

Georgian Poets

Georgian Poets or Poetry refers to a series of poetical collections showcasing the work of a school of British poetry that established itself during the early years of the reign of King George V of the United Kingdom.

The Georgian poets form a third distinct group. The term Georgian was for the first time used by Edmund Marsh who, between 1912 and 1922 edited five collection of poetry entitled Georgian Poetry. Today the term Georgian may refer to the poets published in these collections, to the poets of the decade in general or to a particular group among them.

Georgian poetry was portrayed as being intellectual inexperienced and weakly escapist. It was also considered to be technically slack and emotionally uninspired. While these weaknesses are certainly present in some poets, it must not be forgotten that Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas must also be reckoned among the Georgians.

Sir Edward Marsh published the first collection of Georgian poetry and proclaimed that 'English poetry is putting on a new strength and beauty'. The poetry was new in the sense that the poets certainly rejected Victorianism.

The most characteristic feature of Georgian poetry is its habit of expressing itself through images of rural England. The attractive terms in which nature is painted makes of poetry also vulnerable to charges of escapism. The Georgian response to nature as beautiful and consoling was derivative.

In the portrayal of human life too, Georgian poetry tended to ignore certain areas of human activity. Its poetic realism was confined to an anti-intellectual attitude. The style of Georgian poetry is traditional and popular, the tone cautiously colloquial as in the casual, chatty poems of Rupert Brooke. It avoids the obscurity, disagreement and shock effects of high modernist poetry.

Some of the notable Georgian poets are Hilaire Belloc, Edmund Blunden, Rupert Brooke, William Davies, Sir Edward Marsh, John Drinkwater, James Flecker, Wilfred Gibson, Robert Graves, Walter de la Mare, Harold Monro and Edward Thomas.

Poets of the First World War

According to Perkins, 'when the war came to England in 1914, poetry was among the first volunteers'. The poetry of the past was everywhere eagerly invoked reflecting the idealistic fervor of the England in the early years of the war. The war fostered an attitude of unquestioning enthusiasm for heroic pieties and nationalistic feelings.

The poetry of the First World War is primarily a record of the experience of war in conventionally heroic terms till the event itself transformed this traditional response. War poets like Robert Graves, Nichols, Edmund Blunden and Julian Grenfell retain a conventional peace time habit of sensibility. Although their firsthand experience of combat was traumatic that experience is not the focus of feeling. It was left for Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen to strip the false literary wrappings from the reality of the war. Like Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg delineates the physical and emotional realities of war without sentiment.

The most valuable contribution to war poetry was made by Wilfred Owen, he is among the first to discard the soothing concept of an England of shining valleys and Arthurian chivalry. His lingering Romanticism not only makes his poetry more accessible to the reader but also makes his realism more telling. A past master of verbal exactitude which he often achieved through the use of Keatsian intensifiers, Owen was a patient craftsman whose poetic maturity is proclaimed by his complex pattern of alliteration and controlled use of assonance.

Had Owen and Rosenberg survived the war, the poetry of the ensuing period might have been different, the features of Modernism for the first time introduced by them. Thus, the war poets and poetry helped prepare the way for change, not least by preparing an audience for the Modernist movement.
