetry* II, in Brooke's war sonnets, but the precedent is shadowy. Moreover, Brooke wrote in 1914. By late 1917 a picture of England as "Happy...in the brave that die / For wrongs not hers... / Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns, / Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea," was pitifully unrealistic. Three protracted years of...
bloody, dirty trench warfare had made bitter mockery of such sentiments. Late 1917 was the age of Counter-Attack:

The barrage roars and lifts. Then, clumsily bowed
With bombs and guns and shovels and battle-gear,
Men jostle and climb to meet the bristling fire.
Lines of gray, muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in the mud. O Jesu, make it stop!

"The Lily of Malud" was even more obviously a poem of escape, though of a different kind. It turned completely away from the subject of war and as a relief from horror sought to find beauty in the exotic moon-drenched landscape of the jungle.

The lily of Malud is born in secret mud.
It is breathed like a word in a little dark ravine
Where no bird was ever heard and no beast was ever seen,
And the leaves are never stirred by the panther's velvet sheen.

It blooms once a year in summer moonlight,
In a valley of dark fear full of pale moonlight:
It blooms once a year, and dies in a night,
And its petals disappear with the dawn's first light;
And when the night has come, black small-breasted maids,
With ecstatic terror dumb, steal fawn-like through the shades
To watch, hour by hour, the unfolding of the flower.

In the cultivation of the strange and the exotic Squire was matched, and frequently excelled, by W.J. Turner, who was enchanted by the sound of the names of far-off places. Turner's "Romance" was on the first page of Georgian Poetry III:

When I was but thirteen or so
I went into a golden land,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Took me by the hand.
My father died, my brother too,
They passed like fleeting dreams,
I stood where Popocatapetl
In the sunlight gleams.

Again, there was some precedent for Squire and Turner in *Georgian Poetry* I and II, in the Eastern exoticism of Flecker's verse, or in the curious, unique blend of strangeness, beauty, and mystery in the verse of De la Mare. But again the differences appear more striking than the similarities; again the Neo-Georgians gave the screw an extra turn. Their verse seems too cultivated, too obviously unreal, their beauty too lush, too patently contrived. Poems like "Romance" and the "Lily of Malud"—and there were to be many of them in *Georgian Poetry* IV and V—are the best possible evidence of the genius of Walter De la Mare, for they demonstrate unmistakably that his poetic mood is essentially inimitable.

In leading *Georgian Poetry* down the path of the moonlit, exotic jungle the Neo-Georgians were forcing the anthology into a cul de sac. By late 1917 their misty escape poetry was an anachronism, and within the next five years it was to become even more obviously out of step with the age it lived in. The Neo-Georgians were poets of the moon; their verse was washed white with the pale beams of Diana. Compared to the best of the Georgians the Neo-Georgians are pallid, lifeless, and monotonous. And they were to take Edward Marsh's anthology eventually from the real world of men and things to an eternally moon-washed land of tropic nights. With such poems as the "Lily of Malud," "Happy is England Now," and "Romance," *Georgian Poetry* took the first step toward verse that was
increasingly trivial, unreal, and out of touch with the bloody late war years and the violent postwar period.

The decline of Georgian Poetry can be blamed directly or indirectly upon the war. The anthology began to founder, as Professor Daiches points out, when, after three years of war, it began to substitute "agreeableness" for "truth." The war had made it impossible to combine the two qualities, and "as might be expected, truth was the first to be sacrificed." The sacrifice was begun in Georgian Poetry III. But the blame cannot be placed on the war alone; it must be placed in part on Edward Marsh as well. Georgian Poetry III was not the result only of the substitution of agreeableness for truth; it was also the result of the substitution of a different principle of anthologizing. Following the principle of representativeness, Marsh succeeded not only in making Georgian Poetry III a potpourri but also in opening the gates of his anthology to new poets and new forces which were in subsequent years to exert more influence than he had bargained for. In 1912 and 1915 "Georgian" had implied vigor, revolt, and youth. After 1917 it was to imply retrenchment, escape, and enervation.

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60Daiches, p. 57.
If the years 1912-1915 can be said to have seen the high summer of *Georgian Poetry* and 1917 the solstice between seasons, with the period 1918-1922 the anthology fell upon the lean years of winter. Despite the war poetry it contained, *Georgian Poetry* III had shown some evidence that Edward Marsh's anthology was beginning to lose touch with the environment of the late war years. *Georgian Poetry* IV and V, published in 1919 and 1922 respectively, were to demonstrate this even more conclusively. But if *Georgian Poetry* itself changed character between 1912 and 1919, the literary atmosphere into which volumes IV and V were cast had changed even more drastically. Indeed, the postwar anti-Georgian reaction which began to set in about 1918 resulted as much from the temper of the times as from hostility toward the contributors to *Georgian Poetry* IV and V or resentment over specific acts of omission or commission on the part of Edward Marsh. And so to understand adequately the reasons for the decline of *Georgian Poetry* one turns temporarily from the historical account of the series to a depiction of a few of the more pertinent literary features of the postwar age. It is just as important to see *Georgian Poetry* IV and V in their proper context as it was to see *Georgian Poetry* I and II in theirs.
By 1918 many of the landmarks of the prewar poetic renascence had been swept away. Marinetti and Futurism were dead issues, historical curiosities to be conjured up nostalgically over a post-prandial glass of port as a happy memory of the uncomplicated days before the war. Vorticism, and with it Wyndham Lewis's Blast, had also passed into the limbo of half-forgotten causes of half-forgotten days. Rhythm and Blue Review had been early casualties of the war, and their editor, Middleton Murry, after serving as a reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement, became editor of the Athenaeum in 1919. In the strange, violent world created by the war new movements were a-borning, new literary high priests emerging: the Sitwells, Eliot, Huxley. Four momentous years of war had considerably changed the tone of literary London.

That is not to say that the break between the modern poetic movements of 1912-1915 and those of 1918-1922 was complete. In some respects prewar and postwar coteries appear to have differed more in degree than in kind. To be sure, by 1918 several prewar poetic species vanished without progeny, but the mutations in postwar fashions in verse produced few new movements which could not be recognized in some respect as scions of the old. New work and new personalities did not spring full-blown upon the postwar scene. It is well to be reminded, for instance, that Eliot's "Prufrock," a poem from which some choose to date the beginning of "modern" poetry, had been written before the war and had been published for the first
time in mid-1915; that his "Preludes" and "Rhapsody of a Windy Night" had been printed in the second number of Blast (July, 1915); and that although his first book of verse, Prufrock and Other Observations, had been published in 1917, most of the pieces in it had already been printed individually from 1915 to 1917, in Poetry, Blast, the Egoist, or the Catholic Anthology.¹

Moreover, a few of the same poetic controversies that had rent the air in 1912 were still being argued in the late and postwar years. Even the war failed to dampen arguments over free verse. With an air of exasperation, T.S. Eliot set forth in 1917 to slay the preposterous dragon of versa libre once and for all. As a genuine verse form versa libre was a poetic will-o’-the-wisp, he argued, incapable of positive definition: "the division between Conservative Verse, and Vera Libre does not exist, for there is only good verse, bad verse, and chaos."² Far from settling anything, Eliot's dicta seem only to have set the pot simmering again, for reviewers continued damning or praising versa libre just as if it had not been declared a fiction. One of the most consistent sufferers at the hands of the anti-versa libreists was D.H. Lawrence, whose Look! We Have Come Through (1917) received several scathing reviews because of its failure to use conventional rhythms.³

³See especially J.C. Squire in Land and Water, Jan. 24, 1918.
As late as 1919 Lawrence himself re-entered the controversy with a series of arguments in favor of free verse which precisely echoed those he had championed so eloquently in correspondence with Edward Marsh in 1913. 4

The Poetry Bookshop not only survived the war but also extended its influence into the postwar years. But in comparing the prewar and postwar activities of the Bookshop and of its founder, Monro, one begins to see evidence of the changed tone of postwar literary London. Monro and the Bookshop were perceptibly drifting away from the poetry and poets of the Center toward those of the Left. 5 Poetry readings had continued at the Bookshop during the war on a more or less sporadic basis even while Monro was absent in military service. By mid-1919, however, the readings had once again become weekly events, and the readers were chosen increasingly from among the more controversial and experimental poets of the Left. 6 Monro performed an even more valuable service to postwar poetry by a series of informal parties which he inaugurated in the spring

5 *To-day*, no. 10 (Dec. 1917), p. 133.
6 Among them was Vachel Lindsay. It is to be hoped that the boom in Lindsay's poetic reputation among English poets during 1919 and 1920 may soon become the subject of a detailed investigation, for such a study might lead to interesting conclusions regarding his influence upon British poetry of the 1920's. Meanwhile there is tentative evidence that General William Booth Enters into Heaven (1913) and the Congo (1914) were "discovered" by Robert Nichols during a trip to America in 1919. When Nichols trumpeted his new-found discoveries to the British literary world, Lindsay's work became the dernier cri for several years among some avant-garde circles. Among the enthusiasts in 1919 and 1920 were, apparently, such strangely diverse poets as Masefield and Yeats.
of 1919. Ostensibly intended to launch his new periodical, the Chapbook, these parties achieved much more by affording poets torn from their art by war a pleasant means of becoming reacclimated to the London literary world. As one poet who attended them testified, "They formed a meeting place for old friends who had lost touch with one another during the war years, as well as providing those who frequented them with opportunities of making new acquaintances. Almost everyone who had ever published any verse turned up at them." It was at these parties, too, that the new literary alliances of the postwar era began to take shape and the new battle lines began to form, for over a glass of Monro's wine "warfare between the Left Wing literary rebels and the 'stuffed shirts' of the Establishment, who had formed themselves into a racket and controlled most of the postwar reviewing, was carried on with enormous gusto."  

Perhaps the Chapbook affords the clearest evidence of Monro's swing toward the Left. In all, Monro edited forty issues of the Chapbook from July, 1919, to July, 1925. It appeared regularly as a monthly journal for approximately the first two years of its life, but by early 1922 it had run into financial difficulties and from that time until its demise in 1925 was published irregularly, apparently whenever the material warranted or the spirit moved Harold Monro. The sub-title of the first number was "Poetry and Drama, New Series," and Monro's prospectus announced that it "replaced" Poetry and Drama, which had suspended publication at the end of 1914. But even a

most cursory comparison between the poets who habitually contributed to the Chapbook and those whose work had formed the backbone of Poetry and Drama suggests some major differences in emphasis and tone in Monro's two journals. The Chapbook reflected the postwar literary scene just as Poetry and Drama had reflected the prewar. The contributors to the very first number tell something of the story. A few Georgians appeared among the twenty-three poets whose work was represented: De la Mare, Turner, Davies, even Sturge Moore. But they were far outnumbered by poets of the newer schools: Herbert Read, W.P. Ker, the three Sitwells, "H. D.," Flint, and Aldington. In subsequent volumes the tide turned even more markedly against Centrist verse. The three critics whom Monro chose to review the state of contemporary English poetry in early 1920, far from being Georgians, were T.S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, and F.S. Flint. In 1920 and 1921 Monro began increasingly to take notice of the more modern American poets. The May, 1920, number comprised only John Gould Fletcher's review of contemporary American poetry, and the August number of the same year was entirely given over to Edna St. Vincent Millay's Aria Da Capo. The Chapbook became increasingly precious from 1922 to 1925 as it began more frequently to indulge Monro's passion for "discovering" minor poets; but for two years, from mid-1919 to mid-1921, it presented a reasonably adequate mirror of postwar literary London, along with evidence that the new environment was working a change in the tastes of even so essentially a Centrist poet as Harold Monro.

8II (Mar. 1920).
The situation of the Imagists in the postwar world presents interesting parallels. Essentially a prewar poetic force, Imagism had extended its influence well into the war years. Three successive volumes of the Imagist anthology, Some Imagist Poets, were published from 1915 through 1917. When Richard Aldington entered military service in mid-1916, the Egoist appeared to have been left in the safe and competent hands of "H. D.," who took over her husband's assistant-editorship. But it is doubtful that Imagism survived the war as an organized coterie; or if it did it was bereft of its most effective platform. Around the middle of 1917, owing to the influence of Pound (who had long since been read out of Imagist ranks) the Egoist began to change its tone, and new contributors who would more faithfully reflect the postwar poetic scene began to make increasingly frequent appearances in its pages. Poets like Herbert Read and T.S. Eliot began to receive more critical attention. In May, 1917, the Egoist Press published Prufrock, which Pound reviewed in the Journal with fulsome praise. In June, 1917, Eliot's name appeared on the masthead for the first time as an assistant editor, and the Aldingtons' names were absent (though both husband and wife subsequently contributed to the Journal). After Eliot's accession to office, poems and reviews by Pound became markedly

9Some indication of the waning force of the Imagists, the enfants terribles of the prewar years, can be gathered from the fact that even a TLS reviewer could find nothing to complain of in their 1916 anthology. In fact, he spent a large part of his allotted space in welcoming new forms to modern poetry (TLS, Jan. 11, 1917)!

10Coffman, Imagism, pp. 44-46.
more frequent, and in August, 1917, there appeared for the first time in the journal a contribution from the young Aldous Huxley. And so perceptibly throughout 1917 and 1918 the Imagists lost their hold over the Egoist; they were replaced by poets and reviewers of newer schools who, though they were sympathetic to Imagism and though their work bore unmistakable traces of its influence, nevertheless were not within the Imagist coterie. Huxley, Eliot, and Read were predominantly men of the postwar, not the prewar, era.

A few of the prewar issues, institutions, and coteries, then, survived into the postwar years, though they were severely altered. The postwar spirit is better observed in those movements and coteries indigenous to the climate of the late war years and the period immediately following. By late 1916 new personalities began to appear and, in their wake, new coteries, more partisan, more scurrilous, more thoroughly dedicated to the utter destruction of their poetic enemies than their counterparts in 1912 had ever been. New poetic coteries meant new coterie anthologies and little magazines. Georgian Poetry had pointed the way, as many poets conceived it: corporate publication of verse was the surest means of achieving fame and fortune. And so London was bombarded with partisan, and usually ephemeral, publications of verse for several years after the war. Though they were in a sense eloquent testimony to Edward Marsh's success in making poetry pay, most of the postwar anthologies and little magazines were adamantly, bitterly hostile to Georgian Poetry. Again, as in the years
before the war, the journals, and the poets who edited and contributed to them, can be conveniently classified as Left, Center, and Right. 1

The first sally against Georgianism from the Leftist camp was mounted by the anthology Wheels. In its beginnings it was not, in fact, a postwar publication, but even though three of its numbers appeared during wartime, it was the first harbinger of the postwar spirit. Six annual numbers of Wheels were published, the first in late 1916, the last in 1922. Featuring the contributions of such young poets as Osbert and Edith Sitwell, Aldous Huxley, Herbert Read, Nancy Cunard, Arnold James, and Iris Tree, Wheels was self-consciously avant-garde. Like Blast and several other prewar little magazines, a part of its aim was surely épater le bourgeois; and to do it, moreover, with as much insolence as possible.

But in tone Wheels belonged unmistakably to the postwar world: it was brilliant on the surface, but underneath there lurked a dominant mood of bitterness, cynicism, and flippancy. The Wheels coterie threw over poetic convention with a fine and studied insolence, but they substituted for it nothing but a cynical and epigrammatic brilliance which, though it coruscated, quickly burned out to cinders and ashes. The major contributors to Wheels, as a contemporary critic wrote, share a poetic mood which is "on the whole dour and morose; they see nothing bright in the present, and no bright hopes in the future." Most of them profess only "a dolorous morbid hope-—

Again one must warn against any temptation to extend a convenient poetic label to matters in any sense extra-poetical. No political allusion whatever is implied. (See above, p. 33, fn. 48.)
lessness...."¹² That is not to condemn the contributors to *Wheels*. Hopelessness was a far more genuine reflection of the postwar temper than the Georgian "too happy, happy brook, or lucent sirope" kind of "pleasantness." Moreover, the Cyclists tended toward excessively precious poetry. They "have a little the air of smattering," wrote T.S. Eliot. They represent an opposite extreme from the Georgians, but an extreme nevertheless. "Instead of rainbows, cuckoos, daffodils, and timid hares, they give us garden-gods, guitars, and mandolins, Lancret rather than Watteau, though they seem to have thrown Pierrot overboard. They need Catullus, Homer, Heine, Gautier; for they have extracted the juice from Verlaine and Laforgue."¹³

The *Wheels* coterie put too high a premium on cleverness; they were too self-consciously rebels. Any poetic practice which smacked of tradition had to be rejected out of hand not because it was poetically good or bad, useful or useless, but simply because it was traditional. Had the great English poets of the past approached their art with an attitude of high seriousness? The *Wheels* coterie would approach it flippantly. Had English poets, especially those of the detested Victorian age, eschewed cleverness in verse? The *Wheels* coterie would be excruciatingly clever.

The school of poets of whom Miss Sitwell is a leader are essentially of the sideways—or backwards—turning variety. It is terrible to them to think that they are practising an art which Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Swinburne and Tennyson practised before them. All those highbrows! We have become accustomed to think

¹²TLS, Jan. 4, 1917, p. 11.
¹³Egoist, V, no. 3 (Mar. 1918), 44.
of...a kind of holy seriousness as a condition of poetry; how pitifully antique! Detachment, nonchalance are new requirements; and the object of Wheels is to get effect from such use of words as shall have least in common with the uses to which they have been put by previous poets. Verse becomes in this way an amiable vehicle for the communication of cleverness, and everybody in Miss Sitwell's company is clever. They are bright and they are independent.

Even thirty-five years after the last volume was published, the poems in Wheels seem almost invariably amusing, but they remain unconvincing. One's sympathies are not engaged, not even those sympathies usually engaged by the best satirical verse.

Wheels itself, however, was perhaps not so influential as its editor, Edith Sitwell. The acknowledged leader of the Wheels coterie, she led her oddly assorted band in a slashing assault against the Georgians. Wheels was her first blow but by no means her only one, for she seldom overlooked an opportunity, however remote, to snipe at the enemy and to harass him from every quarter. She was able to turn every defense of her own kind of poetry sooner or later into an attack on every other kind. For Midas-eared postwar critics she had only scorn. Accused of failing to see the value of tradition in verse, she countered by telling the critics that they did not recognize a tradition when they saw one; rather, they recognized only one, the Wordsworthian. Her poetry returned, she explained, to the Elizabethan. For the general reader of poetry, too, she could shed few tears. The fresh views of postwar poetry came as a shock, she admitted, but the horrified reader was getting

no more than he deserved for allowing his emotions to rot unused and preferring to take his poetic impressions second-hand. The best modern verse, especially as written by Miss Sitwell, Miss Sitwell claimed, shocked and infuriated the general reader, for it forced him to perform an act of creative will required by almost no poetry since the seventeenth century: the fusion of the activities of the senses and of the brain. Modern verse made a reader think. No wonder it excited hostility!  

On the subject of the Georgians Miss Sitwell waxed wonderfully and scornfully eloquent, though looking behind the withering sarcasm and the purple prose one may well question whether her implied definition of "Georgian" is either entirely sound or entirely complete. She excluded Davies, De la Mare, and Hodgson from her strictures in toto, and Masefield and Gibson in part; but for the rest, they were only minor nature-lovers, weekend poets, and scribblers "who seem obsessed by the predilection for sheep." On Rupert Brooke as an archetypical Georgian she was particularly trenchant. Some of his poems admittedly have a mercurial shimmer to them, she wrote—which is more than can be said for his imitators in later Georgian volumes—"but they have, at the same time, a faintly spurious flavour.... They lie flat on the page, and are painfully unobtrusive." What emotion they succeed in bodying forth is pretended emotion. It was this quality in particular, the pretense of emotion instead of the real thing, which Miss Sitwell condemned not

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15 *Poetry and Criticism* (London, 1925), passim.
only in Brooke but also as the single preeminently Georgian trait.16

There is just enough truth in F.R. Leavis's ill-tempered dictum that in their early years "the Sitwells belong more to the history of publicity than the history of poetry" to make Miss Sitwell's judgments of the Georgians suspect, but surely she was no reluctant warrior. She was a master alike of the prick, the thrust, and the free-swinging slap with the side of the blade, and she enjoyed her own mastery hugely. But in some respects her criticisms of the Georgians were seminal, to be mouthed again and again, though never so well, by critics of the 'twenties and 'thirties. She was the first to attempt to reduce the Georgians with ridicule, a tactic which was to be frequently employed by other less adept critics in subsequent decades. Looking back from 1934, but in a tone thoroughly characteristic of her remarks in the immediately postwar years, Miss Sitwell gave Georgian poetry one of the most scathing—and masterly—dismissals it has ever had:

Mr. Housman was followed by a school of poets, rather loosely held together by their sub-Wordsworthian ideals. To these men rhetoric and formalism were abhorrent, partly, no doubt, because to manage either quality in verse, the writer must have a certain gift for poetry.

In the age of which I speak, we find the first shy buds of those full-flowered transcriptions of Robert Elsmere into blank verse which enliven the pages of a certain monthly arbiter of our taste.

16 *Trio: Dissertations on Some Aspects of National Genius* by Osbert, Edith, and Sacheverell Sitwell (London, 1938), pp. 131-38. The book comprises six lectures, two by each of the three Sitwells, delivered in 1937 at the Univ. of London as the Northcliffe Lectures.
In that verse...the praise of worthy home life alternated with swollen, inflated boomings and roaring about the Soul of Man. These beauties reigned triumphant, together with healthy, manly, but rather raucous shouts for beer, and advertisements for certain rustic parts of England, to the accompaniment of a general clumsy clodhopping with hob-nailed boots. Birds became a cult. Any mention of the nest of a singing-bird threw the community into a frenzy. Dreamy plaster-faced sheep with Alexandra fringes and eyes like the eyes of minor German royalty, limpid, wondering, disapproving, uncomprehending, these were admired, as were bulldogs weeping tears of blood. Nor was Romance absent. At one moment, any mention of 'little Juliet,' 'Helen of Troy,' or of Troy itself roused a passionate interest. The names alone were sufficient. Again any allusion to a violin—although this must be called a fiddle—any simple description of a gaffer doddering in the village alehouse, melted the audience to tears. Yet with all this romantic simplicity, the business man's careful logic was never absent, combined, strangely enough, with the legendary innocence of the country clergyman (this last trait being a tribute to the memory of the unfortunate Wordsworth).

One of the Leftist little magazines of the postwar period in which Miss Sitwell and her brother Osbert had a direct hand was Art and Letters. Though it achieved less eminence than Wheels, it was if anything even more intransigent in its profession of modernism. In original intent a quarterly, Art and Letters was published intermittently from July, 1917, to 1920. Its editor was Frank Rutter. One of the major contributors to the first number was Herbert Read, whose influence remained strong throughout the life of the journal, but especially during 1917 and 1918. With the 1918 and early 1919 numbers Art and Letters turned almost exclusively toward work from the Wheels coterie, and with the issue of Summer, 1919, Osbert

Sitwell became poetry editor. In that number, and subsequently, the journal's poetic preferences seemed to broaden a little. It published some excellent work of Isaac Rosenberg, Eliot's "Burbank with a Baedeker" and "Sweeney Erect"; and it distinguished itself head and shoulders above almost all the literary journals of the era by being among the first to recognize the poetic stature of Wilfred Owen, three of whose poems appeared posthumously in the Spring, 1920, number. But the major poetic contributors remained the Sitwells, Eliot, and Pound, whose poems, toward the end of the journal's existence, came to be printed with increasing frequency.

In spirit Art and Letters was not so much anti-traditional as anti-democratic. It carried on into the postwar years something of the tone of Middleton Murry's Rhythm and Blue Review, but it gave the screw a few more turns. The feeling for the natural superiority and exclusiveness of the artist breathed through every number of Art and Letters, and with it the implied assumption that almost by definition no popular art can be good art. Its contributors felt impelled frequently to express their scorn for the Philistine. In his "Nine Propositions" Frank Rutter caught some of the spirit with which Art and Letters was infused:

I There can be no art without life.
II There can be no life without growth.
III There can be no growth without change.
IV There can be no change without controversy.
V Vital art-work is controversial and displeasing to the majority.
VI Uninformed opinion is always hostile to the unknown.
VII Of any given subject the number of persons possessing knowledge is smaller than the number of uninformed.
VIII A minority is not always right, but right opinions can be held only by a minority.
IX Ignorance triumphs at a general election. 18

It is small wonder that in its choice of poetry Art and Letters sometimes found itself on the edge of the inane. Some of the verse it printed was obviously chosen more with an eye toward infuriating the Bumbles than out of a concern for poetic art. Upon what other supposition can one account for the publication of such a bit of nonsense as Susan Miles' "My Friend is Crying"?

My friend is crying.
Is it because her mother is dead?
Or because the dust-bin is smelling,
And the charwoman's little daughter is
having whooping-cough in the kitchen?
She does not know. 19

Frequently the attack of Art and Letters against Bumbledom was more direct. In a poem which clearly expressed the bitterness of the postwar intellectual temper and the scorn of the poet for his readers, Osbert Sitwell launched a wonderfully mordant shaft against the British reading public:

We will not buy 'Art and Letters,'
It is affected!
Our sons
And brothers
Went forth to fight,
To kill
Certain things--
'All this poetry and rubbish'--
We said
We will not buy 'Art and Letters.'

We sent them quite willingly
To kill
Certain things--
Cubism, futurism, and so on.

18 Art and Letters, II, no. 1 (Winter 1918), 52.
19 II, no. 2, n.s. (Spring 1919), 54.
There has been
Enough art
In the past;
If they would only turn
Their attention
To killing and maiming.
If they cannot kill men,
Why can't they kill animals?
There is still
Big game in Africa;
Or there might be trouble
Among the natives.
We will not buy 'Art and Letters.'

It is tolerably clear to us
That the War
Was due to a German poet—
All this Nietzsche and nonsense—
We will not buy 'Art and Letters'.

But as the Pharisees
Approached the tomb
They saw the boulder
Roll back
And the tomb was empty
And they said:
'It is all very disconcerting,
I am not at all
Narrow-minded:
I know a tune when I hear one—

And I know what I like.
I did not so much mind
That he blasphemed
Saying that he was the Son of God
But he was never a sportsman:
He went out into the desert
For forty days
And never shot anything:
And when we hoped he would drown
He walked on the waters.'

No, we will not buy 'Art and Letters.'\(^\text{20}\)

A far better edited journal than either Wheels or Art and Letters was Coterie, a periodical conceived and published entirely within the postwar years. Coterie was edited by Chaman Lall from Jesus College, Oxford, and ran for seven numbers

at approximately quarterly intervals from May, 1919, to December, 1920. In make-up the most handsome journal of its time, Coterie was an amateur publication, but only in the sense that its editorial staff was unpaid, performing their services for modern poetry as a labor of love. In its initial numbers Coterie devoted itself entirely to the publication of new poetry, but it quickly branched out into other genres of imaginative literature, proudly—and justifiably—advertising itself as "the only periodical of standing in contemporary literature which contains nothing but work of creative imagination."

Though no fiery poetic credos were laid down by Coterie (uniquely enough, no editorial comments of any kind prefaced the first number), it was apparent from the beginning that the journal would be decidedly modern. The first, only mildly controversial, number furnished a convenient platform for the "Oxford Group," poets like T.W. Earp, Wilfred Childe, and its editor, Chaman Lall. But it also published work from, among others, T.S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley. With the second number (September, 1919) the subsequent tone of Coterie was set. New contributors appeared: poems by Edith Sitwell, Herbert Read, Conrad Aiken, and John Gould Fletcher; drawings by Gaudier-Brzeska, Walter Sickert, Nina Hamnet, and William Rothenstein. In this number Huxley's "Leda" saw its first publication. Though in several subsequent issues some attempt at catholicity was made by the inclusion of verse from such poets of the Establishment as Gibson and Monro, the new still far outweighed the old in the work of young poets like Sacheverell Sitwell, Edmund Blunden, Babette Deutsch, Robert Nichols, Iris Tree, and Russell Green.
Coterie was neither so insolent and provocative as Art and Letters nor so strenuously avant-garde as Wheels. In the eyes of some critics, indeed, it was too solemn, as only the very young could be solemn. Even the Times Literary Supplement reviewer could take the first number to task for what he considered an unbecoming excess of decorum among English youth. Coterie lacked the "definite experimentalism" of the Imagist anthologies and the "rebelliousness" of Wheels, and if the work of Eliot and Huxley is excepted, he wrote, "there is little in 'Coterie' to surprise us as original or to thrill us as outrageous. One rather hopes always to find 'les jeunes' tweaking the beards of Academicians; no doubt they have as good a right to be solemn as the rest of us--but so much decorum is slightly discouraging." 21 As Coterie progressed it became increasingly adept at tweaking beards among the Establishment.

But Coterie's significance lay not so much in its ability to be provocative--a task which Art and Letters performed superlatively well--but in the fact that its very reason for existence demonstrated an important fact of postwar literary life. Coterie was begun because many young poets felt that during the war established English literary journals had fallen too exclusively to the control of conservative editors who had banded themselves into an informal guild dedicated to keeping new and modern poetry off their pages and, conversely, printing only verse of the more firmly entrenched writers. Denied publication, then, the younger poets founded their own journals. Coterie was one of them; so, among others, was Art and Letters.

21 TLS, May 22, 1919, p. 274.
But Coterie was compelled to bring the issue more clearly into the open than most other little magazines, for it attracted the ire of the most influential of the conservative journals, J.C. Squire's London Mercury. In the columns of the Mercury, Squire attacked Coterie with greater regularity and more venom than he customarily devoted to any other Leftist journal. He concluded a particularly vigorous attack in the November, 1919, issue of the Mercury with a scathing one-sentence dismissal: "It is a pity that so much paper should be wasted on so much rubbish." Stung finally to reply to an antagonist they had so far ignored, the editors of Coterie made amply clear the grievances which young poets felt against the Establishment and the bitterness to which corporate publication of verse had brought poetic warfare by 1920. The kinds of criticism that Coterie has received, the editors wrote, are sufficient evidence, if more is needed, that "in the present conditions governing the production of English literature, an aesthetic quarterly written by volunteers rather than by pressmen cannot hope, despite the obvious sincerity and accomplishment of its expression, to escape the irrelevant invective of crustacean criticasters or the dull malice of philistine sciolists."

Coterie gave as good as it got. It accused the Mercury and its editor of "cultural Prussianism," its reviewers of being at best "renegades from the fraternity of letters" whose sense of professional honor toward the staff of a sister periodical, if it did not make their minds more receptive, should at least have made their tongues less sharp in public print. The editorial concluded with a spirited attack on the Establishment:
"It is not by perpetuating the barrel organs of Georgian poetry that the race of Helicon shall be renewed. Nor is English literature in general likely to rebuild its Parthenon out of the accumulated rubble of a sombre academicism." The attack was Coterie's swan song, but the journal at least died with one magnificent gesture of defiance which pointed up for all to see the immense power exerted over English literature by a few established literary journals in the postwar years.

One more postwar journal of the avant-garde deserves mention, T.S. Eliot's Criterion. By almost any standards the soundest and, as it turned out, the most significant little magazine of the 'twenties, Criterion can only be mentioned in passing because its beginnings (in October, 1922) barely fall into the period under consideration. In the beginning Criterion continued much the same tone as its predecessor, the Egoist; and it made use of many of the same contributors, including Pound and Aldington. But from the start it drew upon more diverse literary schools for its contributors and seemed far less contentious, far less coterie-minded, than the Egoist had been. In the first few volumes it printed some of Eliot's poetry, parts of Ulysses, short stories of Virginia Woolf, an autobiographical fragment of Yeats, stories by May Sinclair, and critical pieces by Eliot, Herbert Read, Marcel Proust, Middleton Murry, and Osbert Sitwell. It could scarcely be accused of the kind of literary parochialism in which most of the little magazines of the time indulged. But to the historical eye Criterion was a poetic bellwether. In its first number,

22 Nos. 6 & 7 (Double Christmas No., Winter 1920-21), pp. 2-5.
in October, 1922, appeared the "Waste Land."²³ The next month Georgian Poetry V was published! Such a juxtaposition offers striking evidence that—as subsequent chapters will demonstrate—Edward Marsh's anthology had completely lost touch with the temper of the times.

Wheels, Art and Letters, Coterie, and Criterion, then, may be said to comprise the most significant postwar journals of the Left. Others of more definitely Centrist persuasion deserve some mention. Most of them made a valiant attempt to avoid being tarred with the coterie brush, Right or Left, but in an era when the partisan spirit was flourishing as never before their attempts at splendid isolation were by and large unsuccessful. The middle ground was becoming increasingly difficult to discern and almost impossible to hold, for attempts to hold to the middle succeeded only in provoking violent attacks from both sides. Caught in the cross-fire, and impecunious in the extreme, most of the little magazines of the Center, like Monro's Chapbook, were eventually forced either to stretch a tentative foot toward one of the coteries or to suspend publication. Only a few were able to survive long enough or to find sufficient worth-while material to print to render them noteworthy. Almost by the nature of things in the postwar literary world, neutralism meant death.

Among established periodicals perhaps the Athenaeum most successfully maintained the position of the Center. Traditionally a weekly, it had been forced to monthly publication in 1916 by the wartime paper shortage, and it had turned its

²³I, no. 1 (Oct. 1922), 50-64.
attention largely away from strictly literary and artistic concerns to those which may be broadly described as political or social. In early 1919, however, Middleton Murry became editor, and with the issue of April 4 of that year it returned to its customary character, being published once again as a weekly and devoting itself almost entirely to literature. In the postwar years the Athenaeum was careful to dissociate itself from the more extreme fringes of literary modernism, but at the same time it maintained an attitude which was by no means fusty. The most frequent reviewer of poetry in its columns was Aldous Huxley, whose reviews were characteristically both knowledgeable and judicious; Murry contributed frequent articles on poetry; and in late 1919 Katherine Mansfield became the major novel and short story reviewer. By 1919, however, being of the Center party did not necessarily mean being pro-Georgian. On the contrary, one of the first unmistakably sharp but well-reasoned postwar attacks on the Georgian movement came in a leading article written by Middleton Murry in the Athenaeum of May 16, 1919.

Among the memorable little magazines of the Center was Thomas Moult's Voices. It was an eminently uncontroversial journal published by a poet who was himself to be included in Georgian Poetry IV. It appeared at approximately monthly intervals from 1919 to 1921. A journal like Voices, not strenuously devoted either to Left or Right, had considerable difficulty finding suitable material to publish, and Moult frequently complained to Edward Marsh of the dearth of publishable verse
in the postwar period. Consequently Voices was too largely filled with the work of minor poets who achieved only a second- or third-rate competence in their one brief moment before they sank mercifully back into obscurity. The tone of Voices was quiet, and though the poetry it characteristically printed was more frequently than not in the modern style, the harsh postwar note of despair was not to be heard in its pages. The spirit which governed the selection of poetry for Voices was perhaps best expressed in one of Moult's dicta on modern poetry. "Forethought and afterthought are too much with us in contemporary poetry," he wrote. "Even when the artist is sufficiently master of himself to shed the shackles of intellect and allow supremacy to vision, which is emotion, there remains the further danger that his expression will be achieved either hastily or with wrestlings too prolonged." The more extreme kinds of modern verse were obviously too cerebrated, too devoid of emotion, too hard and dry for Voices.

A more considerable though much more short-lived little magazine of the Center was The Owl. It comprised only two numbers, the first appearing in May, the second around October, 1919. It was edited by Robert Graves, who was abetted and assisted to some degree by J.C. Squire and W.J. Turner. In a brief foreword to the first number the editor of The Owl renounced all coterie verse:

It must be understood that 'The Owl' has no politics, leads no new movement and is not even the organ of any particular generation--for that matter sixty-seven years separate the oldest and the youngest contributors.

24E.g., Thomas Moult to E.M., Mar. 11, 1919, MLC.
25Voices, I, no. 4 (1919), 228.
But we find in common a love of honest work well done, and a distaste for shortcuts to popular success.

'The Owl' will come out quarterly or whenever enough suitable material is in the hands of the Editors.

The journal's deeds matched its words: it not only achieved perhaps the highest literary standard of any contemporary little magazine, but it also managed to achieve a degree of eclecticism beyond the power of most. Among the contributors to the first number were Hardy, Beerbohm, Masefield, Davies, Graves, Sassoon, and Squire; to the second was added work by Blunden, De la Mare, Vachel Lindsay, and Shanks. The only unifying concept behind The Owl was its dislike of the coterie spirit, "the love of work well done" of whatever poetic school it may have stemmed from. On the back cover of each of the two numbers appeared the drawing of an owl and beneath it this quatrain:

Athenian fowl with feathered legs
Stand emblem of our will
To hunt the rat that sucks the eggs
Of virtue, joy, and skill.

Though Athene's owl of wisdom may have stood as emblem of the will to avoid the coterie spirit, the will was not enough. That spirit was abroad in the land, and the short life of even so excellent a little magazine as The Owl is some evidence that in the postwar environment a journal could perish from an excess of eclecticism just as surely as from an excess of partisanship.

A final Centrist journal which deserves brief attention is To-day. A monthly edited by Holbrook Jackson, it appeared for the first time in March, 1917, and achieved something of a record in a field where the mortality rate was high by
appearing without a lapse until September, 1920, when it became a quarterly. It too eventually succumbed to the disease of the little magazines, financial anemia, and after appearing briefly on a monthly basis again beginning in July, 1923, it finally expired. During its first year it was undistinguished, but by 1918 poems by many Georgians as well as by poets of more modern proclivities began to appear. Perhaps no contemporary journal published so much poetry or so many different kinds of poetry as To-day. During 1918 and 1919, little by little To-day stretched its foot toward the Leftist side of the fence. An article by Pound, ostensibly on Chinese poetry but actually defending obscurity in verse, appeared, as well as an article on Pound written by Eliot, and numerous poems by Osbert Sitwell and others of the more severely modern school. But editorially To-day stated both frequently and vigorously its declared policy of avoiding the coterie label at all costs. Holbrook Jackson made explicit the policy which placed To-day squarely with the Center in 1919:

...the contributors to the following pages are not drawn entirely from a single generation any more than they are drawn from a particular school. Attention is drawn to this point, because a little while ago I heard somebody remark that To-day was a literary journal that 'gave young writers a show.' Let me be quite frank and quite brief on that point: To-day does not. As an editor I am no specialist; I specialize neither in periods nor poses, youth nor age. Good writing happens in all circumstances, and takes little account of age or sex or breed. I am content with the best of that coming my way which gives me pleasure in the sure faith that the best is nearly good enough for To-day and its readers.26

The conservative Right-wing of the postwar literary scene is far more readily definable than either Left or Center. The Centrists were by and large amorphous; the Leftists advanced to battle with a bewildering variety of ammunition—Wheels, Coterie, Art and Letters—but the banner of poetic conservatism was stoutly defended in its hour of mortal peril primarily by one man. He frequently found a valuable ally in the Times Literary Supplement, though its assistance was usually confined to judicious elder-statesmanly counsel, and it did not deign to take an active part in coterie warfare. (By 1919, moreover, even the Supplement had found itself able to express an occasional liberal sentiment in its reviews and was by no means as antediluvian in attitude as it had sometimes appeared to be in the prewar years.) But the self-appointed defender of the Right was J.C. Squire. From the citadel of the London Mercury Squire wielded vast literary powers in the postwar period and throughout the 'twenties. His eminence stemmed not alone from being editor of the Mercury, "one of the most ambitious literary journals that the century has produced," as Harold Monro claimed, but also from the fact that he exerted powerful influence over "the literary columns of many dailies, weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies, so that it has often been hinted, rightly or wrongly, that such young poets as are blessed with his favour need not fear to be snubbed, or drubbed or neglected by the Press."28

27 Later (1933) Sir John Squire,
28 Some Contemporary Poets, p. 149.
By 1920 Squire was well on his way toward establishing a literary coterie of the Right just as partisan, as militant, and as dedicated as the Leftist coteries. In 1917 Edward Marsh had printed Squire's "Lily of Malud" in *Georgian Poetry* III presumably because he had thought it a good poem; but Marsh had also picked a powerful friend for days to come, for with his own poetry and the work of his friends, Shanks, Freeman, and Turner, safely included in *Georgian Poetry* from volume III or IV on, Squire became sworn champion of the anthology. On the other hand, perhaps no single action of Marsh so completely alienated most of the younger modern poets of the postwar era as his inclusion of the poets of "the Squirearchy," as the coterie came to be known. From the third volume on, in the eyes of the younger poets *Georgian Poetry* had been tarred with Squire's brush. Consequently the anthology was injected into a coterie war marked by a spirit of vicious partisanship on both sides.

Almost every school of experimental verse was certain sooner or later to feel the sting of Squire's lash, for his tastes were as conservative as his tongue was sharp. His antipathy to modernism had first become evident in the prewar years, when he had acquired a position as columnist on *Land and Water* and had subsequently become literary editor of the *New Statesman*. Frequently using the nom de plume "Solomon Eagle," he had expressed only the utmost disdain for Futurism, seeing in it only a stunt for self-advertisement and reminding the Futurists that in attitude and technique alike, far from being new, they were only a réchauffé of Whitman—who, he
added for their information, was "a mid-Victorian American." Blast he found tedious, the Vorticists only "a heterogeneous mob suffering from juvenile decay tottering along...in reach-me-down fancy-dress uniforms...trying to discover as they go what their common destination is to be." He was particularly severe on Ezra Pound, an antipathy which he was to carry on into the pastwar years. "Le bon Ezra," he wrote, "nearly bursts himself in the attempt" to be new, but "in spite of the abruptness of his phraseology and the unmeaning inequalities in his rhythms, he does not succeed in convincing one that he has discovered anything.... When he is comprehensible he is usually silly.... Where he is incomprehensible he would not, I suspect, be found much less silly if one had the key to his cipher." It is to Squire that one is indebted for the last word on Blast. It succumbed, he wrote, "shortly after a hostile critic, consulting his Webster, had discovered the definition: 'Blast:--a flatulent disease of sheep'."

The postwar years found Squire's opinions still as adamantly conservative, his pen as biting. They gave him, moreover, an opportunity to express his views unequalled in the literary world. In November, 1919, Squire founded and became first editor of the London Mercury, the most influential journal of its time. It was launched with no more than the usual spate of high-minded comments about promoting the cause of literature

29NS, II (1914), 694.
30NS, III (July 4, 1914), 406. For Squire's equally acidulous comments on the second number of Blast, see NS, V (1915), 449.
31London Mercury, I (1920), 386-87. Footnote references to this periodical will hereafter be abbreviated to Mercury.
in a Philistine world. The Mercury would never be allowed to succumb to the coterie spirit, Squire promised in the foreword to his first number. It would not become just another partisan journal "attempting to make universal the shibboleths of some coterie or school." He explicitly disclaimed for his new journal any "ambition for an infallible pontificate of letters."

Even while he was stating his virtuous aims on one page, however, he was implicitly contradicting them on another. Given the literary conditions of 1919, how could the Mercury escape becoming a coterie journal when its editor could dismiss most modern poetry and poets in this fashion?

Young simpletons who, twenty years ago, would have been writing vapid magazine verse about moonrise and roses have discovered that they have only to become incoherent, incomprehensible, and unmetrical to be taken seriously.... Year after year we have new fungoid growths of feeble pretentious impostors who, after a while, are superseded by their younger kindred; and year after year we see writers who actually have some intelligence and capacity for observation and exact statement led astray into the stony and barren fields of technical anarchism or the pitiful madhouse of moral antinomianism.

And how could the Mercury hope to become known for the application of "sound critical standards" when, in his first issue, Squire could accuse fellow journalists of sheer cowardice because they treated modern poetry with too much respect? "Everything is treated with respect," he complained, even when all right-minded critics were bound to agree in the depths of their consciences that most modern poetry was arrant rubbish.32

The Mercury's antipathy toward Edith Sitwell's coterie was particularly marked. Its review of the third issue of

\[32\textit{Mercury, I (1919), 1-6.}\]
Wheels left little doubt where the journal stood. To Miss Stiwell's poetry the reviewer applied the most damning of all epithets: "incomprehensible." He gave Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" a most ignominious dismissal and then turned his attentions to Aldous Huxley. Squire was habitually kinder to Huxley than he was to others of the Wheels group (indeed, Huxley was a frequent contributor to the Mercury, writing some uncontroversial articles on older English men of letters); but the reviewer made a comparison which could not entirely have pleased the young poet. "Mr. Huxley," he claimed, "when these poems were written, ... seems to have been in the same sort of revulsion against sentimentality as Rupert Brooke was in when his first book was being composed." And he bestowed on Huxley the same patronizing pat on the head that Brooke had received from his early reviewers: Huxley "can see things with his own eyes, and he has a powerful intelligence, and when he has discovered something to write about he may become a very good poet." 33 In 1921, when an anonymous parody of Wheels, compiled by "Obert, Sebert, and Ethelberta Standstill" and entitled Cranks, was published, the Mercury again seized upon the opportunity to deride the Wheels coterie. "The worst of it is," the Mercury asserted, that the verses in Cranks "are unlikely to be permanently readable owing to the nature of the subjects [the author] has chosen to burlesque. The book is a parody of the annual collection Wheels, the contents of which are not popular enough to be worth attacking and not good enough to keep a parody alive.... Ten years hence, should any of [the

33Mercury, I (1920), 334-35.
Wheels coterie] run across detached poems from Cranks they will find it difficult to say whether themselves or a parodist wrote them."

Squire's opinions of other avant-garde poetic schools were equally hostile and just as caustically expressed. His antipathy toward the Imagists was of long-standing. He dismissed Amy Lowell summarily: "Miss Amy Lowell is, in America, the most vigorous propagandist of the revolt against what are deemed old-fashioned kinds of poetry. Having tried to turn verse into prose, she is now trying to turn prose into verse." His distaste for the poets who contributed to Coterie has already been remarked. In his reviews of that journal he surpassed himself in aspersion, being particularly harsh on Herbert Read. In an attack on the fifth number he quoted a part of one of Read's poems ending,

He cannot disentangle
The genesis of any scope.
His limbs
Dangle
Like marionettes
Over
a mauve
Sea.

And then he drove the harpoon home: "Lest it be thought that this loses by being detached from its context, it may be said that it does not. It is a pity that so much paper should be wasted on so much rubbish." For the avant-garde European literary movements he had only profound scorn. In the "New

34 *Mercury*, IV (1921), 432.
35 *Mercury*, III (1921), 441.
36 *Mercury*, III (1920), 7.
and Recent Periodicals section of the Mercury short notices like this were not infrequent: "The publisher of a Dadaist organ apparently called '391' has sent us a copy of it, for which we are profoundly grateful. The price seems to be two francs, but this figure may possibly be one of the poems."\(^{37}\)

Perhaps it was not so much Squire's conservatism which irked the younger postwar poets as it was the tone in which he expressed his ideas. About almost all new verse he characteristically adopted the tone of a lenient father of the gods handing down his observations to children as if from Olympus. And when he was not patronizing he was scornful. Squire rang the changes in the Mercury, as before the war, on a few dominant notions: modern poetry is only a fad not to be taken seriously; it results only in poetic stunts and verbal legerdemain; it will one day pass and all will once more be well with the queen of the arts. Hostility was one thing: the modern poets could expect that and take it in their stride. But scorn was quite another; and it earned for Squire and the Mercury bitter attacks from the younger generation almost without exception.

"People read poetry for the sake of beauty and for an appeal to the highest of appreciation and aspiration that is in them," Squire wrote in the course of one of his attacks on modern verse.\(^{38}\) With that obiter dictum he made abundantly clear perhaps the central critical premise of the postwar literary Right-wing: poetry must be, in its broadest sense, inspirational. In order to be so, it must, above all, communicate.

\(^{37}\)Mercury, III (1921), 359.

\(^{38}\)Mercury, II (1920), 233.
With Squire incomprehensibility was the poetic sin of sins. The premise that an incoherent world demanded an incoherent poetry was beyond his limits of tolerance. Rather, incomprehensibility was only a trick, a means of self-advertisement for versifiers who could attract attention in no other way. And so, Squire could smugly assert in 1920, most modern verse "has ceased to be amusing." But, he added, "we don't think that anybody need be alarmed; nobody can like it, and in the end those who...have pretended to will revolt against a diet of wind and sawdust and return to something more palatable."

For the simple truth is that the trick of incomprehensibility is the best trick that has ever been invented for the benefit of writers who, if they can feel or think, do not know how to translate their thoughts and feelings into the language of art.... Let rhythm go, let sense go: put down in barbarous sequence any incongruous images that come into your head: even, if you like, put down sheer gibberish: if possible, deceive yourself, and you will deceive others. Produce a work so opaque that it cannot be seen through. The innocents will either wildly protest against these dangerous revolutionaries...or else they will knit their brows with the reflection 'if this young man expressed himself in thoughts too deep for me, why what a very, very, very deep young man this deep young man must be.' But we have noticed that these dealers in chaos soon tire. Those who have something in them (and any young man is liable to be infected by a current fashion) get through, none the worse: those who have not flag and stop.

Faced with such sentiments expressed in such a tone, it is small wonder that the younger generation declared war on the London Mercury. Their fury was increased by the fact that a man like Squire obviously sat in a position of great power.

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39Mercury, I (1920), 386-88.
and could, if he chose, dominate the tone of a sizeable number of reviews of their own poetic efforts. And so a struggle was undertaken between the rebels and the Establishment; and though it frequently may not have seemed so amid the dust and the shouting, the new poets were fighting on the winning side, for they were fighting with, not against, the spirit of the age.

11

Given the literary environment of the postwar world, it was to be expected that a severe anti-Georgian reaction would set in. By late 1919 or 1920 two facts about modern poetry were beginning to emerge with reasonable clarity. In the first place, if the modernists won the day—and they were beginning to even then—modern poetry would be obscure. Incomprehensibility, or incoherence, the whipping-boy of the conservative critics, was not, the modern poets claimed, a stunt to attract attention but an effective means for transmuting the spiritual and social incoherence of the postwar world into poetry. And it was to become a more or less permanent condition of poetry throughout the 'twenties and 'thirties. Secondly, modern poetry, like other forms of twentieth-century art, was well on its way to becoming a private not a public art. The shift toward private poetry had begun, of course, in the prewar years, and by the end of the war it was becoming increasingly clear that poetry was either retreating into the scholar's study or becoming the expression only of the poets' private world. In a remarkably acute analysis (which of course expressed a conservative point
of view) a Times Literary Supplement reviewer complained of the increasing privateness of poetry in mid-1919:

To many people the literature of today... appears to be nothing but an intellectual anarchy. Standards of absolute excellence no longer exist in a vital form, and every man writes according to his own conceptions of the art. We are as far from the aesthetic dogmatism of the nineteenth century as we are from the moral dogmatism of the eighteenth. A poet no longer intends to instruct the world or to 'uplift' it (certain anachronisms, chiefly American, excepted), he does not claim to have a mission or a message; he seeks only to express a personality or a point of view. Yet it is no great wonder if such an attitude seems to put a premium on egoism, to turn poetry into a sort of mirror of Narcissus; it is no wonder if so many conflicting reflections seem merely to create confusion.

Both obscurity and privateness ran directly counter to the tendencies of Georgian Poetry, especially to the mystery-cum-moonlight tendencies which began to overtake the anthology with the third volume. They also ran directly counter to Edward Marsh's poetic canons. Obscure verse had been anathema to Marsh from the beginning, and in the postwar period he was to become even more hostile to poetry which he considered inchoate or incomprehensible. If obscurity was to be one of the hallmarks of modern verse, Georgian Poetry was bound to become an anachronism by 1919 and 1922. And the reaction against it is in part attributable to the fact that it was looked upon by many of the newer poets and critics as being not only unmodern, but positively anti-modern.

Another reason for opposition to Georgian Poetry among many postwar poets rested upon more personal considerations.

By the laws of human nature an anthology must make an enemy of almost every poet whom it excludes. *Georgian Poetry* was no exception. By 1918 the work of twenty-eight poets had been represented in the three volumes of the anthology. But how many more times that number had been excluded even of the professional poets whose level of competence might have admitted them to serious consideration? Personal rancor against the anthology, against its editor, and against the major poets represented in it was bound to grow with each volume. An ever-increasing antipathy could have been expected and planned for—as in fact it was by both Marsh and Monro—but the situation was aggravated by 1918 or 1919 by several harsh facts: the coterie spirit was hardening on all sides, but particularly among the Leftist poets whose aesthetic convictions normally placed them in opposition to the Georgians; and the younger poets felt themselves improperly denied a fair show for their verse by the conservatives' hold on reviewing.41 In such an environment each exclusion from *Georgian Poetry* was likely not only to pique the pride of the individual poet barred from paradise but also to bring down upon the head of the anthology the wrath or scorn of the entire coterie to which the excluded poet belonged.

Nor was pride alone involved; financial considerations also played their part. The reaction against *Georgian Poetry* was part of a postwar reaction against anthologies in general. The initial effect of at least the first two volumes of

Georgian Poetry had been to increase sales of the poets' individual volumes. Ironically, the anthology had been almost too successful in its aim of pushing the new poetry, for during the war years the anthology boom showed scant signs of quieting; on the contrary, as anthologies began to increase in number they began to compete with one another rather severely for the reader's shillings. The competition occurred not only between Georgian Poetry and some of the more modern anthologies like Wheels and Coterie but within each camp as well. One particularly close rival of Marsh's anthology was R.C. Trevelyan's Annual of New Poetry (1917), which contained the work of Gibson, Davies, Drinkwater, Sturje Moore, Frost, Bottomley, Edward Thomas, and Trevelyan, and seemed rather like a pale copy of Georgian Poetry I and II.42 To the stream of competing anthologies must also be added the innumerable collections of war poetry published from 1914 to 1918. The result was that a movement which in 1912 and 1915 had succeeded in helping to increase poets' individual sales was in many cases having a decidedly opposite effect in the postwar era, for the public was refusing to purchase expensive individual copies of poets' works when adequate samples were at hand for the same money in an abundance of anthologies.43

The professional poets' and critics' hostility toward the anthology system was expressed largely in private utterance, or if it appeared in public print, it became more frequently

42A fact which was not overlooked by the reviewers. E.g., TLS, Mar. 29, 1917, p. 161; NS, VIII (1917), 617.
43Palmer, p. 95.
a matter of tone than of direct attack. One candid and direct blow was struck, however, by Middleton Murry in mid-1919 in the Athenaeum. The anthology system, he admitted, "with its perturbations and aberrations, its wheels within wheels, ... is now a familiar feature of the intellectual heavens," but unfortunately, the "stability and brilliance of the new system depend upon its nebular structure." They depend, that is, upon anthologies, regularly appearing, because most of the anthology poets are mildly impressive only when seen en masse. Mediocrity and a comfortable sameness are the natural results, Murry reasoned, for poets who want to be published must write minor, occasional verse for the anthologies. If postwar poetry is to have any vitality, he concluded, the poets "must break up the anthological system in which their comfortable revolutions are at present pursued [and] shoot off into the invisible unknown" on their own orbits.44

By 1921 the poets themselves were more willing to speak out publicly against the anthology system. Attacked in the Times Literary Supplement for allowing certain of his works to be printed in Untermeyer's Modern American Poetry, T.S. Eliot replied that he had not been consulted in any way regarding the anthology; "in short," he wrote, "the whole production is

44 Athenaeum, no. 4646 (May 16, 1919), pp. 325-26. Though I have attributed the article to Murry, the author cannot be quite positively identified. Because of the particular brand of anti-Georgian sentiments expressed in the course of the article, however, and for other reasons as well, Middleton Murry seems the likely author. A contemporary reader guessed that Lascelles Abercrombie had written it, a charge which Abercrombie quickly and emphatically denied (ibid., no. 4647 [May 23, 1916], p. 374; no. 4649 [June 6, 1916], p. 438).
a surprise to me." To avoid such incidents in the future, Eliot suggested, poets must take a strong stand against the anthology system, for, as he claimed, "the work of any poet who has already published a book of verse is likely to be more damaged than aided by anthologies." Robert Graves enthusiastically commended Eliot's position, adding an objection to anthologies which might well have been aimed squarely at Georgian Poetry. "A poet who once gets marked by the reviewers with the ranch-brand of the anthology in which he first appears," Graves claimed, "is thereafter made to suffer for the failings of the other weaker members of the herd, with whom he may have nothing further in common."45 The motto of the professional poet in the face of the anthologist must be: "Nothing for Nothing and Mighty Little for Sixpence."46 The occasional instances when the struggle was brought out into the open suggest something of the bitterness against anthologies which many poets were expressing privately. Georgian Poetry was perhaps the chief

45 This objection is perhaps partially explained by the fact that by late 1921 Graves was engaged in more or less strenuous attempts to cast off the "Georgian" label which had been affixed to him by reason of his appearance in G.P. III and IV. He had little in common with the poets of the "Squirearchy" and was concerned lest the "ranch brand" of their Neo-Georgian drenched-in-moonlight school should be applied to his own work. Nevertheless, he was to permit his work to appear in G.P. V.

46 The case against Eliot and Graves was pursued in subsequent issues of the TLS by two self-styled "ordinary lovers of poetry," one of whom argued that the poets were biting the hand that fed them. "The reader who, meeting a poet in anthologies, does not trouble to search him out," he wrote, "would hardly be likely to buy his works in any case, so no sale is lost." The second correspondent threw Eliot's argument back in his face, asserting, "I bought Mr. T.S. Eliot's 'Prufrock' entirely on account of the poems from it contained in 'Catholic Anthology,' published by Mr. Elkin Matthews in 1915." There the matter was allowed to rest, each side having made its point (TLS, Nov. 17, 1921, p. 746; Nov. 24, 1921, p. 771; Dec. 1, 1921, p. 789; Dec. 8, 1921, p. 827; Dec. 15, 1921, p. 853).
target of the anti-anthology movement, for by common consent it was looked upon as the father of the anthology system; and even in the postwar period it remained, in terms of sales, the most considerable anthology of the times.

The postwar anti-Georgian reaction expressed itself in a number of ways. Coterie, Wheels, and other partisan little magazines were one avenue through which hostility found an outlet. Parodies were another. As the Georgian poets came increasingly to assume a "Georgian" manner they invited parody; and as the coterie spirit of the Left solidified in 1919 and 1920 they were assured of getting it. Much of the anti-Georgian occasional verse of the postwar period was not, strictly speaking, parody, but rather broadly satiric verse which administered the lash to the Georgians for their coterie proclivities and the vices thereby engendered. The penchant for log-rolling, for instance, one of the most telling charges levied against the Georgians by their enemies, was made the subject of a trenchant little poem entitled "Perpetuum Mobile: A Pantoum, More or Less":

Pilk lauds the verse of Jobble to the skies,
And Jobble says that Bibson's Dante's peer;
Bibson is great on Pagg,—'What Art!' he cries,
While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer.

While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer,
Dubkin swears Botchell's odes will never wane;
Botchell commands: 'Watch Pimpington's career!'—
Pimpington writes a book on Trodger's brain.

Pimpington writes a book on Trodger's brain,
And Trodger shrieks: 'Glabb's genius stirs my soul!'—
Glabb raves of Cringeley's rhymes with might and main;
Cringeley pens Gummitt's name on glory's scroll.
Cringeley pens Gummitt's name on glory's scroll,  
And Gummitt sees in Sludd new world's arise.  
Sludd bids us hear Pilk's mighty rhymes roll;  
Pilk lauds the verse of Jobble to the skies.... 47

Another more finished poem shed crocodile tears over the  
situation of the displaced Georgian in early 1920. Written  
by Douglas Goldring, it depicted the unfortunate prewar Georgian  
as leaderless and without artistic haven in the cruel postwar  
world. In its tone, as in its very title, it skillfully sug­  
ggested what many young poets keenly felt: Georgianism was a  
dead poetic movement by early 1920.

Post-Georgian Poet in Search of a Master

I had been well brought up: I liked the best.  
My prose was modelled on Rebecca West,  
My 'little things' erstwhile reflected tone,  
My brother poets claimed me as their own,  
In those blithe days before the War began—  
Ah me, I was a safe young Georgian!

Now all is chaos, all confusion.  
Bolshies have cast E. M. from his high throne:  
Wild women have rushed in, and savage Yanks  
Blather of Booth and Heaven; and T. S. E.  
Uses great words that are as Greek to me.  
Tell me the Truth, and ah, forego those pranks—  
Whom must I imitate? Who's really It?  
At whose embroidered footstool should I sit?

There's Podgrass now—he seems a coming man;  
Writes unintelligible stuff, half French, half Erse,  
He told me Philomela had technique  
But not much feeling; Crashaw knew his trade,  
But Keats had no idea of writing verse...  
The thing to read, he said, had just come out,  
His latest work, entitled 'Bloody Shout.'

And then there's father Michael, Secker's pal,  
Who's left dear Sylvia for the Clergy-house.  
Michael lives sumptuously: silver, old oak,  
Incunabula, the Yellow Book, Madonnas, Art;  
Excited wobblings on the brink of Rome;  
The 'Inner Life,' birettas, candles, Mass;  
Fun with Church Times and Bishops; four hair shirts,  
And Mr. Percy Dearmer's Parson's Book.

47Coterie, no. 5 (Autumn 1920), pp. 59-60.
He talked to me of Antinomianism
And stirred the incense, while two candles burned,
Then read aloud his works, with eye upturned,
(Somehow I felt I'd heard it all before—
When I was 'boat-boy' in a pinafore.)

Are Sitwells really safe? Is Iris Tree
A certain guide to higher poesy?
Can Nichols be relied on, for a lead;
Or should I thump it with Sassoon and Read?
Or would it not be vastly better fun
To write of Nymphs with Richard Aldington?
Or shall I train, and nervously aspire
To join with Edward Shanks and J.C. Squire
--A modest 'chorus' in a well-paid choir?

I've thought of middling Murry and Sturge Moore,
I've thought of Yeats (I thought of him before).
I've toyed with Aldous Huxley and Monro--
I don't know where I am, or where to go.

Oh, mighty Mr. Gosse! Unbend, I pray!
Guide one poor poet who has lost his way....

The most persistent and masterful parodies of the Georgians came not from the Left, however, but from the pen of E. V. Knox, who under the pseudonym "Evoe" published his works in Punch. Knox began his parodies early, during the years when the Georgians were at the height of their power and pre-eminence, and he precisely hit off both their characteristic manner and matter. He parodied John Drinkwater's sedate pastoralism in the ponderous blank verse that the poet was so fond of using. And he nicely satirized the matter and manner of W. H. Davies, one of the most susceptible of the early Georgians to parody:

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48Coterie, no. 4 (Easter 1920), pp. 50-51.

49His parodies were collected in two volumes, Parodies Regained (London, 1921) and These Liberties (London, 1923), from which all subsequent examples of Knox's work will be cited.
Companions

When I go in to ask for ale
At Stratford pubs in lamplight gleam,
More sweet than any nightingale
The sounds of men do seem.

I rub my hands, I laugh, I smoke,
I tap my coins upon the bar,
Like woodpecker that strikes an oak
Where woods most tranquil are.

But when I see two men that fight
Outside the pub for all the world
As though they'd clench their hands more tight
Than bracken fronds uncurled,

Thereat my heart gives such a prick,
I feel the wound for months and months.
I take my library and stick
And leave West Ham at once.

In fields where tiny daisies grow
And throstles sing I then do drowse
And often see small birds that go
Quite close to hooves of cows.

The titmice perch upon my thumbs
And cock their heads to ask for food.
More sweet than any urban slums
Is then my solitude.

In several poems Knox was able to satirize the work of De la Mare, a poet who did not lend himself to parody as readily as many other Georgians. And one of the most delightful thrusts was "The Snail," a parody of Hodgson's "The Bull." Taking for his subject, as he said, "the only horned live-stock on my premises, which are snails," Knox playfully reduced to absurdity one of the most popular poems ever published in

Georgian Poetry:

50These Liberties, pp. 129-30.

51See especially an exquisite shaft at De la Mare entitled "The Lost Bus" (These Liberties, pp. 131-35), and "The Mocking Navy" and "Questions" (Parodies Regained, pp. 15-17).
See the sick and wounded snail
Sick in body and mind both,
Travelling through the undergrowth
Of asparagus and kale;
Exiled from the herd (or horde)
Where he once was overlord.

See him as his eyeballs glaze;
Nasty sorts of flies and things,
Such as every poet brings
Into poems nowadays,
Buzz about the eyes and tail
Of this old unhappy snail.

Ants arise to greet the dawn,
Beetles burnish up their mail,
But this old unhappy snail
Creeps toward the croquet lawn
Where the loathly blackbird jumps,
Looking out for slithery lumps....

Now how altered! Now he's been
Broken like the one before;
All his face is smeared with gore;
Showing undisguised chagrin
He is crawling, as I said,
Through the vegetable bed.

Soon to meet the blackbird grim
Perching on the fateful tree
While the last snail (Number Three),
Having now defeated him
Lords it, till in turn he fails,
And a fourth--
Oh!--these snails.

The Neo-Georgians did not escape "Evoe's" shafts. Perhaps the soft verse of the drenched-in-moonlight school was best satirized in a parody of John Freeman, who, Knox claimed, belonged to "the school of the wistful, the dreamy, the unsatisfied and the faint." The poem, in which the poet rejects earthly for ideal love, is entitled simply "Go":

Go....
I would not that you should stay;
Your lips and your eyes confound me;
I want you to go away
And not keep coming round me.

52Parodies Regained, pp. 95-98.
There is a love of the mind
That holds, never loosens,
More sweet than the bodily kind
And much less of a nuisance....

We should glimpse and pass on
And remember the glimmer,
Like the pool that grows wan
When the twilight glooms dimmer;

But you creep so close
When I crave but your image;
Kissing makes me morose;
It resembles a scrimmage....

I would make you my own,
Blossom sweet and enthralling,
But alone, but alone...
And you will keep on calling.

What was fire in the brain
Turns, touched, to a statue;
Don't come here again
Or I'll set the dog at you.
Get away....

And under the title "Streams" Knox aimed directly at J. C.
Squire a satiric poem in which he precisely caught the flavor
of the banal imagery and diction of Squire's "Rivers."

The young poets who contributed to Wheels and Coterie
could scarcely have hoped to escape an occasional barb. One
satirist, J. B. Morton, aimed almost an entire volume of paro-
dies at the several Leftist postwar coteries. And J. C.
Squire, who might have been one of England's truly great

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54 These Liberties, pp. 125-28.
55 Gorgeous Poetry, 1911-1920 (London, 1920). The title is
misleading, for it implies that the book was intended to parody
the Georgians, who had come to be referred to derisively by their
enemies as "the gorgeous Georgians." Upon examination, however,
one finds the contents aimed almost exclusively at the more
modern postwar coteries. Moreover, Morton shows himself, in
a bitterly worded preface as well as in some of his verses,
too deadly serious to be a completely successful parodist.
The preface promised far more than the book was able to
deliver.
poetic satirists had he continued in that genre, launched many a poetic attack in the prewar years against the vers librists whom he so cordially disliked. Perhaps his best satiric poem—and a genuinely great parody—was his attack on Ezra Pound. It was entitled "Very Libre" and subtitled "If a Very New Poet Had Written 'The Lotus Eaters'."

I

Ah!
Ough!
Umph!
It was a sweat!
Thank God, that's over!
No more navigating for me
I am on to
Something
Softer....
Conductor
Give us a tune!

II

Work!
Did I used to work?
I seem to remember it
Out there.
Millions of fools are still at It,
Jumping about
All over the place....
And what's the good of it all?...
Buzz,
Hustle,
Pop,
And then...
Dump
In the grave.

III

Bring me six cushions
A yellow one, a green one, a purple one,
an orange one, an ultramarine one, and
a vermilion one,
Colours of which the combination
Pleases my eye.

Some of his parodies have been collected in Tricks of the Trade (London, 1917).
Bring me
Also
Six lemon squashes
And
A straw.

IV

I have taken off my coat.
I shall now
Loosen
My braces.

V

Now I am
All right....
My God...
I do feel lazy! 57

Whether the satire was predominantly good-natured, like
that of Squire and Knox, or in the more derisive vein of Douglas
Goldring, parody was one of the most significant avenues for
expression of anti-Georgian sentiment. But it cannot be claimed
that the parodies of the Georgian poets were in any sense the
cause of the anti-Georgian reaction. They were rather a symptom
of it. They did not start the fire, but they succeeded in
adding a good many more faggots to the already warm blaze.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the postwar
literary scene, however, was not the reaction against Georgian-
ism per se, but rather the perceptible hardening of the coterie
spirit which took place from 1918 to 1922 and resulted too
frequently in an attitude of mind among poets and critics
which can only be described as literary intolerance. The situ­
atation presented its mildly humorous aspects, for, as Harold
Monro observed, by 1920 literary London had come to resemble
nothing so much as the Left Bank, with all the "factional

acrimonies, jealousies, and scandal-mongerings" of French coteries, but with an important difference: the British were too deadly earnest in their partisanship; their coteries commonly lacked the light Gallic touch, the "pleasant and private inner qualities" of their French counterparts. "Most French Groups are societies of friends, not Unions of Professional Poets. The members of English Cliques meet less at supper than in periodicals and anthologies, less in private than in public."58 The intensification of literary partisanship had its serious implications, too, both for Georgian Poetry and for the immediate future of English letters. It made the struggle against the Georgians more bitter and perhaps more protracted than it might otherwise have been. Georgianism was not to be allowed to die a peaceful death in the natural course of poetic affairs but was to be hooted to its grave by the unnecessarily derisive jeers of those self-appointed poets and critics who had mounted its death watch. Moreover, the sneers uttered in the heat of partisan battle in large measure set the tone for critics in years to come so that a balanced estimate of Georgian poetry became impossible for almost two decades.

From all sides came anguished recognition of the danger to letters posed by the hardening of the coterie spirit, but from no quarter came an effective solution. No one seemed to want it, but no one seemed to be able to propose a means of avoiding it. Even Harold Monro, genuinely fired with idealism and hope for the future of English poetry in the prewar days,

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58 Some Contemporary Poets, p. 15.
turned cynical as he surveyed the postwar poetic scene. "Verse writing in the year 1920 is a professional occupation," he wrote. The love of work well done is gone; success no longer comes through poetic merit but through advertising. The first requisite for the young poet, Monro claimed, was not necessarily to be read but only to be talked about by large numbers of people. And the most effective means to that end was obviously the coterie, for it could attain wider publicity for the young man than he could hope to attain for himself. Thus the clique fulfilled a function: it was "a support to individuals not strong enough to stand alone." Mediocrity was the only possible result; and originality, the most precious possession of poetry, was snuffed out.59

Some turned against the Georgians, seeing in Georgian Poetry the first cause and the prime mover behind the solidifying of the coterie spirit. Even though he published the anthology, Monro himself candidly admitted in public print that, although "in its infancy the 'Georgian Movement' was uncharacterized by evidence of design, that is, it did not, like other schools, preach or practise a special dogma of the poetic art," the poets included in its latter volumes "devoted much energy to narrowing and hardening what had begun as a spontaneous co-operative effort. They sought to establish...'a form of literary tyranny,' demanding of its own disciples a complete conformity to certain standards, and seeking to exclude altogether those who refuse to do homage to those laws."60 Others, recalling

60 Some Contemporary Poets, pp. 150-51.
the prewar literary scene, were willing to place a large share of the blame for postwar partisanship at the door of the vers libristors, or, more specifically, the Imagists.61

Still others were willing to blame not so much the poets as the conditions surrounding postwar reviewing. "It is not poetry at all that stands in peril," wrote Gerald Gould in 1922; "it is criticism. Poetry cannot die. Poetry cannot even 'have a bad time' or 'be in a bad way.' At some times there are more great poets than at others. But there are always poets; and in so far as they are poets, they will always quietly go on their way, saying nothing when they have nothing to say, and, when they cannot help saying something, saying it in a form they cannot help." Contemporary reviewing was too obviously partisan; it too frequently inquired only "'Does this belong to such-and-such a school?' instead of simply: 'Is this poetry?'"62 The practice of using signed reviews, common to all but a few postwar journals, also nourished literary animosity. The results of the "star system," as Douglas Goldring called it, were obvious: "Those whom the 'star' attacks are tempted to form an offensive and defensive alliance against him. Those whom he praises rally at once to his side in order that his encomiums may never lose their potency and their effect. Thus the cliques come into being."

The poetic aspirant tempted to excessive independence was faced with the probability of two equally unattractive results: "If you remain outside [the cliques], and if you are a harm-

61E.g., Alec Waugh in To-day, no. 32 (Oct. 1919), p. 61.
less person, the chances are that your books will never be reviewed at all. And if you are not a harmless person you run the risk of having the whole pack yelping at your heels whenever you succeed in persuading a publisher to print you." It is "small wonder," Goldring concluded, "that the majority of writers take the line of least resistance and squeeze in somewhere" among the coteries.63

Whichever direction they turned, all agreed that coterie warfare was fraught with real and present danger, for it was tearing the craft of letters apart, reducing the individual poet to impotence, and stifling creative originality. Moreover, in coterie warfare the artists were dissipating their energies on the wrong front. "Concerted effort...is the effort to justify art to the Philistines," Frank Swinnerton warned the embattled cliques, "not to destroy its examples for the banal amusement of Dilettanti."64

But English poetry was to become a good deal more coterie-minded before it became very much less. "Verse writing in the year 1920 is a professional occupation": Monro spoke cynically, but the facts bore him out. For most poets it was simply a case of fight or die, coterie warfare or poetic oblivion. The slow, often halting development of the individual poetic genius along lines determined by its own uniqueness, which had been

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64"Coteries," Athenaeum, no. 4675 (Dec. 5, 1919), pp. 1281-82. Swinnerton was one of the most persistent and dedicated fighters against the coterie spirit in the postwar years, launching several unusually frank and heated attacks in 1919 and 1920. Other critics, however, also warned against the dangers of coterie warfare in much the same tone (e.g., TLS, Aug. 19, 1919, p. 434).
the priceless jewel of English poetry for generations, seemed likely by 1920 to become a thing of the past, a sacrifice to the collectivist urge and the relativistic spirit of the on-rushing twentieth century. But, as one observer concluded, "even the war that was to end war ended, and so also will the war that is going to end prewar poetry; and just as the war-that-was-going-to-end-war has not ended war, so the war-that's-going-to-end-prewar-poetry will not achieve its heart's desire. Wars never do." The poetic war was no exception. For a few years, amid shouts and jeers, behind dust and tumult, the post-war coteries succeeded in obscuring the voice of English poetry, but they could not choke it into silence. The real poets, the poets who, "when they cannot help saying something, say it in a form they cannot help," were still writing amid the shouting; and from the 'twenties was to emerge a new kind of verse which in manner and matter was as adequate to its age and as workman-like as that of any other era of English poetry.

The editing and publishing of *Georgian Poetry IV* and *V* followed the familiar pattern set up with the first three volumes. In mid-April, 1919, Harold Monro sounded out Marsh on the prospects of a fourth *Georgian Poetry*. Though the volume was financially feasible, he reported—in fact, a number of pre-publication orders had already been placed with the Poetry Bookshop—Monro expressed his customary doubts as to whether the material at hand warranted a new volume in 1919. It might be both wise and discreet, he suggested, to allow a three-year rather than a two-year interval between volumes. Marsh did not agree. Though second thoughts were to assail him a few months later, he decided in April to go ahead with his fourth volume. Monro replied, only partly convinced, that he was glad to hear the decision had been taken, but he was "as usual...a little diffident about the material."¹ Both editor and publisher set to work, and by the end of September the first proofs were in Marsh's hands. Monro set the price of the new volume at six shillings per copy, almost double the 3/6 that *Georgian Poetry I* had cost and a small evidence

¹Harold Monro to E. M., Apr. 15, 1919; Apr. 25, 1919, MLC.
of postwar inflation.\(^2\)

The book was published on schedule in November and, Monro wrote, had sold almost 6,000 copies by the second week in December. "I'm not sure how much I like this popularity!" he added. "I am sure that I think it the worst G.P.--but that's in confidence. The second one set such a very high standard." Monro was almost as unhappy with the reviews of *Georgian Poetry IV* as he was with the volume itself, being particularly displeased with Middleton Murry's comments in the *Athenaeum*. Murry was not entirely qualified to write such a review, he claimed: "He should have given it to Eliot"!\(^3\)

On the timing of *Georgian Poetry V* both editor and publisher agreed. When Monro advised Marsh against publishing a new volume at the end of 1921, Marsh readily assented to a three-year interval between volumes IV and V.\(^4\) By May, 1922, however, poems for *Georgian Poetry V* were being chosen, and by mid-August—somewhat earlier than had been the case with previous volumes—the fifth volume had reached the proof stage. Again Monro expressed reservations about the quality of the book, and between the lines of his correspondence with Marsh one reads his concern over the deterioration of the entire series. Specifically, he regretted, as he had with volume III, the exclusion of Charlotte Mew and objected to printing "some jingle about poets and puddings" (i.e., Richard Hughes' "Poets, 

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\(^2\)Harold Monro to E.M., Sept. 26, 1919, MLC. Not one to overlook an opportunity, Monro also raised the price of G.P. III to 6/- in November, 1919, "so as to get a bit more on it," he wrote Marsh (*loc. cit.*).

\(^3\)Harold Monro to E.M., Dec. 13, 1919, MLC.

\(^4\)Harold Monro to E.M., Apr. 30, 1921, MLC.
Painters, Puddings") which made the absence of first-rate work the more painfully obvious.⁵ Georgian Poetry V was put on sale in November, 1922, and sold, as Edmund Blunden wrote, "like scandalous revelations—though surely," he added, "this time it is the mirror of innocence."⁶ Compared to the sales of the previous volumes, however, those of Georgian Poetry V were unimpressive. Even Georgian Poetry IV had a total sale of 15,000 copies, but its successor sold only 8,000. As Marsh himself admitted, such an obvious "falling-off in public receptivity" in 1922 afforded "a pretty strong hint" that Georgian Poetry had outlived its day.

The editorial problems Marsh encountered with Georgian Poetry IV were not greatly different from those he had met in compiling his first two volumes. Only one situation seems to have arisen for which no clear precedent existed. By 1919 the success of Georgian Poetry had made entrance to its pages a prize ardently coveted by many poets, and Marsh was therefore made the object of several solicitations by poets on their own behalf. The approaches were in some cases surprisingly direct. Thomas Moult, the editor of Voices, was moved to submit his own work for Georgian Poetry IV. "I do not know," he explained, "if I am doing the wrong thing in submitting them to your editorship in the conventional way, or how your attention is drawn to anybody's poetry. But you will forgive me, I know, if I say that nothing would give me greater happiness, and

⁵Harold Monro to E. M., Aug. 14, 1922, MLC.
⁶Edmund Blunden to E. M., Nov. 28, 1922, MLC.
⁷A Number of People, p. 329.
nothing so pleasantly, for me, crown these six months of struggle and exultation than that I might appear in your pages. There, I have said it, and if I have sinned in saying it, I have sinned...." Though Marsh was a bit taken aback by such a frontal assault, Moult's verse fortunately met with his approval, and the poet was included in *Georgian Poetry* IV. In Moult's reply to the notification of his acceptance, one understands something of the honor many poets felt at being included in *Georgian Poetry*. "I am very proud indeed and it is a great honour you have done me," he wrote. "Yours is no ordinary anthology: I have learned to love and admire the spirit and mind at the back of it, and to make the poems you have chosen as perfect as my poor gift can manage will be a very happy August task. I only hope they turn out worthy of their pages." Other poets who approached Marsh in the same fashion were not so fortunate as Moult. They received kind words, but very little else.

On the question of whether a woman poet should be included in *Georgian Poetry* IV Marsh was on more familiar ground. Again, as in 1917, he was eager to include a poetess provided one could be found whose work appealed to his tastes. The task which had proved fruitless in 1917 was to be successful in 1919. For the second time Monro strongly urged the candidacy of Charlotte Mew. Edward Shanks argued for the work of Rose Macaulay, and both he and Sassoon suggested Edith Sitwell. None of the

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8Thomas Moult to E. M., May 18, 1919; July 17, 1919, MLC. See also J. D. C. Pellow to E. M., Nov. 10, 1919, in which another poet chosen for the first time for *G.P.* expresses his feeling for the honor that has been done him.

9E. g., J. R. Ackerley to E. M., June 2, 1919, MLC.
advocates prevailed, for Marsh favored the work of Fredegond Shove as being "closer to the poetical." Shanks deferred to Marsh's judgment on Miss Macaulay, but he could not resign himself to the inclusion of Mrs. Shove.

I capitulate as regards Rose Macaulay (he wrote). Such virtues as she has are prose virtues, cropping up fortuitously in her verse, for which, I agree, she has no specific gift. And I agree that Mrs. Shove's talents are closer to the poetical; but after reading her book through again, I still think that her work is neither strong enough nor, especially, individual enough.... Mrs. Shove, I feel, is like a house in which all the fittings for electric light are in position but which is not yet connected with the main. If something happened to her, I believe she might begin to write poetry; but I remain doubtful as to whether she has really done it yet. My understanding of your position was that on the whole you would be not merely willing but actually glad to include a woman.... And honestly I know of none that I would plump for. But I do think that Edith Sitwell has a definite, solid and individual talent, limited though it may be.

The suggestion of Miss Sitwell must have afforded Marsh only a moment of amusement. It was the work of Mrs. Shove, unobtrusive, and safe, as Shanks had pointed out, which was printed in Georgian Poetry IV.

With Georgian Poetry IV Marsh's principles of anthologizing once more came under attack. And again the arguments were familiar. For the anthologist, "le mieux est l'ennemi du bien," Maurice Baring had insisted in 1917. In 1919 an even more

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10 Mrs. Shove, wife of Gerald Shove, Lecturer in Economics at King's College, Cambridge, and daughter of F. W. Maitland, jurist and biographer of Sir Leslie Stephen, had recently published Dreams and Journeys (1919). She is perhaps better known for a subsequent study of Christina Rossetti (1931) than for her poetry.

11 Edward Shanks to E. M., Apr. 10, 1919, MLC.
formidable voice, that of Marsh's long-time friend Edmund Gosse, arose to remind him of the maxim. Warning Marsh that this number of his anthology was the first to be launched into unmistakably stormy and hostile waters, Gosse argued that it was "no longer safe" to anthologize a minor poet on the basis of one or two good poems which appear to stand out only because of the sodden uniformity of the rest of his work. "I think you can hardly now be too careful in selecting and winnowing." Gosse advised.

Who is Thomas Moult? I never heard of him before, and I do not think the piece you give is at all up to the mark. I think I see that you were attracted by a certain naïveté, but the result does not seem to me to show the root of the matter. I suggest that it is no longer safe to include a poet on the score of one piece which had pleased you, but that there should always be a body of work from which you select a poem which meets your standard. One ode does not make a Georgian.12

The editing of *Georgian Poetry V* in 1922 again presented Edward Marsh with several familiar problems. He was faced with the delicate task of excluding from volume V a poet who had been represented in volume IV. Having heard *Georgian Poetry V* was being assembled, Thomas Moult again seized the initiative and, unsolicited, offered up any of his work Marsh might care to choose.13 Marsh replied in a letter which, though it was apparently the apogee of tact, made it quite clear that Moult would be required to step down. The poet was understandably disappointed, but he bore no grudge. "Your fine comradeship and encouragement have been among the few

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12 Sir Edmund Gosse to E. M., Dec. 11, 1919, MLC.
13 Thomas Moult to E. M., Aug. 1, 1922, MLC.
best things that have happened to me," he wrote Marsh. "I treasure them so proudly that I recognize and appreciate your decision as obviously your duty. My one regret is that I have not yet been able to 'make good' in your eyes."

With **Georgian Poetry V** Marsh was also called upon again to withstand special pleading from a friend on behalf of a poetic protégé. This time he remained firm in the face of a plea from the Poet Laureate himself. Bridges was keen on seeing the work of Herbert Palmer included in **Georgian Poetry V**, and he stated Palmer's case persuasively to Marsh on several occasions in June and July, 1922. Having been refused on all previous attempts, the Laureate made, as he called it, "one last appeal." He had mustered some support from one of Marsh's younger Georgians: "Robert Graves and I were agreed," he wrote, "about the genuine imaginative quality of [Palmer's] best poems—and it is recognised by others, to judge by the reviews of the published poems." He enclosed two poems for Marsh's consideration. In one of them, the sonnet "Ishmael," Bridges pointed out, Palmer had already shown his willingness to cooperate by emending a line which Marsh had previously objected to because it would not scan. Regarding the second poem, Bridges wrote quite bluntly: "I read it with a good deal more of pleasure and admiration than I find awakened in me by the average of the poems you print."

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14 Thomas Moult to E.M., Aug. 7, 1922, MLC.
15 Robert Bridges to E.M., June 9, 1922, MLC. The poem also apparently appealed to Middleton Murry's tastes, for it had received its initial publication in the *Athenaeum*, no. 4718 (Oct. 1, 1920), p. 433.
Marsh declined to print any of Palmer's work. Perhaps the major reason for Marsh's refusal was the very quality which the Laureate took to be a virtue: "the genuine imaginative quality" of Palmer's verse, as Bridges called it. The "Ishmael" sonnet was perhaps too "imaginative," too vibrant (and too obscure) for Marsh in his Neo-Georgian mood. At any rate, in answering Marsh's letter of refusal, Bridges underlined what he considered Marsh's too narrow tastes.

My dear Marsh

Your letter is amusing enough to be in some sort a reward to me for my charitable effort. I am sorry that it didn't succeed, but I did not wish you to go counter to your judgment, which has made your book what it is.

Still Graves and I wi say that you do not recognise the sort of excellence that this man has. You c have pulled Blake to pieces in much the same way—and Palgrave refused Blake a place in the Golden Treasury. Now he is reckoned next to Shakespeare in his lyrics. He is of course incomparable with the present case, except that in being so much greater he is a stronger example....

With thanks for your patience I am sorry to have caused you trouble.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Bridges

Bridges was one of the few poets in England who could have written such a letter to Marsh. And the Laureate saw fit to rub it in a little with a comment some months later: "Did you see," he wrote Marsh, "that the poet Davies has given Palmer's Ishmael a place in his very original anthology?"17

16Robert Bridges to E. M., July 11, 1922, MLC.
17Robert Bridges to E. M., Nov. 6, 1922, MLC. Italics mine.
Marsh's major difficulty in compiling both *Georgian Poetry* IV and V arose out of a situation which had occurred very infrequently with the first three volumes. With increasing frequency many of the poets he approached either agreed to their inclusion only reluctantly or refused altogether to be represented. Even several of his old-line Georgians who had appeared in all the first three volumes were at best lukewarm about volumes IV and V. John Masefield entirely declined Marsh's invitation to contribute to *Georgian Poetry* IV. "I'm afraid I've nothing available for G.P.," he wrote. Though Marsh had succeeded in changing Masefield's mind under similar circumstances in the past, this time all his persuasions were to no avail.¹⁸ Masefield appeared in neither *Georgian Poetry* IV nor V.

Walter De la Mare also expressed doubts about his inclusion in both volumes. He permitted his verse to be printed in both 1919 and 1922, though perhaps more out of friendship than conviction. When approached for a contribution to *Georgian Poetry* IV he reminded Marsh that poetic times had changed: "I feel... that I am a rather stale old bird to be chirping in the new nest," he wrote. He not only reiterated his position in 1922 but also, in his characteristically gentle manner, attempted to give Marsh some sound advice. "You must shed as you go, if you decide to continue," he wrote. "To be in 5 would be monstrous--but not because our friend Walter is a Victorian,

¹⁸John Masefield to E. M., July 12, 1919; and undated postcard (but ca. mid-July, 1919), MLC.
but because of all these Young Things clamouring for admittance. So, pray, seriously reconsider this. I am quite certain the critics would welcome some removals. 'Old ruts'—can't you hear the echoes?" In both instances, however, Marsh pursued De la Mare, and the poet capitulated gracefully though not without serious misgivings. 19

Lascelles Abercrombie was also accommodating to an old friend but dubious of Marsh's wisdom in publishing Georgian Poetry V. Invited to contribute, he wrote Marsh, "As to the general policy of continuing the G.P. series, I'm doubtful: but you don't ask me about that, and as you are anyhow making up a new number I shall be delighted and honoured to be in it." 20 Gordon Bottomley was less obliging. He declined to contribute at all to volume V on the grounds that his work might "seem too occasional in the eyes of an increasingly critical world." This from the poet who had "laughed out of his great beard" at the critical abuse heaped on "King Lear's Wife"! Perhaps a more cogent reason for Bottomley's refusal may be noted in the reservations the poet expressed about Marsh's policy of continuing Georgian Poetry along customary lines: "Beside my scanty production during the qualifying period, I feel that the time has come when your memorable standard for the first G.P.—'an accession to power'—ought to be applied again in a re-examination of the whole ground.... I am sure that the time has come when you ought to leave me out, and

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19 Walter De la Mare to E. M., Aug. 18, 1919; June 15, 1922; and undated (but ca. June 25, 1922), MLC.

20 Lascelles Abercrombie to E. M., July 3, [1922], MLC.
that G.P. can only be valid by keeping its face toward the dawn. 21

From among his newer contributors Marsh also encountered several objections and at least one point-blank refusal. Edward Shanks accepted Marsh's invitation to contribute to *Georgian Poetry IV* lukewarmly, and only after having turned him down on the first approach. 22 Sassoon accepted but expressed an implied warning for the future in several frank observations about his coevals between the covers of *Georgian Poetry IV*:

I think it is very important that the collection should contain nothing half-baked. The danger with G.P. is that it will become too tidy. I hear you are putting in Mrs. Shove. I would suggest that Edith Sitwell ought to be asked, as her work is far stronger, and quite as original. But when you've got people like Drinkwater in the thing is bound to be more or less an academic hotch-potch.

The same thing applies to Shanks—delightful as his verse is—it doesn't excite, and it is all based on echoes from the past. Turner's stuff (unequal as it is) is on a different plane—he has real creative imagination.

In 1922 Sassoon saw fit to withdraw entirely from *Georgian Poetry V*. "I refuse to be represented by...perfunctory things which I've written for my own amusement," he told Marsh. But he had another rather more important reason for refusing: "I am entirely out of sympathy with several of the Georgian shavers in the shade of your laurel-tree," he added. 23

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21 Gordon Bottomley to E. M., July 9, 1922, MLC. See also Bottomley to E. M., July 17, 1922, in which Bottomley thanks E. M. for indulging his desire to be excluded from G.P. V.
22 Edward Shanks to E. M., Apr. 11, 1919, MLC.
23 Siegfried Sassoon to E. M., July 16, [1919]; July 11, [1922], MLC.
Perhaps the most forthright refusal came from W. J. Turner. Though he was invariably polite and grateful for Marsh's efforts in the cause of modern poetry, Turner left small room for doubt as to why he felt impelled to withdraw from *Georgian Poetry* V. The poet had already crossed swords with Marsh in 1919, when Marsh had demurred at including several of Turner's poems in *Georgian Poetry* IV on the grounds of his ancient abomination, obscurity. Far from knuckling under, Turner had defended himself vigorously. He had invoked the aid of Squire, and Marsh had been prevailed upon to print the poems in volume IV, though perhaps not without misgivings. When he was approached for *Georgian Poetry* V, Turner was quite explicit. "With regard to the new G.P.," he wrote Marsh, "while fully appreciating the compliment of being asked to contribute--I feel that you do not really like my last book and I would rather on this occasion therefore be out of it." Marsh's request of the poet to reconsider his decision elicited from Turner a somewhat less formal letter but an equally firm refusal.

My dear Eddie,

I hope you will not think me foolishly perverse if I say I feel I must stick to my decision. No one appreciates more than I all you have done for living poets. In fact this personal appeal is so strong that it is with the greatest difficulty, believe me, that I can resist it. But sometimes a devil rises up in one which will not be denied. I cannot properly explain why I want to be out of G.P. this year; it is merely a blind instinct.

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24 W. J. Turner to E. M., undated (but ca. mid-1919), MLC. See also Turner to E. M., Jan. 4, 1922, in which the poet defends one of his plays against Marsh's charge of obscurity.
which is too strong even for my admiration and liking for you so I do hope you will be indulgent to my caprice with your characteristic generosity.

Yours sincerely

Jim

The inelasticity of Marsh's tastes had apparently played a large part in excluding from his final volume perhaps the foremost poet among his Neo-Georgians.

Most reviewers received Georgian Poetry IV and V with the same lack of enthusiasm which the more perceptive among them had displayed toward volume III. Perhaps the two most influential critics of the Georgian Poetry series were T.S. Eliot and Middleton Murry. Eliot had had his say with Georgian Poetry III: the Georgians "caress everything they touch," he had charged; they possess an uncommon degree of "pleasantness" of either the "insidiously didactic...Wordsworthian" or the "solemn, minor-Keatsean" variety. And again in 1918 Eliot had elaborated on his basic theme. "What we commonly find among contemporary poets," he had written, "is a mentality which has remained in the age of Wordsworth or in the age of Tennyson, with a technique which is actually inferior to either of these.... But while the mind of man has altered, verse has stood still;" most contemporary poets are capable only of "a heavy trifling; they have nothing to say to the adult, sophisticated, civilized mind; are quite unaware of its tragedies and ecstacies."  

25W.J. Turner to E. M., July 11, 1922; July 14, 1922, MLG.
26Egoist, V, no. 3 (Mar. 1918), 43-44.
27"A Note on Ezra Pound," To-day, no. 19 (Sept. 1918), pp. 3-4.
In 1919, with *Georgian Poetry IV*, Middleton Murry took up the cudgels. In a review which helped to set the anti-Georgian critical pattern for years to come, Murry charged Georgian poetry with "an indefinable odour of complacent sanctity, an unctuous redolence of union sacrée." The Georgian poets, he claimed, characteristically exhibited two pernicious qualities: "false simplicity" and "right-mindedness." He defined "false simplicity" as being "compounded of worship of trees and birds and contemporary poets in about equal proportions; it is sickled over at times with a quite perceptible varnish of modernity, and at other times with what looks to be technical skill, but generally proves to be a fairly clumsy reminiscence of somebody else's technical skill." Most of the verse in *Georgian Poetry IV*, moreover, is bathed in the "luminous haze" of a "fundamental right-mindedness." "There is nothing disturbing about them," Murry complained of the Georgians. You feel, somehow, that they might have been very wicked, and yet they are very good; ... they are kind, generous, even noble. They sympathise with animate and inanimate nature. They have shining foreheads with big bumps of benevolence, ...and one inclines to believe that their eyes must be frequently filmed with an honest tear, if only because their vision is blurred. They are fond of lists of names which never suggest things; they are sparing of similes. If they do use them they are careful to see they are not too definite, for a definite simile makes havoc of their constructions, by applying to them a certain test of reality.

Murry supported the general thesis propounded by Eliot two years earlier; because the Georgians were afflicted with "false simplicity" and "right-mindedness," he argued, they
characteristically wrote poetry which not only lacked thought and emotion but was also marked by a deadly sameness. "If they have an idea," he wrote, "it leaves you with the queer feeling that it is not an idea at all, that it has been defaced, worn smooth by the rippling of innumerable minds."

It was primarily to the Neo-Georgians, however, not the Georgians, that Murry administered the most severe strokes of the lash. Indeed, he exempted such Georgians as De la Mare, Davies, and Lawrence from his condemnation and concentrated his criticism upon J.C. Squire and the poets of the "Squirearchy"—Shanks, Freeman, and Turner. Though all the Neo-Georgians were guilty of emulation, Squire's verse alone, he claimed, "would make an excellent subject for a critical investigation into false simplicity" because it so obviously—and unsuccessfully—attempted to copy the tone and even the technique of Walter De la Mare. And from a line-by-line comparison of Squire's "Rivers" with De la Mare's "Arabia" Murry clearly demonstrated that in Squire's poem "not only the idea is derivative, but the rhythmical treatment also."

For the deterioration of Georgian poetry so amply evident in Edward Marsh's first postwar volume, Murry was willing to blame the times. Only through a disastrous decline in artistic standards, he observed, was such a volume as Georgian Poetry IV made possible. Its lassitude, enervation, and sickly imitation all argued that the Georgians, and perhaps the postwar world as well, had forgotten the most basic truths about poetry; that it is "rooted in emotion," that "it grows by the
mastery of emotion," and that "its significance finally de­
pends upon the quality and comprehensiveness of the emotion."
And so, Murry concluded, it is quite impossible to apply
serious critical standards to most of the contributors to
Georgian Poetry IV. "The more stupid of them supply the matter
for a good laugh; the more clever the stuff of a more recondite
amazement." 28

Several other reviewers found themselves in general
agreement with Murry, though they approached the volume from
different points of view. Considering Georgian Poetry IV in
the perspective of the entire Georgian series, the reviewer
for the New Statesman complained of the increasing sameness
of the anthology. Whereas Georgian Poetry I and II showed
"no detectable tendency" toward coterie verse, he argued, "as
time has passed the volumes—therein presumably, and we think
certainly, reflecting the movement of the time—have become
increasingly homogeneous." It was only to be expected perhaps
that by 1919 "the weaker of the poets included" in the series
should have begun to "show traces of the influence of the
others"; it is more deplorable that even some of the original
Georgians apparently have succumbed. With volume IV, "some of
those—rather tedious realists originally—who are veterans in
the series have now cast off their old habits and become guilty
of the sincerest form of flattery." Moreover, the reviewer
observed, many of the poets in volume IV seem to have copied

28 Athenaeum, no. 4675 (Dec. 5, 1919), pp. 1283–85; reprinted as "The Present Condition of English Poetry" in
one another's worst features; the qualities which they possess in common are far from admirable. If Georgian Poetry IV is to be taken as typical, he concluded, the new brand of Georgian verse is the poetry of retrenchment and lassitude. The Georgians are too often "content to express the simpler emotions; they look on beauty in man and in the physical world gratefully, with an intense love bound up with, born of, the sense of transience." The result is an undue emphasis on lifeless, unaspiring landscape poetry; "even those poems which are love poems are dominated by landscape or images drawn from it." 29

The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement also attacked the volume for its lack of vigor. In a review significantly entitled "Georgian Poetry: New Style." he pointed out that although critics had understandably disagreed upon the intrinsic merits of the verse in Georgian Poetry I and II, the two prewar volumes had contained some poetry which was at least vigorous and, to some extent, new. No such claim could possibly be advanced for Georgian Poetry IV, he asserted, for the postwar spiritual enervation had taken its toll upon Georgians and Neo-Georgians alike. In the first volume of the series there had appeared Abercrombie's "Sale of St. Thomas," for instance, "one of the finest, if not the finest, poem of an equal length produced in recent years." In Georgian Poetry IV there appeared Abercrombie's "Witchcraft: New Style," of which it could be remarked only that "its effect on the imagination resembles that of a clumsy lie on the intellect:

29NS, XIV (1919), 224-26.
unconvinced, you blush for the author." In *Georgian Poetry* II, again, as the reviewer pointed out, there had appeared Bottomley's "King Lear's Wife," a controversial but "puissant and poetically conceived tragedy." In volume IV Bottomley was represented only by "a short blank verse piece which never quite flows or carries us away." And the verdict was the same with the contributions of both Davies and De la Mare: neither had remotely approached his prewar achievement; both had been content to limit themselves to "tiny poems, which not infrequently might be further reduced by concentration."

Like their elders, the reviewer claimed, the Neo-Georgians too "pause and shrink from the highest themes and grandest forms." It is they who are primarily responsible for the unfortunate "growth and spread of ingenuous poetry," the identifying characteristics of which are unmistakable: "Some simple mood, perception, or admitted truth is taken and deliberately elaborated upon until it seems portentious; the means employed are tireless repetitions,...cascading catalogues of nouns and adjectives, and often a repeated reference to the secret knowledge of the world known only to the poet." Obviously a new kind of Georgian poetry has been created by 1919, he concluded, for it is verse of this stripe— the "ingenuous poetry" of volume IV, not the vigorous, often realistic verse of volumes I and II—to which Edward Marsh's once proud adjective must now be applied. But he was not willing entirely to blame either Marsh or the Georgian poets for the obvious deterioration of the anthology. The blame lay also, as he surmised, in the spirit of the postwar age, "in the lack of
spiritual direction of a nation that turns upon itself, leaderless, discontented, and half-hearted.®

In an inconclusive review in the Mercury, J.C. Squire continued to beat a dead horse. He correctly concluded that Georgian Poetry IV reflected a decided break with the tone of the first two volumes, which "seemed to be leading toward... realism, sometimes informed with a conscious brutality," but he was understandably vague and imprecise when he attempted to define the quality which had replaced realism. The nearest he came to specifying the new spirit of Georgian Poetry IV was a fuzzy assertion that most of the poems in that volume were "not realism, but passages of reality imaginatively seized and transfigured by passion." The very lack of passion, of course, was the principal weakness of the volume commented on by Murry and most other reviewers, but with his own and his followers' verse safely enshrined in Georgian Poetry, Squire was not, to say the least, an impartial reviewer.

From across the Atlantic came the voice of Amy Lowell, never a Georgian partisan but now more caustic than ever. "Weary verse," she called Georgian Poetry IV. "It is a profound labor to read this book," Miss Lowell began, because all the Georgians have begun to sound alike; none of them seems to have retained an ounce of individuality; their freshness has departed. Like most other observers, Miss Lowell attributed the falling off in vigor to the fact that the Squirearchy

30TLS, Dec. 11, 1919, p. 738.
31London Mercury, I (1919), 201-05.
had taken over the pages of the anthology. Concerning the derivative verse of the Neo-Georgians she was characteristically blunt: "It is stuff and nonsense," she wrote, "to try and raise such echoes into the dignity of a poetic creed as Mr. Squire and Mr. Shanks are constantly trying to do. All literature is against them; good poets are not echoes, and never were, and that is the long and short of it." But there is not only poetic "atrophy" in Georgian Poetry IV; "this stale stuff is not merely stale," Miss Lowell claimed; "it is pathological," induced by the strain of war. "We know what these young men want to say," but the power to say it "has been weakened by strain. They have not the energy to see personally, or speak with their own voices. The will to do so is strong; the nervous strength necessary for the task...is lacking."32

By 1922, when Georgian Poetry V was published, it was almost universally conceded that the anthology had outlived its day. With the striking exception of D.H. Lawrence's "Snake," and a few selections from Blunden's Shepherd and The Waggoner, and Vita Sackville-West's Orchard and Vineyard, Georgian Poetry V contained by and large the same kind of lifeless verse which had characterized volume IV. By 1922 it was even clearer than it had been in 1919 that no amount of critical good will could justify an assertion that Georgian Poetry V represented the best accomplishment of English poetry during the previous three years. Even those critics normally most in sympathy with the aims and the tone of Edward Marsh's

anthology were hard pressed to find enough noteworthy material in the fifth volume to fill the space allotted them for their reviews. The reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* could only introduce a more or less irrelevant comparison between the poetic forms used by the Georgians of volume V and those in use among poets fifty years ago, and question rather mildly whether the Georgians were perhaps not too greatly absorbed in "the new love of detail" for its own sake. His concluding remarks were typical of the innocuous tone of the entire review: "On the whole, without being able to pretend that the Georgian editor has discovered any unknown geniuses, or induced his fixed stars to shine brighter than before, we may congratulate him on proving once more that English poetry is alive and giving us some very useful hints of where to look for it." 33

Edmund Gosse, writing for the *Sunday Times*, chided the Georgians gently for the lassitude which they displayed in *Georgian Poetry* V and attributed it to their "determination to be anything rather than rhetorical." Their sedulous and misguided rejection of "general ideas in favour of a pictorial representation of the physical phenomena of life" has had two results on their poetry, Gosse maintained. It has led either to a frivolous poem like Martin Armstrong's "Miss Thompson Goes Shopping"—"a catalogue of trivialities"—or it has plunged the Georgians into poetic bathos. Too often, he claimed, the Georgian poets "are so determined to be simple that they succeed in being silly." They have retreated from the high esteem that the poet of the nineteenth century felt for his

own art; their poetry is the poetry of minutiae. "The broad outline, the radiating vistas of intellectual and moral life do not interest these young poets in the least. Their eyes are not lifted to the mountains, but are occupied in minute inspection of the ground.... No generation of writers... was ever more obsessed with the charm of nervous sensibility, cultivated for its own sake, and not shrinking even from an apparently prosaic diction in order to emphasise its presentation." But perhaps the most outspoken critic of Georgian Poetry V was Alec Waugh. The volume was characterized, he wrote, not only by lifelessness and lack of intensity but also by a "distinctly tedious homogeneity of style and meter." Nor did he confine his condemnation to the fifth volume alone. Quite correctly, he linked volumes IV and V together, asserting that the material in both of them was "in the bulk uninteresting [and] undramatic. It limited the capacities of the universe to a number of natural objects, and to the poet who observed them. There is little if any recognition of other personalities."  

Both in what he said and the manner in which he said it, Holbrook Jackson courageously did what one suspects several other reviewers would have preferred to do: he devoted precisely one short paragraph in To-day to a succinct dismissal of the volume. "The fifth book of Georgian Poetry," he wrote,  

34 "Georgian Poetry," reprinted in More Books on the Table (New York, 1923), pp. 231-34.  
"despite the addition of seven writers who have not hitherto appeared in this collection, carries on a tradition of sameness. The quality is maintained but the freshness has departed—which means that E.M. has more or less completed his work as an anthologist. He has represented a poetic mode with fairness and accuracy, and it is not his fault that the particular vein has exhausted itself."

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CHAPTER 10

THE FAILURE OF IMAGINATION

What reasons can be adduced for the lack of vigor which so abundantly characterized Georgian Poetry IV and V, making inevitable the steady decline and eventual demise of the anthology? Several have already been suggested. It is tempting, in the first place, to lay the blame upon Edward Marsh's poetic tastes. Such a course has been particularly attractive to those critics who cynically define Georgian poetry as that poetry which appealed to Edward Marsh. And although it too neatly over-simplifies a complex matter, there is obviously some truth in the argument. Marsh's taste, never precisely avant-garde, grew steadily more conservative in the postwar era. As obscurity came increasingly into poetic fashion, Marsh was led to insist the more strenuously upon lucidity as the sine qua non for entrance into the post-war volumes of Georgian Poetry.

The charge of obscurity which he levelled at W. J. Turner in 1919—and which resulted in Turner's secession from Georgian Poetry V in 1922—was a case in point. And

1 E.g., Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature (New York, 1947), p. 373.
2 A tendency which even several of his original contributors to G.P. observed. Cf. Wilfrid Gibson, "The 'Georgian Poets,' or Twenty Years After," Bookman, LXXII (1932), 260.
Marsh undertook disputes over poetic form with others of his Georgians as well, though none resulted in so serious a defec-
tion. In a rash moment in 1919, John Freeman confessed that he was "getting tired of little lyric gasps," and advised
Marsh that he was setting out to experiment with new forms. Freeman could scarcely have pricked Marsh in a more sensitive
spot. The short lyric was par excellence a "Georgian" form; it was the form which Marsh instinctively preferred, the one
which most nearly satisfied his poetic canons, and the one in which, if anywhere, the Georgians had excelled. To dismiss
it so cavalierly seemed to call Marsh's basic poetic taste into question. Or at any rate, so Marsh apparently interpreted
Freeman's remarks. And Marsh was alarmed. He advised the poet, apparently with some force, to stick with the short
lyric, and, when his advice went unheeded, accused Freeman of "throwing over form" altogether.

Freeman defended himself: "I was never farther than now from throwing over form, and please God never shall dream of
doing so," he wrote. "Things I am doing now will show you that it is at least as great an urgency of form as of content
that drives me to—well, longer lyrics. Content is the root—
not fixed in a pretty crystal bowl but growing in the earth
and sending up at length some flower which is neither form
alone nor subject alone, but truly the flower—the poem." Marsh remained unconvinced, preferring to suspect that be-
cause Freeman had abandoned the lyric form, he had abandoned
all form. Again Freeman felt compelled to defend himself
against the inflexibility of Marsh's taste. "To throw over
the brief lyric isn’t suicide,” he replied to one of Marsh’s preachments. “Rather it is a withering than a rejection:
leaves falling before fruit comes. It seems to me that
modern poetry must, if it lives an hour, express personality and
a view of the whole that’s outside personality and time; must
express them both and cannot indeed express them individually
or singly; and so inevitably one tends to the longer...form--
the lyric prolonged into steady reflectiveness....”

It is also true that Marsh grew increasingly insistent
upon the rightness of his own poetic judgments in the postwar
years. He too seems to have shared in the mounting literary
intolerance which accompanied intensification of the coterie
spirit in postwar England. In a sense Georgian Poetry IV,
unprovocative and well-mannered as it was, was an act of de­
fiance. In it Marsh seemed more stubbornly determined than
ever before to raise his flag in the very teeth of hostile
critical guns. With volume IV, he indulged his own tastes
perhaps more extensively than in any other volume. Conse­
quently, though none of the series was intended to be wholly
representative, Georgian Poetry IV was the most narrowly con­
ceived of them all. Gordon Bottomley was among the first of
Marsh’s contributors to recognize this difference. Soon after
receiving his copy of the fourth volume, he wrote:

I don’t know whether or not you intended it, or
whether its aspect comes by you or by the time­
spirit, but it seems to me to have drawn its being
and nature from a different conception; in trying
to register candidly its impression and effect on
me, I can come nearest by saying that its three

3John Freeman to E.M., July 30, 1919; July 5, 1920; Aug. 1,
1920, MLC.
elder brothers strike me as being constituted on the lines of a national picture gallery, while this newest scion has rather the nature of one of the great private collections of the same calibre as the public ones. The former volumes have the feeling of having been chosen to satisfy connoisseurs of all schools, the present one to satisfy and exemplify the unresting and exacting taste of one of the great connoisseurs—so that, for the first time, I am eagerly enjoying the knowledge of your vision of poetry, and of what your own poetry would be like if you had chosen to write instead of to guide your age. 

In view of the almost universal critical condemnation of *Georgian Poetry* IV Bottomley's compliment to Marsh was a back-handed one, though surely he did not intend it so.

Marsh's second attempt to defend his principles in the face of postwar hostility was less indirect. No longer willing, by 1922, to ignore the sneering attacks upon his anthology, Marsh carried the battle to the enemy with an unusually lengthy preface to *Georgian Poetry* V. Characteristically, he attacked with the rapier, a weapon which he wielded with uncommon skill. "When the fourth volume of this series was published three years ago," he began, "many of the critics who had up till then...been the dearest creatures in the world to me, took another turn. Not only did they very properly disapprove my choice of poems: they went on to write as if the Editor of *Georgian Poetry* were a kind of public functionary, like the President of the Royal Academy; and they asked...who was E. M. that he should bestow and withhold crowns and sceptres, and decide that this or that poet was or was not to count." Nothing could have been farther from his aim than to set himself up "as a pundit, or a pontiff, or a Petronius Arbiter," Marsh alleged. An anthology

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4Gordon Bottomley to E.M., Nov. 29, 1919, MLC.
is by nature exclusive, but *Georgian Poetry* did not seek to establish a poetic school or coterie; its aim was simply to place before the public eye "a number of writers doing work which appeared...extremely good, but which was narrowly known."

Moreover, Marsh entered what he called "a mild protest" against the commonly repeated charge that because *Georgian Poetry* "had merely encouraged a small clique of mutually indistinguishable poetasters to abound in their own and each other's sense or nonsense," the poetic result had been only "an insipid sameness." "It is only natural," he argued, "that the poets of a generation should have points in common; but to my fond eye those who have graced these collections look as diverse as sheep to their shepherds, or the members of a Chinese family to their uncle."

He saved his keenest thrust until last. To those critics who implied that in closing the pages of *Georgian Poetry* to "modern" verse, Marsh was not only intensifying coterie warfare but was also being deliberately stiff-necked, his reply was simple and direct. "Much admired modern work," he wrote, "seems to me, in its lack of inspiration and its disregard of form, like gravy imitating lava." Edmund Blunden was no doubt right when he wrote Marsh, after reading the preface, "The foreword to the *Georgians* is an act of vengeance which leaves you in possession. The enemy lies strewn about you, and all done with a rapier."\(^5\) Marsh had effectively defended his anthologizing principles; he had again disavowed the assumption

\(^5\)Edmund Blunden to E.M., Dec. 3, 1922, MLC.
that Georgian Poetry was—or should have been—representative. The charge against his poetic taste, however, he could not so easily turn aside. Indeed, the preface to Georgian Poetry V was at once Marsh's admission that his tastes were out of date and his challenge to his adversaries to do their worst. Come what may, Edward Marsh would defend the lost cause of formal verse. Rather than submit to the powers of darkness, he would allow Georgian Poetry to die. Admiration for Marsh's integrity cannot be allowed to obscure the fact that his increasingly restricted tastes and his inflexible insistence upon the rightness of his own poetic judgments constitute significant reasons for the postwar senescence of Georgian Poetry.

Perhaps an even more considerable reason was the spiritual enervation of the postwar age itself. Most of the reviewers who assailed the last two volumes of Georgian Poetry for their lifelessness were also willing to attribute that quality to the age in which they appeared. The reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement, as has been pointed out above, considered Georgian Poetry IV a literary symptom of the spiritual temper of the times: the lack of poetic direction which he discovered in it was but evidence of "the lack of spiritual direction of a nation that turns against itself, leaderless, discontented, and half-hearted." Alec Waugh agreed. "No contention could be more absurd," he argued, than to blame the insipidity of the verse in Georgian Poetry IV and V upon the taste of Edward Marsh. Rather, there was "only one explanation for the preponderance in these last two collections of impersonal

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6TLS, Dec. 11, 1919, p. 738.
unemotional poetry, namely, that the poetry of personal passion and experience is no longer being produced with the rich abundance of the war and prewar years." Like the nation itself, the English poet was emotionally exhausted; he recoiled from the horror of war to uncomplicated poetry which extolled the "calm beauties of the English countryside" or to a poetry of minutiae which required no strenuous emotional effort. The lifelessness of postwar poetry, Waugh declared, was a kind of passive protest, "the mark of a very definite conviction, of the post-war aesthetic point of view. It is the protest of a generation that has put all its eggs...into one basket and has seen them smashed; a generation that has been exploited once and is resolved not to make that particular mistake again."  

Even Amy Lowell, one of the severest critics of Georgian Poetry, could lay the blame for the "weary verse" of volume IV only partially at Edward Marsh's doorstep. She admitted, too, that the tedious sameness of postwar Georgian verse was "pathological" in origin. It arose, that is, because emotions made taut by four years of death and horror had finally snapped; and being unable, or unwilling, to feel deeply, the postwar Georgian poets could scarcely have been expected to produce any but third-rate verse.  

Middleton Murry came to much the same conclusion. The complacency and "right-mindedness" for which he had belabored Georgian Poetry IV in 1919 came about, he later agreed, not because the Georgians

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7*Fortnightly Review*, CXV, n.s. (1924), 129-30.  
8*Poetry and Poets*, p. 127.
were consciously attempting to create a coterie, but simply out of emotional fatigue. It was a reaction to the war, a defense mechanism against a too long protracted strain. It was a pitiful attempt to keep up poetic appearances by the outward pretense that nothing at all unusual had happened to the spirit of man from 1914 to 1918. "Right-mindedness," Murry observed in 1920, "is, fundamentally, a clumsy method of exorcising the devil that walketh at noonday; it is an attempt to combat an insidious disease by assuming the outward behavior of a man in health." Equally insidious, Murry argued, was the opposite disease, "wrong-headedness," or the pessimistic, despairing state of mind common among many of the more avant-garde postwar poets. But both were caused by the same virus; both owed their genesis to the war. And so, Murry observed, the British literary world was divided into two quarreling factions, "the right-minded and the wrong-headed, the comprehensibles and the incomprehensibles, the top-dogs and the under-dogs." Meanwhile the resultant friction was debilitating the best talents in England.9

Such analyses as Murry's and Miss Lowell's, though essentially correct, seem just a shade too neat. Emotional exhaustion was not the only attribute of the postwar years which helps account for the insipid calm into which a large segment of English poetry sank from 1918 to 1922. Another can perhaps be singled out in the general drift toward conformity. The tendency of the poet toward corporate endeavor,

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his susceptibility to the coterie spirit, and his consequent willingness to sacrifice a large measure of his individual inspiration, have already been noted, and to some extent, explained. But can the unusually strong appeal of the coterie to the postwar poet be satisfactorily accounted for only by the practical argument that the individual poet was forced to join a coterie if he wanted to be published? Perhaps not. Such an argument seems in part to beg the question; it accounts satisfactorily for the symptoms of the disease while overlooking the cause.

War had made conformity both fashionable and habitual. It had brought to the profession of letters the necessity to conform to majority opinions, even to reflect those opinions, to a degree which most authors would have scorned as intolerable in peacetime. And the will to conform, the habit of acting in concert with the group, enforced by four years of war, could scarcely have been expected to disappear immediately at the onset of peace. "There was perhaps never a time," wrote one observer as he surveyed literary London after six months of peace, "when our scribes were more uniformly ingratiating and struggled more desperately to please. No pretty lady or earnest young curate has ever approached some of the leading novelists and quill-drivers in the fervour of their desire to make a good impression." Again the cause was the war: a time when "the great mass of current literature...cowered like a veritable Uriah Heep before public opinion, rubbing its greasy hands with invisible soft soap"; when British writers seemed to strive with almost one accord to reflect every
popular prejudice and to echo every popular banalité"; and when there was "scarcely to be found one 'conscientious objector' who had the pluck to follow his own road, giving the herd—in passing—a sound clump over its collective tête de mouton."¹⁰ If the lifelessness of poetry in the immediate postwar years is to be attributed even in part to the tendency of the British poet to seek out the security of a coterie, then surely the attractiveness of the postwar coterie is in turn to be explained partially by the peacetime survival of war-engendered habits of conformity, collective action, and the will to please.

Not all observers concurred in the pessimistic estimate of the temper of the age implied in the comments of such critics as Miss Lowell, Murry, or Alec Waugh. J. C. Squire still fought a rear-guard action. From the London Mercury he fired an occasional salvo intended to persuade literate Englishmen that the prewar poetic revival was still in fact occurring. But his postwar bursts went off with all the impact of a wet firecracker. And by 1922 even Squire's comments were noticeably more guarded than they had been in the prewar "Solomon Eagle" days. He still stuck to his guns—the poetic revival had survived the war, he argued—but in 1922 he could only write ambiguously, "We are far from thinking...that all our contemporary geese are swans, or that swans are very numerous.... But if we see no reason to believe that we are in the middle—though we may be at the

beginning of a great creative age, we certainly do not think that we are in the middle of a slump. No age has thought much of itself..."\(^{11}\)

An editorial writer in the *Athenaeum* also saw some hope for poetry. While admitting that the present looked black, he argued that reasonable hopes for the future were possible if poetry consented to become more "democratic," less esoteric, less private. A "democratic culture," he argued, must be reflected in a "living literature,...catching the spirit and vigour of the people,...clothed in the language of the hearth and the workshop. Its subject-matter and allusions and metaphors must be drawn from the life of the people.... The poems of the new era will throb with the activities of the mine and the workshop, the trade union and the cooperative society."\(^{12}\) Only time would tell what an erroneous prophet this writer turned out to be.

Contrary to such sanguine views, most critics agreed that the postwar imaginative paralysis boded ill for the future of poetry. The patience of even the *Times Literary Supplement* was finally taxed beyond endurance by the flaccidity of postwar verse. In a most uncharacteristic excursion into sarcasm it exclaimed: "We have discovered the cause of world unrest. It is respectable minor poetry; poetry written without imagination at the call of cultivated emotions, rich in the righteousness of untroubled convention; poetry which tells us nothing but that a man is tired, or saw a sunset, or was mildly alarmed, or lived at Constantinople,

\(^{11}\) *London Mercury*, VII (1922), 2.

and, far from transporting us there, settles us more firmly in our chair in an atmosphere of such chill indifference as invites the flames of revolution." Many observers were unwilling to dismiss the sorry state of verse in even such bitterly humorous tones. They agreed with another reviewer in the same journal who complained in a rather more serious vein, "The crying fault of so many modern poems is that they do not move us strongly either to delight or disgust, that the material out of which they are made is not sufficiently dominated by its creator's idea, or illuminated by his passion, for us to forget the artifice in the art, the body in the spirit. Rather they suggest petty experiments in both matter and style, like the floral designs on Victorian china...."

The listless temper of the age, then, and Edward Marsh's increasingly restricted tastes both partially explain the postwar decline of Georgian Poetry. But from out of the historical account of the anthology a third reason for the tepidity of the 1919 and 1922 volumes is perhaps even more clearly implied. The history of Georgian Poetry from 1917 to 1922 suggests that the Neo-Georgians were steadily gaining dominance over the anthology while the influence of the original Georgians was being continually whittled away, until,

13TLS, Nov. 25, 1920, p. 772. One of the volumes under review which invited the TLS's stricture was Herbert Asquith's A Village Sermon (1920). Asquith had of course appeared in G. P. III in 1917, when objections to his inclusion on much the same grounds had been urged on E.M. by, among others, Edmund Gosse. See pp. 238-39, above.
14TLS, Jan. 19, 1922, p. 38.
by 1922, it had almost reached the vanishing point. The Neo-
Georgians' gain was Georgian Poetry's loss.

The contention for dominion over the anthology between
Georgians and Neo-Georgians was of course part of a larger
struggle in which the stakes were nothing less than leader-
ship of postwar English poetry. From one point of view it
appeared as a struggle between two personalities, Harold Monro
and J. C. Squire. In the prewar years, and perhaps through
most of the war as well, no person or institution in London
was capable of challenging the leadership Monro exerted over a
large segment of English poetry, a leadership which, though
informal and largely undefined, was nonetheless real, for it
stemmed from his position as dean of the Poetry Bookshop, editor
of the most influential poetic journal of the prewar era, and
the most active publisher of new poetry in London. Not a
little eminence had also accrued to him as publisher of the
Georgian Poetry series. During the late war years, however,
Monro's power was steadily being chipped away by the growing
influence of Squire. The appearance of his verse in Georgian
Poetry III, as well as the verse of his protégés Turner and
Freeman, had been a major coup for Squire; and if Monro saw
the handwriting on the wall in 1917, there was little he could
do about it, for Turner's moon-drenched verse and Squire's
catalogue poetry seemed to exert a mounting hold over Edward
Marsh's tastes. With the founding of the abundantly endowed
London Mercury in 1919, and with the considerable power he
exerted over reviewing in other journals, Squire was able
successfully to wrest leadership of postwar poetry from the hands of Harold Monro. By 1920 the conquest was all but complete, and Monro could only pay grudging homage to the man who had bested him while at the same time impliedly blaming Squire and his poetic following both for the intensification of postwar coterie warfare and the senescence of Georgian Poetry. 15

But far more was involved than a dispute between two men. Two very different schools of poetry were contesting for predominance over Georgian Poetry. One of the most significant qualities of the first two volumes, for instance—and the one which most clearly distinguished the Georgians from their prewar contemporaries—was poetic realism. Abercrombie, Bottomley, Brooke, Masefield, Gibson: all had taken their fling at realistic verse in 1912 and 1915, in several cases with spectacular, if not entirely successful, results. Neo-Georgianism, exemplified in the Squire-Shanks-Freeman-Turner school, was precisely a reaction against Georgian realism. With the ascendancy of the poets of the Squirearchy, as Herbert Palmer wrote, "the boisterous influence of Masefield...and other ruddy poets was to be thoroughly checked." In place of Georgian realism was to be substituted Turner's lush, tropic exoticism; in place of Masefield—"the most sunshiny of them all"—was to be substituted that veriest symbol of Neo-Georgianism: the moon. The symbol came from the verse of J. C. Squire. "J. C. Squire's Moon! His own

15 Some Contemporary Poets, pp. 150-52. See also Swinnerton, Georgian Scene, pp. 275-77.
verse is hag-ridden by it; and it was on the banner of all
the New Poetry. On the banner of all the new-comers—Shanks,
Freeman, and W. J. Turner—casting its silvery beams across
the whole landscape of Georgian verse.¹⁶ And what did this
moon-worship mean for Georgian Poetry? It meant that in
volumes IV and V the anthology had succumbed to the spiritual
exhaustion of the age.

It meant that passion was dying, that it
was thought better that it should die,
that emotions during the early part of the
war had been keyed to too high a pitch,
and that henceforth poets must seek strength
in complete escape, in farther withdrawal
from the turmoil of religion, of politics,
of patriotism, of active life. The sun,
the old life-giver, had gone corrupt; the
moon, the new life-giver, was to be the
symbol of the new serene order in the
world of poetry, of art, of human life.
Suppression! Resignation! Restraint!

As it turned out, the Neo-Georgian moon lighted only the
wide path to poetic oblivion.

Several of Marsh's contributors sensed the change of
tone which had occurred in Georgian Poetry by 1919.
Bottomley's comments on the difference in tone between
volume IV and the first two volumes have been noted. Several

¹⁶Palmer was not the only critic to remark the depressing
recurrence of the moon, moonlight, and imagery connected with
the moon in Squire's poetry. Middleton Murry also recognized
it and, in fact, used it as the primary piece of evidence to
convict Squire of poetic insincerity. ("A Poet of the Moon,"
Athenaeum, no. 4710 [Aug. 6, 1920], p. 170).

Though the sharp division of the Georgians into two schools
(to which I have applied the names of Georgian and Neo-
Georgian) is Palmer's, he was not the first to notice the
difference between pre- and postwar Georgian poetry. He was
anticipated by Middleton Murry and several other contemporary
reviewers in both the TLS and the Athenaeum.
younger poets were even more outspoken, particularly Robert Graves. While attempting to mitigate the sting of his comments with a wry joke or two, Graves deplored the lushness of Neo-Georgian verse; and he clearly pointed out to Marsh the danger of poetic insincerity inevitable when poets begin to emulate each other. In its attempt to be vivid and colorful, Graves argued, much of the over-decorated verse in Georgian Poetry IV succeeded only in betraying the fact that the poets who wrote it suffered from an advanced case of spiritual anemia.

'It's a very arborial book,' said Bob Nichols to me, and I remarked on the apparent instability of all the elms as contrasted with the enormous vitality of the nightingales. But that was only a joke and against ourselves really too.

...I wish the older blokes wouldn't borrow Turner's moonwashed apples and parrotty jungle and fishy conservatory. It upsets one so; I know Turner's scenario is fearfully good as written by himself and tempting for idea-less people to copy but that when they do it's a signal for someone with a more personal style to take over the torch. (This craving for exotic color is a sign of anemic old age; University dons always love red robes and their wives' purple hats. And in the vacation they revel in foul red sunsets on Brighton Esplanade. Comprise?) If the tendency continues you'll have to go and publish in British North Borneo or Brett-Young's E. Africa on bamboo paper using ape-blood for printers ink and crocodile for binding.18

The "tendency" did continue. When Georgian Poetry V came under consideration, therefore, Graves made a suggestion which faced facts realistically and which Marsh might have done well to consider. "Why not muzzle the critics' sweeping jibes by dividing the book historically into two parts?" Graves suggested. The first part would contain the work of

18Robert Graves to E.M., Nov. 30, [1919], MLC.
the Georgians—"the old hands," as Graves called them—the second the work of the younger men, "the ones who are now not more than 32 or 33--i.e., those who at the outbreak of the war eight years ago had not settled down seriously to write or formed their styles for good, in other words those whose characters are entirely moulded by war-experience and after-the-war experience." Such a division, Graves argued, would tend to spike the critics' guns by taking belated recognition of what had in fact already occurred: a split between the Georgians of the volume I and II tradition and those of the volume IV tradition. It "will make the book more sensible," he urged, "and will account for the breaking of the excellent Abercrombie-Hodgson-De la Mare-Davies-Brooke tradition of early Georgianism." And he added a comment which Marsh might correctly have taken as evidence of a good deal of discontent among some of his younger contributors who were unaffiliated with the Squirearchy. "It will be kinder both to old and young to put 'em in separate cages if the murmurings I hear are to be trusted."

As Graves was aware, however, a division simply on the basis of age would not accurately reflect what had happened to Georgian Poetry by 1922. There were not only two schools of poets to consider; there were three. Graves designated them metaphorically as the bull, the camel, and the ox. "At present," he told Marsh, "you are ploughing with a Bull and a young camel."

By that token the Bull has begotten a rather ineffective Ox; which disgraces its very excellent sire and annoys the camel--its name is not
Georgianism but Georgianismatism and it is against the inclusion of this occasional ox that the real hostility to recent volumes lies.

Tortures wouldn't drag from me the names of this sham-Georgian school, but it is recognizable by its infernal cleverness and damnable dulness. Remember the end of the Yellow Book and forgive my impertinence, ... but take this view (about the ox) as expressing the secret opinions of that group of writers Turner, Blunden, Nichols, Sassoon, Graves, etc., the camel which thrust its nose into the Arab's tent in 1916....

For "bull" read the Georgians of volumes I and II; for "ox" read the Neo-Georgian moonlight school which had perverted the genuine Georgian tradition; and for "camel" read that loosely knit group of young poets who, though contemporaries of the moonlight poets, were of a more virile stripe. It was the impotence of the ox which in large measure accounted for the enervation of Georgian Poetry, for with volumes IV and V the ox waxed fat in the pages of the anthology while the camel succeeded in getting very little more than his nose under the tent, and the bull, old and docile, was put out to pasture.

The failure of the Neo-Georgians was at bottom the failure of the poetic imagination. They were imaginatively bankrupt. Not that they had lost the ability to see. On the contrary, most of them were sensitive and perceptive recorders who even managed now and then to capture some of the more subtle nuances of the world of eye and ear.

The heavy train through the dim country went rolling, rolling, interminably passing misty snow-covered plough-land ridges that merged in the snowy sky; came turning meadows, fences, came gullies and passed, and ice-coloured streams under frozen bridges.

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19 Robert Graves to E.M., undated (but ca. early 1922), MLC.
Across the travelling landscape evenly
drooped and lifted
The telegraph wires, thick ropes of snow
in the windless air;
They drooped and paused and lifted again
to unseen summits,
Drawing the eyes and soothing them, often,
to a drowsy stare.

Singly in the snow the ghosts of trees were
softly pencilled,
Fainter and fainter, in distance fading,
into nothingness gliding,
But sometimes a crowd of the intricate
silver trees of fairyland
Passed, close and intensely clear, the
phantom world hiding.

(J. C. Squire, "Late Snow," Georgian Poetry V, p. 187)

What the Neo-Georgians had lost was rather the ability to
create out of what they saw, the ability to transmute raw ex­
erience into art, to give shape, form, direction and signifi­
cance to the data of the senses. And so, as the Times
Literary Supplement claimed, they slipped into "respectable
minor poetry; poetry written without imagination at the call
of cultivated emotions."

At the worst the failure of imagination led the Neo­
Georgians down the path of poetic insincerity. They became
poseurs. By 1920, as Harold Monro complained, "verse writing
[had become] a professional occupation." For many a young
postwar poet appearances had become more important than
reality; "his desire to be thought a poet [was] stronger than
his love of poetry."20 Unfortunately much Neo-Georgian verse
bears him out. The moonlight poets were so absorbed in the
task of appearing superficially "poetic" that they forgot a
cardinal truth: poetry is based upon emotion deeply felt

20Some Contemporary Poets, pp. 9, 15.
and imaginatively seized. Such critics as Monro and Graves, speaking from within the temple, were not the only observers to inveigh against Neo-Georgian Pharisaism. From outside the sacred precincts too, there arose a chorus of voices, from 1919 through 1922, to deplore, to condemn, or to deride the patent insincerity of much Neo-Georgian verse. Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, Osbert and Edith Sitwell, Middleton Murry: in varying tones they all pointed out the same basic deficiency in Neo-Georgian verse. Perhaps Murry may be permitted to sum up their comments, for he was more skillful than most in keeping the sneer from his voice but at the same time mincing no words. He chose a vulnerable point for one of his attacks, the title poem of J. C. Squire's The Moon (1920). Having analyzed the poem at length, and having isolated several glaring weaknesses which arose, he claimed, from Squire's uninspired attempts to copy the matter and the manner of other Neo-Georgians, Murry concluded with a perceptive one-sentence indictment: "And when these weaknesses recur through the poem the suspicion hardens into a certainty that it is not really a poem, because it did not have its origin in any compulsive emotion, but was the outcome of a desire to write poetry rather than the urgent need to express a perception."21 Murry had placed his finger precisely on the weakness of several of the Neo-Georgian poets. They were, so to speak, faking poetry, playing mechanically by rote or by ear poetic chords which they did not feel. They had perhaps

been shaken by experience—shaken too deeply, many critics believed—but their experience and their emotions were merely versified. Their perceptions had not been forced through the alembic of the shaping, creative imagination to emerge as unique poetry.

Even at the best, when not the faintest suspicion of poetic insincerity can be allowed, the poverty of their imaginations often rendered the Neo-Georgians uncommonly ineffective poets. They were by no means lacking in poetic skills. Poets like Shanks and Turner can scarcely be accused of technical ineptitude. But technical dexterity was no substitute for that one quality indispensable to the poet, the power which "bodies forth / The forms of things unknown," permits the poet's pen to turn them to shapes, "and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name." One recalls Edward Shanks' indictment of Mrs. Shove, who, though not strictly speaking a Neo-Georgian, shared most of their shortcomings. She "is like a house," he wrote, "in which all the fittings for electric light are in position but which is not yet connected to the main. If something happened to her, I believe she might begin to write poetry."22 Shanks could scarcely have picked a more fitting simile to describe the Neo-Georgians, a school to which, ironically, he himself belonged. Nor could he have prescribed a better remedy for "Georgianismatism": something had to "happen" to the Neo-Georgians to turn them from versifiers into poets. Of course nothing did happen to them because, in the postwar world, 

22Edward Shanks to E.M., April 10, 1919, MLC.
they allowed nothing to happen. Too much had happened from 1914 to 1918. And so even at their best, the Neo-Georgians often practiced a poetry of shimmering mirages and half-lights or what one critic called a "kind of aesthetic mesmerism."

Perhaps the foremost Neo-Georgian practitioner of the poetry of mesmerism was W. J. Turner. No one can question his sincerity. In his own genre he was unsurpassed; even Robert Graves, a poet of quite a different order, admitted that Turner's "scenario [was] fearfully good." But his genre was exceedingly restricted, his poetic aims severely limited, and his characteristic poetry essentially unreal, remote, and fervorless.

The stone-grey roses by the desert's rim
Are soft-edged shadows on the moonlit sand,
Grey are the broken walls of Khangavar,
The haunt of nightingales, whose voices are
Fountains that bubble in the dream-soft moon.

Shall the Gazelles with moonbeam pale bright feet
Entering the vanished gardens sniff the air--
Some scent may linger of that ancient time,
Musician's song, or poet's passionate rhyme,
The Princess dead, still wandering love-sick there.

A Princess pale and cold as mountain snow,
In cool, dark chambers sheltered from the sun,
With long dark lashes and small delicate hands:
All Persia sighed to kiss her small red mouth
Until they buried her in shifting sand.

And the Gazelles shall flit by in the moon
And never shake the frail Tree's lightest leaves,
And moonlight roses perfume the pale Dawn
Until the scarlet life that left her lips
Gathers its shattered beauty in the sky.

("The Princess," Georgian Poetry IV, p. 185)

No matter what subject Turner chose to treat—and the seven poems Marsh chose for Georgian Poetry IV showed a remarkable
diversity of subject matter—the tone remained essentially the same. With Turner one does not even inhabit a world where it seems always afternoon but rather always dusk; his is a world of hallucination and half-light. "His voice comes to us," as one contemporary critic observed, thin and spare, "not out of the world we know, but out of some mirage of its own creation."

He leads us through a mysterious landscape every detail of which is delineated with conscious clearness; it is as if we had passed with him through some open window or half-open door out into the jewel-like background of an early master. He brings to bear upon us a kind of aesthetic mesmerism, and seems to achieve this end by first mesmerizing himself. For the ornate and complicated picture or picture background he exhibits to us is always the same;... all [his poems] are dominated by one idea: that which in a picture is called chiaroscuro....

Everywhere...the contrast of light and darkness is insisted upon, as though poetry were enjoyed in a state of hallucination and this were the necessary preliminary and accompaniment.23

Poetry conceived "in a state of hallucination" could scarcely have been expected to be a poetry of passion and conviction. And indeed it was precisely Turner's lack of passion, the spiritless quality of his verse, which many contemporary critics came to see as the hallmark of Neo-Georgian verse.

Mr. Turner's new poem is like a piece of tapestry. It is large and simple in the main masses of design. The details are worked out with great beauty. There are heroic figures in each piece, but their action is not violent, and their outlines are not sharp. The passion of the whole is subdued; the lighting very soft, the colour dim and rich.... It all seems very faint, old, and far-away.... There is very little brightness in Mr. Turner's rich old tapestry. On the other hand, the lighting is always rather that of moonlight than of sunlight; and the frequent mention of the moon is but just art.24

23TLS, Feb. 16, 1922, p. 104.
"Very faint, old, and far-away." The poem specifically at issue was *Paris and Helen* (1921), but the critic's observations apply equally to much of the rest of Turner's own verse, and to a large part of the poetry of the other Neo-Georgians—poets like Squire, Shanks, and Freeman—who followed Turner's cue in *Georgian Poetry IV* and *V*. In a world which had just emerged from the most frightful blood-bath in history, a world of general strikes and of continuing alarms of struggle and flight on an ever more darkling plain, a large segment of British poetry had taken the road of retrenchment, of retreat into an hallucinatory world created by tired minds and overtaxed spirits.

The failure of the postwar imagination was not restricted to the Neo-Georgians alone. The Georgians too faltered and flagged. Most of those poets of the prewar tradition who survived into volumes *IV* and *V*—Abercrombie, Bottomley, Davies, De la Mare, Drinkwater, Gibson, and Monro—showed evidence of clearly declining powers in 1919 and 1922. Like their Neo-Georgian peers, the Georgians were also content to set their poetic sights too comfortably low in the postwar years. More specifically, having been deserted by their own muse, several of the Georgians began to play the sedulous ape to the Neo-Georgians, particularly to Turner. As Robert Graves had complained to Marsh, the "older blokes" in *Georgian Poetry IV* insisted on borrowing "Turner's moonwashed apples and his parrotty jungle and fishy conservatory." Evidence for Graves' accusation is not difficult to find.

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25 Robert Graves to E.M., Nov. 30, [1919], MLC.
In a poem the very title of which is revelatory, John Drinkwater demonstrated that Turner's muse was at least adaptable. Given the only absolutely essential ingredient, moonlight, it could function as well in the Cotswolds as in a tropic jungle.

**Moonlit Apples**

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows, And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then There is no sound at the top of the house of men Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams; On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams, And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep. And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep On moon-washed apples of wonder.

(georgian poetry IV, p. 50)

In a most un-Gibson-like poem, Wilfrid Gibson took a colorful look into Turner's "parrotty jungle":

Somewhere, somewhen I've seen, But where or when I'll never know, Parrots of shrilly green With crests of shriller scarlet flying Out of black cedars as the sun was dying Against cold peaks of snow.

("The Parrots," georgian poetry IV, p. 74)

Or in an even more obviously derivative vein, he pictured
seven solemn negroes dancing,
With faces rapt and out-thrust bellies
prancing
In a slow solemn ceremonial cakewalk,
Dancing and prancing to the sombre tom-tom
Thumped by a crookbacked grizzled negro
squatting.
And as he watched...within the steamy twi-
light
Of swampy forest in rank greenness rotting,
That sombre tom-tom at his heartstrings
strumming
Set all his sinews twitching, and a singing
Of cold fire through his blood--and he was
dancing
Among his fellows in the dank green twilight
With naked, oiled, bronze-gleaming bodies
swinging
In a rapt holy everlasting cakewalk
For evermore in slow procession prancing.

("The Cakewalk," Georgian Poetry IV, p. 75)

Harold Monro too fell under the hypnotic spell of the Neo-
Georgian moon and nightingales in a poem which, for its in-
sistence upon "chiaroscuro" and "the contrast of light and
darkness," out-did even Turner.

The Nightingale Near the House

Here is the soundless cypress on the lawn:
It listens, listens. Taller trees beyond
Listen. The moon at the unruffled pond
Stares. And you sing, you sing.

That star-enchanted song falls through the air
From lawn to lawn down terraces of sound,
Darts in white arrows on the shadowed ground;
And all the night you sing.

My dreams are flowers to which you are a bee
As all night long I listen, and my brain
Receives your song, then loses it again
In moonlight on the lawn.

Now is your voice a marble high and white,
Then like a mist on fields of paradise,
Now is a raging fire, then is like ice,
Then breaks, and it is dawn.

(Georgian Poetry IV, p. 103)
But perhaps the urge to ape the verse of the Neo-Georgians was not the disease itself but only the symptom. If the Neo-Georgians had not been available, most of the Georgians would have been compelled, one suspects, either to search for other models or remain silent, for by 1919, with few exceptions (notably Walter De la Mare), the Georgians themselves were suffering from imaginative asphyxia. In the prewar years the Georgians had excelled, if anywhere, in two genres: in realistic poetry and in nature poetry. It was precisely in these two realms that their declining powers became most painfully evident in the postwar years.

To be sure, by 1920 poetic realism had almost run its course; it was no longer capable of shocking a world grown inured to more brutal shocks than poetry could deliver. When they were published in volume form in 1920 and 1922, King Lear's Wife and the End of the World, those realistic causes célèbres of 1915, failed to evoke much more than kind words and more-or-less bored yawns from the reviewers. By 1920-1922 the major Georgian realists had either died or abdicated their positions. Brooke had died in 1915; Masefield had emphatically bowed out of Georgian Poetry in 1919; Abercrombie, having been appointed to a lectureship at the University of Liverpool in 1919, turned increasingly from poetry to literary criticism; and Bottomley, who had demurred at inclusion in Georgian Poetry IV, conclusively refused to be represented in V on the grounds that his brand of verse might "seem too occasional in the eyes of an increasingly critical world."

27Gordon Bottomley to E.M., July 9, 1922, MLC.
Only Wilfrid Gibson was left. And in Gibson's postwar verse one sees some evidence that prewar Georgian realism had become little more than mere convention. One sees, moreover, a subtle change of tone which the war years had worked upon Gibson's poetry. Even as early as 1915 at least one reviewer had noticed that Gibson's characteristic prewar tone was changing: unexpectedly, he pointed out, Gibson's wartime verse was becoming bitter and "ironic." By 1920 it had also become monotonous and even macabre.

Philip and Phoebe Ware

Who is that woman, Philip, standing there
Before the mirror doing up her hair?

You're dreaming, Phoebe, or the morning light
Mixing and mingling with the dying night
Makes shapes out of the darkness, and you see
Some dream-remembered phantasy maybe.

Yet it grows, clearer with the growing day;
And in the cold dawn light her hair is grey:
Her lifted arms are naught but bone: her hands
White withered claws that fumble as she stands
Trying to pin that wisp into its place.

O Philip, I must look upon her face
There in the mirror. Nay, but I will rise
And peep over her shoulder...Oh, the eyes
That burn out from that face of skin and bone,
Searching my very marrow, are my own.

(Georgian Poetry V, p. 77)

As a reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement pointed out in 1920, Gibson's view of the horror and ugliness of life had at least been tempered in his prewar verse by some insight into life's beauties as well. "We had hoped," he wrote, "that the beauty which [Gibson] loved would in time assert its authority over the horror which he feared." It was not to be.

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The war came and mocked at beauty, and in the postwar world, Gibson's view became too insistently fixed upon the grimness of life. Therefore his verse had taken on a tedious monotony; he could "only hope as a poet to go on repeating himself." Moreover, it had become to some extent insincere. The charge which Middleton Murry leveled against J. C. Squire—that his verse "did not have its origin in any compulsive emotion, but was the outcome of a desire to write poetry rather than the urgent need to express a perception"—could also, unhappily, be applied to much of Gibson's postwar verse. Too often in his poetry Gibson seemed "to be playing the conjurer with grim situations more in a desire to move other people's compassion than to express his own. Such tragedies as obsess Mr. Gibson's mind are bound to occur in an imperfect world. To justify their place in poetry, they must be born again into a new life...; they must not be imposed on language by an ironical spectator." And so the verse of Wilfrid Gibson, the only Georgian seriously to attempt to carry prewar realism into the postwar era, affords evidence that a poetic mode which had seemed vital, new, and daring in 1912, and which had been capable of rousing a critical storm in 1915, had become only an outworn convention by 1920. Clearly, in one phase at least, the Georgian poetic imagination had failed. As the reviewer put it in his summation of Gibson's deficiencies, "Having lost his creative principle, he has become the recorder." That can be said not only of Gibson but of many other poets represented in Georgian Poetry IV and V, Georgian and Neo-Georgian alike.

29TLS, Nov. 4, 1920, p. 714.
In the ineffectiveness of the Georgian nature poets one sees even more clearly than in the case of the realists the decline of a once vital Georgian poetic mode into Neo-Georgian convention and worse. Even in the hands of its most outstanding practitioner, W. H. Davies, the Georgian nature lyric had gone stale by 1920. Davies was perhaps the seminal lyricist of Georgian Poetry I and II, the poet whom other Georgians and, later, Neo-Georgians tried vainly to copy. Davies had the rare gift of spontaneity, a quality which made him as inimitable, essentially, as Walter De la Mare. "Nature poets, with their meticulous catalogues," as Richard Church observed, "can be bores. Davies, with his handful of references which he repeats over and again, is never a bore. On the contrary, he puts a sort of enchantment upon us.... The emotion is a kind of nostalgia, a harking back to the morning of life, of time, the lost realm of innocence, where everything is wonder, and nothing is knowledge."^31

But in many of his postwar efforts, Davies' spontaneity faltered. He too had lost his "creative principle"; his imagination had flagged. The early-morning freshness had departed. In one mood he began to seek an undemanding lotus-

^30 Perhaps Edward Thomas might also be justifiably called a "seminal" Georgian nature lyricist, though his work never appeared in G. P. In tone and temper his verse embodied some of the best of the prewar Georgian traits, and it is not entirely clear why E.M. saw fit to exclude him from G. P. I and II. By 1917 E.M. was apparently willing to include Thomas's work in G. P. III, but the poet had been killed at Arras in April, 1917, and so was ruled out because of E.M.'s avowed policy of pushing only the work of living poets. (see above, p. 234).

land, the calm peace of eternal evening, of the Neo-Georgian
nightingale and moon.

How many buds in this warm light
    Have burst out laughing into leaves!
And shall a day like this be gone
    Before I seek the wood that holds
The richest music known?

Too many times have nightingales
    Wasted their passion on my sleep,
And brought repentance soon:
      But this one night I'll seek the woods,
The nightingale, and moon.

("Wasted Hours," Georgian Poetry V, p. 41)

In another mood he turned, like Gibson, to grim and bitter
subjects as if he too were trying to exorcise "the devil that
walketh at noonday." But Davies' excursions into the bitter
or the macabre were the more incongruous for being so
thoroughly out of character and, to some extent, unexpected.
As early as 1917, he had published in one of the little maga-
zines a most un-Davies-like lyric, the title of which implied
its significance:

Confession

One hour in every hundred hours,
    I sing of childhood, birds and flowers:
Who reads my character in song,
    Will not see much in me that's wrong.

But in my ninety hours and nine,
    I would not tell what thoughts are mine:
They're not so pure as find their words
    In songs of childhood, flowers and birds. 32

And by the early 1920's the postwar spiritual malaise had so
taken hold of Davies that he could write an incongruously
macabre little lyric.

32 Form, no. 2 (Apr. 1917), p. 18.
Down Underground

What work is going on down underground,
Without a sound--without the faintest sound!
The worms have found the place where Beauty lies,
And, entering into her two sparkling eyes,
Have dug their diamonds up; her soft breasts that
Had roses without thorns, are now laid flat;
They find a nest more comfortable there,
Than any bird could make, in her long hair;
Where they can teach their young, from thread to thread,
To leap on her white body, from her head.
This work is going on down underground,
Without a sound--without the faintest sound.33

One does not object, certainly, to the almost Elizabethan quality of Davies' subject matter. It is the manner—the simple Davies-like diction and versification—which seems out of place, for it evokes too many ironic echoes of the prewar, Georgian Davies. It seems grotesque and utterly inconsistent with the bitter tone of the postwar Davies. The contrast between matter and manner creates here, as in much of the rest of Davies' poetry, an effect of almost absurd incongruity.

Even though Edward Marsh saw to it that none of Davies' poems in Georgian Poetry IV and V dealt with rotting corpses, they too clearly demonstrated the change in tone which came over Davies' verse in the postwar years. His lyrics were no longer insistent upon the joys of nature, the rainbow and the cuckoo's song, but upon the ironies, the cruelties, even the horrors, of the natural world. The poet asks of a caged lion who it was that brought him to such ignominious captivity. He answers his own question ironically:

33The Golden Hind, no. 3 (Apr. 1923), p. 3.
It was that man who went again, alone,
Into the forest dark—Lord, he was brave!
That man a fly has killed, whose bones are left
Unburied till an earthquake digs his grave.

("The Captive Lion," Georgian Poetry V, p. 37)

He looks out on a summer morning at a lark. Unseen danger lurks, for all the other birds are silent; the lark alone sings. And the poet no longer exults in the song; rather, he warns the bird to stop his "daring task":

'Peace, little bird,' I say, 'and take some rest;
Stop that wild, screaming fire of angry song,
Before it makes a coffin of your nest.'

("A Bird's Anger," Georgian Poetry V, p. 38)

Even Davies' metaphors have become grim by 1922. In "The Villain" the first six lines are pure joy, pure prewar Davies:

While joy gave clouds the light of stars,
That beamed where'er they looked;
And calves and lambs had tottering knees,
Excited, while they sucked;
While every bird enjoyed his song,
Without one thought of harm or wrong--

But the last four lines suggest something more sinister in nature:

I turned my head and saw the wind,
Not far from where I stood,
Dragging the corn by her golden hair
Into a dark and lonely wood.

("Georgian Poetry V, p. 39")

An image of the wind as rapist would scarcely have occurred, one suspects, to the Davies of 1914. The poet's capacity wholly to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature is gone. No longer can he simply "stand and stare," for his joy is poisoned by the bitter knowledge of nature's cruelties.
Surely Davies was as fully aware in 1914 as in 1922 that nature was red in tooth and claw, but in 1914 he could still suppress the knowledge of the head and give himself over completely to the joy of the eye and the heart. In his mood of 1922, however, there was a good deal more of the Shropshire lad in W. H. Davies: the poet had capitulated to bitter knowledge. He confessed it in a poem significantly entitled "The Truth," the last of Davies' lyrics to be published in the Georgian Poetry series and an ironic coda to his career as nature poet:

Since I have seen a bird one day,
    His head pecked more than half away;
That hopped about, with but one eye,
    Ready to fight again, and die--
Ofttimes since then their private lives
    Have spoilt that joy their music gives.

So when I see this robin now,
    Like a red apple on the bough,
And question why he sings so strong,
    For love, or for the love of song;
Or sings, maybe, for that sweet rill
    Whose silver tongue is never still--

Ah, now there comes this thought unkind,
    Born of the knowledge in my mind:
He sings in triumph that last night
    He killed his father in a fight;
And now he'll take his mother's blood--
    The last strong rival for his food.

(Georgian Poetry V, p. 42)

Rotting corpses, a bird's nest viewed as a coffin, the wind conceived as a rapist, a robin with his head half pecked away: surely the Davies who could conceive of such images was not the same poet who wrote in 1912,

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

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

("Days too Short," Georgian Poetry I, p. 60)

The decline of the Georgian nature cult can also be discerned in another phase of nature poetry, the landscape poem. Although the Georgians afforded the original models—and even, in several cases, showed the Neo-Georgians how to pervert them—it is the Neo-Georgians who must assume most of the blame not only for the dreary failure of postwar landscape verse but also for the critical obloquy which that failure brought down upon the entire Georgian movement. The seminal landscape poets of Georgian Poetry I and II had perhaps been Rupert Brooke and John Drinkwater, the former in a poem like "Grantchester," the latter in a number of modest but workmanlike poems praising the beauty of his native Cotswolds. Using Brooke and Drinkwater as models, then, but utterly lacking either Brooke's sense of fun and contagious enthusiasm or Drinkwater's quiet but deeply felt love of his land, the Neo-Georgians produced landscape verse which, like Freeman's, was devoid of emotion, or catalogue poetry which, like Squire's, became more often than not simply banal. To be sure, at least one Georgian had pointed the way. As early as 1917, Edward Marsh had published in Georgian Poetry III a particularly uninspired, soporific catalogue poem of Harold
Monro extolling, among other things, the joys of the simple country life and entitled "Weekend." It began:

The train! The twelve o'clock for paradise.
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
Out in the country every one is wise:
We can only be wise on Saturday.
There you are waiting, little friendly house:
Those are your chimney-stacks with you between,
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,
Staring through all your windows at the green.
Your homely floor is creaking for our tread;
The smiling tea-pot with contented spout
Thinks of boiling water, and the bread
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem
Purring and crooning: 'Lie in us, and dream.'

(Georgian Poetry III, p. 82)

Following the lead of such perverted Georgianism as "Weekend," it is small wonder that the Neo-Georgians quickly earned the richly deserved epithet "weekend poets," by which derisive critics meant to imply the poetic insincerity which inevitably arises when town-born poets sentimentalize over rustic virtues. Small wonder, too, that Georgian Poetry IV and V should have been marked, as critic after critic complained, by a kind of vitiated pastoralism which was not only excessive but also—and this was the nub of most complaints—self-conscious and mediocre. If he sensed the decline of the genuine pastoralism of his original Georgians, Edward Marsh could do little about it in 1919; no alternative to the dreary Neo-Georgian landscape verse and catalogue poetry was at hand. By 1922, fortunately, Marsh could demonstrate to the world by at least one of his choices for Georgian Poetry V that good pastoral verse could be written in the postwar world: he had "discovered" Edmund Blunden. As Christopher
Hassall wrote, "What was weak in the last two volumes was pseudo-pastoral, but what was good, it should be noted, was none the less pastoral, vide the last of Marsh's discoveries, Edmund Blunden."\textsuperscript{34} But even Blunden's work, though it struck the authentic note again, was obviously too little and too late. The Neo-Georgians had won the day.

The appalling pastoral-cum-landscape poetry produced by the Neo-Georgians gave contemporary critics abundant opportunity for bursts of withering scorn. It afforded the evidence, moreover, on which not only the Neo-Georgians but the Georgians too were damned out of hand; and thus was set the pattern and the tone of criticism of the Georgian movement for many years to come. In Christopher Hassall's words again, "No critical distinctions were made—until recently—but all was damned as pastoral, in the sense of damnably pastoral, or what has been called 'week-end verse.'"\textsuperscript{35}

Edith Sitwell claimed that Neo-Georgian pseudo-pastoralism—the penchant for writing about birds or "dreamy plaster-faced sheep with Alexandra fringes and eyes like the eyes of minor German royalty"—was purely and simply "Georgian."\textsuperscript{36} Osbert Sitwell was equally acidulous—and equally indiscriminate. The Georgians, he wrote, were "lark-lovers"; and he encouraged his readers, in his own phrase, to "give them the bird." But he pointed out a major weakness of Neo-Georgian nature poetry. "It is these dreary catalogues of natural

\textsuperscript{34}The Prose of Rupert Brooke, Christopher Hassall ed. (London, 1956), p. xlix.
\textsuperscript{35}The Prose of Rupert Brooke, pp. xlix-l.
\textsuperscript{36}Aspects of Modern Poetry, p. 19.
phenomena," he wrote, "which are most trying to the patience; the last dead grisly remains of a once vital movement in poetry, they are as infinitely pathetic as the excavated final joint in the tail of some huge but extinct monster." And though by 1921 it was too late by far, he attempted to give the Neo-Georgians some advice about poetic sincerity: "...it is not the facts in a poem that make it interesting, but the effect on the mind of their observer.... Poetry lies in the expression of an emotion, of whatever kind, however great or slight, but has no connection with the cause of that emotion. ...by repeating the word 'cuckoo' you do not make yourself the author of 'Summer is y-comin' in'."

Attacks on the nature cult in Georgian Poetry were not new. The nature poets of volumes I and II had absorbed their share of criticism even though their muse was infinitely fresher than that of the Neo-Georgians. As early as 1913, Richard Aldington had implored his Georgian coevals to abate their enthusiasm for natural objects.

To a Poet

May we not be spared—
I beseech you—
This insistent cult of 'Nature,'
This reiteration?
May we not accept
The facts of vegetation and florescence
Without these reminders?
I grant you that hyacinths
Are blue, and that olives
Are green in their season,
That berries are juicy and vine-leaves
delightful.
But may we not leave them to Wordsworth
And caterpillars,

---

And ourselves make merry
With our own particular
Unvegetable artifices?38

Moreover, attempts to copy the Georgian nature poets were not confined to the postwar age. Several prewar Georgians had tried their hand at imitating Davies, for instance, though their endeavors, like those of the Neo-Georgians after them, served only to demonstrate how essentially inimitable Davies was. One particularly banal effort was James Stephens' "The Cow." It is difficult to believe that the poem was not an ill-managed satire of Davies, but, on the contrary, it appears to have been guileless.

The Cow

Cow, cow
I and thou
Are looking at each other's eyes:
You are lying on the grass
Eating every time I pass,
And you do not seem to be
Ever in perplexity:
You are good, I'm sure, and not
Fit for nothing but the pot:
For your bearing is so kind,
And your quietness so wise:
Cow, cow,
I and thou
Are looking at each other's eyes.39

And T. S. Eliot had complained in 1917 that lacking a philosophy of nature the Georgian nature poet was forced to keep his eye too exclusively on the object itself, with the result that his poetry was perforce thin and vague. "Only in something harder can great passion be expressed," he wrote; "the vague is a more dangerous path for poetry than the arid."40

38 Though written in June, 1913, as indicated by a superscription, the poem was published in Egoist, I, no. 9 (May 1, 1914), 161.
39 Five New Poems (Flying Fame, 1913), p. 91.
40 Egoist, IV, no. 8 (Sept. 1917), 118-19.
If the nature poetry of the Georgians could be judged vague and thin, how much more so the pale copies produced by the Neo-Georgians! Indulging his fondness for cataloguing in a poem about birds, J. C. Squire demonstrated more ornithological knowledge than poetic insight:

Yes, daw and owl, curlew and crested hern,
Kingfisher, mallard, water-rail and tern,
Chaffinch and greenfinch, warbler, stonechat, ruff,
Pied wagtail, robin, fly-catcher and chough,
Mistle-thrush, magpie, sparrow-hawk, and jay,
Built, those far ages gone, in this year's way.
And the first man who walked the cliffs of Rame,
As I this year, looked down and saw the same
Blotches of rusty red on ledge and cleft
With grey-green spots on them, while right and left
A dizzying tangle of gulls were floating and flying,
Wheeling and crossing and darting, crying and crying,
Circling and crying, over and over and over,
Crying with swoop and hover and fall and recover.

("The Birds," Georgian Poetry IV, p. 176)

John Freeman indulged his penchant for cataloguing in a poem on the subject of flowers:

I will ask primrose and violet to spend for you
Their smell and hue
And the bold, trembling anemone awhile to spare
Her flowers starry fair;
Or the flushed wild apple and yet sweeter thorn
Their sweetness to keep
Longer than any fire-bosomed flower born
Between midnight and midnight deep.

And I will take celandine, nettle and parsley, white
In its own green light,
Of milkwort and sorrel, thyme, harebell and meadowsweet
Lifting at your feet,
And ivy-blossom beloved of soft bees; I will take
The loveliest—
The seeding grasses that bend with the winds and shake
Though the winds are at rest.

("I Will Ask," Georgian Poetry V, p. 65)

Neo-Georgian nature poetry failed even when judged by the limited standards of the prewar Georgian tradition. At the heart of the matter was again the failure of the postwar imagination.

What Aldous Huxley wrote of John Freeman may be said with equal justice about most of the Neo-Georgian weekend poets in Georgian Poetry IV and V:

Mr. Freeman enjoys looking at trees, listening to the wind, walking through the fields; so do we all. But the mere enjoyment of country life is in itself quite uninteresting. We demand from a poet that he shall give to an emotion which we all feel some fresh significance, that he shall look on familiar sights with eyes that discover new and surprising beauties. That is what we demand, and, except on rarest occasions, we demand from Mr. Freeman in vain. The fundamental defect of his poetry is that it is extremely dull.41

The imagination, that crucible in which the emotions commonly evoked by the mighty world of eye and ear can be transmuted into poetry, had deteriorated. The result was versified dullness, for the very essence of the poetic view of life had vanished. Comparing Freeman unfavorably to Edward Thomas, a successful nature poet in the prewar Georgian tradition, Huxley, again, pointed out both what the genuine nature poet must possess and what the Neo-Georgian lacked:

To be a nature poet it is not enough to affirm vaguely that God made the country and man made the town, it is not enough to talk

sympathetically about familiar rural objects, it is not enough to be vaguely poetical about mountains and trees; it is not even enough to speak of these things with the precision of real knowledge and love. To be a nature poet a man must have felt profoundly and intimately those particular emotions which nature can inspire, and must be able to express them in such a way that his reader feels them.\textsuperscript{42} 

To feel emotions "profoundly and intimately." If they had not lost the ability to feel, Neo-Georgian and Georgian alike had lost the will to feel, to imagine, to mould and shape experience artistically. It was time, and past time, that Georgian Poetry be laid to rest. And so when Harold Monro wrote Marsh in 1925 inquiring of the possibility of yet one more, final volume of Georgian Poetry, alleging that the booksellers were "clamouring" for one, that it would sell perhaps 5,000 copies, and that it would afford its editor "a rare opportunity...to sum up and round off 'the movement' ...and to comment upon new directions," Marsh replied with an unmistakably decisive no. The anthology had done its work, he wrote: "We set out with the single object of stimulating public interest in contemporary poetry, and I shall always cherish the belief that the books had a great deal to do with the marked growth of that interest...within the thirteen years since we began." But perhaps the reason which Marsh put second was even more to the point. By 1925 Edward Marsh was quite willing to concede what had in fact become increasingly clear from 1917 on: his taste was fundamentally and finally at variance with the new directions in which modern poetry had moved. His feeling toward the "chief

\textsuperscript{42}Athenaeum, no. 4717 (Sept. 24, 1920), pp. 405-06.
exponents" of modern verse, he admitted, was one only of "tepid and purblind respect." 43

As much as to any other influence Georgian Poetry owed its demise simply to the relentless passing of time. That ambitious adjective "Georgian" had been applied proudly by Marsh in 1912 to mean "new," "modern," "energetic," but by 1922 it had come to denote only "old-fashioned," "outworn," or worse. Edward Marsh's anthology had played an important and, for a time, predominant part on the literary scene during a period which was for poetry probably the most momentous that the twentieth century has yet produced. Georgian Poetry had been published through twelve eventful years: through the first fervid flush of a poetic renascence; through the powerful stimulus of the First World War; and through a subsequent period of emotional relapse, imaginative paralysis, and the sniping, petty coterie bickering which passed for literary activity in postwar London. But by 1925 time had inexorably decreed, and Edward Marsh had wisely bowed to the inevitable. Georgian Poetry was allowed to cross its Acheron. There were few to remark--and fewer to lament--its passing in the new world of Sweeney and Mrs. Porter. The time-spirit had dug the grave of Georgian Poetry abundantly deep, and the anthology was, as Edward Marsh said, "hushed in grim repose."

43 A Number of People, pp. 329-30.
"English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty.... We are at the beginning of another 'Georgian period' which may rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past." No more than five years after they were written Edward Marsh's brave new words of 1912 had begun to ring hollow; by 1922 they had become bitterly ironic; and today they seem perhaps more incredible than ironic. Though a poetic renascence did in fact occur from 1911 to about 1915, it is nonsense to attempt to rank the achievement of the Georgian age with that of "the several great poetic ages of the past"—with that of the Elizabethan, say, or the Romantic! To be sure, as the Georgian poets took arms against the spirit of the fin de siècle, for a few short years English poetry succeeded in putting on new strength. That it also succeeded in putting on new beauty is far more questionable. But if the Georgian age did not entirely live up to Marsh's too sanguine predictions for it, neither did it sink to the poetic nadir implied by most subsequent criticism. Despite the contemptuous dismissal of Georgian Poetry by critics of the 'twenties and 'thirties, the last word on the place of the Georgians in the stream of English poetry has by no means been said. Some of the subsequent hostility is to be explained, I suspect, by the fact that many critics have misconceived what or whom they were describing by the word "Georgian."
The word is undeniably ambiguous. But the ambiguity is not dispelled by flying in the face of historical evidence and claiming, as does Herbert Palmer, for instance, that Edward Marsh was guided by no less than fourteen definite canons in selecting poetry for his anthology. Had Palmer looked closely at the specific works in Marsh's first three volumes at least, he would have recognized major exceptions to every one of his canons. I see no reason why our reluctance to define "Georgian" by a too dogmatic, rigorous set of poetic tenets should disturb, of all people, the modern critic, skeptical as he is about the validity of most literary labels. Is Keats a typical "Romantic" poet, or are we to take Byron as the archetype? What is a "Pre-Raphaelite" poet? Who is the most typically "Victorian," Browning, Meredith, or James Thomson? And so with the Georgians. In what sense can we call D.H. Lawrence a Georgian and at the same time Walter De la Mare and John Masefield? If Wilfrid Gibson is a Georgian, can we include James Elroy Flecker in the same category? The fact is that Edward Marsh did not intend—in his first three volumes, at any rate—to establish a poetic coterie or deliberately to choose work which bore any particular "ranch-brand" (as Robert Graves called it). Within the limits of his own taste of course, Marsh sought only to display the work of new, young poets, who, he thought, were not getting an adequate hearing. To be sure, as Marsh himself conceded, the new poets demonstrated what may be called a Georgian temper. They had, as Marsh wrote, "certain points in common," several of which we have been able to identify:
spiritual euphoria, a sense of vitality, anti-Victorianism, realism, and freedom of poetic diction. But most of these tendencies were not uniquely Georgian; they rather marked the Georgians, like the Imagists, Vorticists, and even Futurists, as scions of their age. Until 1917 at least, the Georgians were in no sense a formal school.

Again, assuming that the word "Georgian" describes primarily a certain temper, or set of mind, and not (strictly speaking) a poetic school, we are still not using the word entirely accurately until we recognize that there were in effect two Georgian movements, not one. I have called them Georgian and Neo-Georgian; and I have suggested that although they share certain features—most notably, a predilection for pastoral verse—the differences between the two groups of poets are more striking than their similarities. In fact, the characteristic Georgian themes and techniques are so thoroughly distorted and attenuated in Neo-Georgian verse that the two groups come finally to differ more in kind than in degree. The Neo-Georgians achieved a glib competence in verse writing. Their poetry was what a more modern generation would call "slick." But they lacked the will, the emotional insight, and the creative imagination by which alone the raw material of experience is moulded into art. Having lost their creative principle, as a reviewer wrote of Wilfrid Gibson, they became too exclusively recorders.

In imputing to the Georgians the shortcomings of their Neo-Georgian successors, the critic is carrying coals to
Newcastle. The Georgians have several deficiencies of their
own which are sometimes a good deal more obvious than their
virtues. They have also been a good deal more fully explored
and publicized, thanks to the almost universally hostile criti-
cism of the 'twenties and 'thirties. Subsequent critics of
the Georgians, however, rang the changes by and large on the
points made by several contemporary observers, notably T.S.
Eliot, Middleton Murry, and Edith Sitwell. Eliot accused the
Georgians—though only with volume III, it should be recalled—
of too much "pleasantness" of either the "insidiously didactic,
or Wordsworthian" variety, or the "decorative, playful or
solemn, minor-Keatsian" kind. Miss Sitwell charged them—
though specifically exempting such poets as Davies, De la Mare,
and Hodgson—with a too sentimental view of nature, a penchant
for writing about "dreamy, plaster-faced sheep with Alexandra
fringes." And though his remarks were directed more toward
the Neo-Georgians than Georgians, Murry warned them against
"false simplicity" (the "worship of trees and birds and con-
temporary poets in about equal proportions"), and the "luminous
haze" of a "fundamental right-mindedness." None of the charges
can be entirely denied. Even at its best Georgian poetry
suffers from a characteristic thinness. It shies away from
both the profoundly intellectual and the profoundly emotional;
the former tempted the Georgians too much to rhetoric, the
latter too much to didacticism. In their efforts to avoid
seeming rhetorical the Georgians sometimes fell into the
opposite trap of banality; in their efforts to escape
didacticism they often wrote verse which presented the raw materials of experience but was not an imaginative elucidation of the meaning of experience. Their nature lyrics, the very genre in which they may be allowed to have excelled, frequently demonstrate this characteristic thinness. They attempted to preserve the Wordsworthian tradition divorced from the thoughtful aspects of Wordsworth. As both Eliot and Huxley pointed out, the Georgians tried to be nature poets without a philosophy of nature. And so despite their newness, the Georgians can be said in several respects to have come to rest in a comfortable poetic backwater, only faintly stirred by the mainstream of the emotions and themes of their age, apparently unaware, as Eliot concluded, of the "tragedies and ecstasies" of the "adult, sophisticated, civilized mind" of the twentieth century.

The Georgians' virtues are perhaps more debatable than their deficiencies. Nevertheless, it seems to me that not only according to the standards of their own age but also according to the standards of any age, Georgian Poetry I and II particularly contained some very good, workmanlike verse. The Georgian poetic achievement is too severely limited to suit all tastes--as Sir Edmund Gosse remarked, the best Georgians were jewelers whereas the great Victorians were sculptors--but within their usually self-prescribed limits, some of the Georgians were uncommonly effective poets. Surely one should not have to apologize for an anthology containing such poems as Lawrence's "Snapdragon" and "Snake," Davies' "Kingfisher," De la Mare's "Listeners" and "Mocking Fairy," Abercrombie's "Sale of St.
Thomas,* and much of Blunden's pastoral verse.

Viewed solely in the context of their own age, however, the Georgians played a part in the revolution in technique which overtook English poetry from 1910 to 1920. How thoroughgoing a revolution it was can be too easily overlooked. Put in the simplest terms, English poetry entered the second decade with Watson and Phillips, and it emerged at the other end with the *Waste Land*. In the years between, Georgians, Imagists, Vorticists, vers librists, all played a part. With all the new schools of the time the Georgians too shared a common distaste for poetic verbiage; they tried to write without rant, bombast, or rhetorical flourish; and they insisted by and large upon a return to unstilted, unpretentious poetic diction. Centrists though they were, the major Georgians agreed with Ezra Pound: modern poetry must not "try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot"; it must have "fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it"; it must be "austere, direct, free from emotional slither."

But the clearest evidence of the Georgian temper is to be found not in the technique but in the tone of Georgian poetry. The hallmark of the Georgian poet was his vitality, the sense of buoyancy and optimism which he carried over into his poetry. With the Georgians, English poetry regained for a few brief years the joy of living. Perhaps Rupert Brooke expressed it best: "With such superb work to do, and with the wild adventure of it all, and with the other minutes...given to the enchantment of being even for a moment alive in a world of real matter
(not that imitation gilt stuff one gets in Heaven) and actual people—I have no time now to be a pessimist." The same sense of elation is apparent in almost every kind of Georgian utterance: in Davies' "Good Morning, Life—and all / Things glad and beautiful"; in Lawrence's passionate cry of "exultation after fear,...the exultation in the vast freedom...we have suddenly got"; in Abercrombie's perception of "that terrific splendid fact, the fact that we do exist"; in Brooke's "Breathless, we flung us on the windy hill." The Georgians were characteristically breathless at their sudden beholding of the wonders of a "world of real matter and actual people."

What is more natural, then, than that the Georgians should have excelled in nature lyrics, in descriptions of England's farms and fields, moors and hedgerows? That was "the world of real matter," in which they saw, with an early-morning vision newly stimulated, a reflection of the spiritual vigor which they felt within themselves. What more natural, too, than that the Georgians should have scorned the poetic practices and attitudes of the Victorians and the cloistered aesthetes of the 'nineties? Hence Lawrence's strictures against "the nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people," Ibsen and Hardy, "who represent the dream we are waking from." Hence Monro's scorn of lean aesthetes "in velvet coats and baggy trousers" and the "poets and professors" who had tried to sequester poetry from life. From the Georgians' sense of vitality, too, arose perhaps their most characteristic trait: realism. What technique could have been more natural for the poet who attempted
to convey his sense of joy or enchantment at being "even for a moment alive" and sentient "in a world of real matter and actual people"? Realism was also the device by which the Georgian poet sometimes showed his disdain for odious Victorian sentimentalism; consequently, in works like "Channel Passage" and "King Lear's Wife" he often overdid his rebellion. As Robert Bridges warned as early as 1912, the Georgian poet was likely to end up with too much of the raw experience of art but not enough art. In spite of his failures, however, the Georgian poet at least tried to see again with his own eyes and to feel with his own emotions.

Georgian vitality and optimism were short-lived. "We have faith in the vastness of life's wealth," wrote Lawrence in 1913. "There is no winter that we fear." But a year later the winter of the spirit descended. From the other side of the war, to a disillusioned and cynical generation, the Georgians' spiritual euphoria seemed only ironic, material for angry attacks and malicious jibes. And so the Georgians were all grouped indiscriminately together, labelled lark-lovers, and ignominiously dismissed from further consideration. Before we are tempted thus to damn out of hand, in all honesty we must recall that even the Georgians were individual poets, not indistinguishable ciphers. And even a Georgian is entitled to a separate hearing before condemnation. We must recall also that the too commonly accepted pattern of the Georgian as a lark-lover is a good deal too tidy to be true. Not a single Georgian poet entirely fits such a pattern. Pseudo-pastoralism,
"the 'low-tension' verse, the false rusticity, the self-conscious charm conveyed in glib technique": if these are (in Christopher Hassall's phrase) the attributes which we ordinarily conjure up as "Georgian," then an unprejudiced look at the first three volumes of Edward Marsh's anthology should suggest to us that it is time we reexamine our pattern of what is and is not "Georgian." Finally, the Georgians have too long been the victims of pure critical spleen. Vigor, optimism, energy, and vitality were the very qualities calculated to infuriate the critics of the cynical, jaded postwar generation. Many of their assaults were both unreasoning and unfair, for they too frequently boiled down to one fundamental proposition: the Georgian poet must be damned because he failed to foresee the disasters, spiritual and physical, which were to occur from 1914 to 1918. To condemn a poet for lack of insight is defensible; several contemporary critics—notably Eliot and Murry—succeeded in doing just that. But to blame a poet for lack of foresight is absurd.
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The sources consulted for this volume fall into three general classifications: unpublished letters, periodicals, and individual books and periodical articles. The following list, though representing only a fraction of the sources examined, includes all items likely to be of substantial use to a student of the Georgian period. Many ephemeral reviews and editorial comments which have been referred to and documented in the text have been omitted here.

The major single source for this volume has been the Edward Marsh Letter Collection. That part of the Collection which I examined comprised letters to Sir Edward Marsh written by many of the major English poets and literary figures from approximately 1895 to 1950. The Collection also includes numerous letters—though I did not examine them in detail—from many prominent English social and political figures written over approximately the same span of years. When I consulted the collection in 1954, it was owned by Mr. Christopher Hassall. In 1957 it was sold by Mr. Hassall to the New York Public Library, where it has now become a part of the Berg Collection. With the exception of some of the letters of D.H. Lawrence and Isaac Rosenberg, the correspondence in the Marsh
Letter Collection is unpublished.

Out of a total of approximately 2,000 letters and postcards which I examined, the correspondence of the following persons proved to be the most useful and significant:

Lascelles Abercrombie
Laurence Binyon
Edmund Blunden
Gordon Bottomley
Robert Bridges
Frances Cornford
W. H. Davies
Walter De la Mare
John Drinkwater
James Elroy Flecker
John Freeman
Wilfrid W. Gibson
Sir Edmund Gosse
Robert Graves
Ralph Hodgson
D. H. Lawrence
Shane Leslie
John Masefield
J. Middleton Murry
Harold Monro
Thomas Moult
Isaac Rosenberg
Siegfried Sassoon
Edward Shanks
Edith Sitwell
Osbert Sitwell
Sacheverell Sitwell
J. C. Squire
James Stephens
W. J. Turner

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Art and Letters
The Athenaeum
Blast
The Blue Review
Calendar: A Quarterly Review
The Chapbook: A Monthly Miscellany
Coterie
The Egoist
The English Review
Flying Fame Pamphlets
[broadside and chapbooks]
Form
The Golden Hind
The Fortnightly Review
The London Mercury
John O’London’s Weekly
Land and Water
The New Age
The New Freewoman
New Numbers
The New Statesman
The Owl
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