

Anthology of Georgian Poetry in French
*(Anthologie de la poésie géorgienne, (V-XX Siècles) Traductions
et Commentaires de Serge TSOULADZÉ,
Tbilisi, Ganatleba, 1982, p. 179)*

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Kathrine Vivian, an English Kartvelologist, translator of *The Man in the Panther Skin* and a long term friend of the journal *Kartvelologist*, published the following article in 1982 in the *Revue des Etudes Georgiennes et ausiennes* (N 1). I found the manuscript of the Georgian translation of the article (made by Rusudan Tsuladze), and edited by the late scholar Akaki Khintibidze, in the files of materials now being prepared to be sent to the Archive. Obviously, the translation was not published at that time. Akaki Khintibidze, a famous researcher of Georgian versification systems, was ultimately interested in this article due to Kathrine Vivian's remarks regarding the peculiarities of Georgian versification and its relationships with the French and English versification systems. As well as these valuable remarks this article is extremely important regarding the references by Kathrine Vivian to hidden depths and nuances typical of Georgian poetry as well as those regarding the delimitation of the deep originality of verses by Akaki Tsereteli, Vaja Pshavela, Galaktion

Tabidze, Giorgi Leonidze, Irakli Abashidze and Valirian Gaprindashvili.

I believe it is highly advisable to attract the attention of both Georgian and English speaking researchers to these remarks, valuable for the theory of literary studies, made by an English intellectual, translator and Kartveleologist

Editor

On my first visit to Georgia I had the good fortune to meet Sergo C'uladze in Tbilisi. He told me then that he was working on an anthology of translations of Georgian poetry into French. A few years earlier, I had read his most distinguished translation of *Vepxist'q'aosani* – extracts from which appear in this anthology – and found it an excellent companion and guide to a study of the poem, as also was his monograph *Connaissance de Roustaveli*. Now, with his last book before me, I deeply regret that I cannot meet him again and discuss it with him. He was a truly great translator, at home in Georgian and French alike, and brought to his work the polished intellect of a scholar and the artistry of a poetic nature.

This collection of poems ranges far in time – from the early Middle Ages to the 20th century – and covers a broad field of moods and subject matter. The translator displays his skill in a variety of poetic forms. He moves from the quiet, reflective mood of *me da yame* through the gay and lilting tones of Giorgi Leonidze's song to the first fall of snow, the stirring cavalier rhythms of *Merani*, to the noble, elevated style of *xma k'at'amontan*, capturing and conveying the essential quality of these different poems.

The eloquence of Georgian verse is very largely due to the use of rhyme, alliteration and assonance – effects which cannot easily be reproduced in another language without losing or distorting some of the sense. As regards accent and metre, however, French and Georgian are in more natural accord. In the

classical French alexandrine, as in the Rustavelian sixteen-syllable line, there is a caesura dividing the line in two. Unlike English verse, in which there may be a variable number of unstressed syllables, both Georgian and French lend themselves to a syllabic rather than an accentual metre, since in polysyllabic words the stress is more evenly distributed [Cetereli Giorgi, *Met'ri da ritma Vepxist'q'aosanši*, Tbilisi 1973] Thus the Georgian metre can be closely approximated in French, as Sergo C'uladze so successfully shows in his translation of *Vepxist'q'aosani*, *Mtac'mindis mtvare* and other poems. In another respect, however, the two languages are less concordant. The genius of French in its later development lies in its precision, clear definition and disciplined form. Earlier French – that of Rabelais, for example, with its cornucopial richness and variety – might more truly have reflected the subtleties and overtones of Georgian, in which a writer can often suggest more than he overtly states. *C'q'nari*, in *Mtac'mindis mtvare*, has resonances that the French *paisible* does not altogether convey; the meaning of *zyap'ari*, in another poem by Galak'tion T'abidze, is too strictly limited by the French *romance*. In K'olau Nadiradze's *Bevri ar mitkvams ...* the words *net'av*, *unet'areso*, essentially a Georgian concept, are – perhaps inevitably – lost in translation.

These are small points, however. In *Gantiadi* C'uladze's verses sing like those of the great Ak'ak'i; in *xma k'at'amontan* the translator matches Irak'li Abashidze's nobility of style and depth of feeling. The close affinity – an almost mystical understanding – with nature in all its forms, revealed by many Georgian poets, is reproduced by C'uladze not only with poetic mastery but with deep sensitivity and perception. He makes us aware with Važa Pšavela of the moods of mountain and sky; with Valerian Gaprindašvili he exposes the role of the tree in the lives of men. Poetry can only be translated by one who is himself a poet, ideas expressed by one who has made them his own. Sergo C'uladze appears to understand and reflect the true spirit of Georgian poetry.

To know a little of Georgian literature is to wish to know more, and this anthology offers to students of Georgian a well-mixed aperitif to stimulate the appetite. With brief notes on each of the writers translated, it is a most valuable contribution to the store of Georgian literature in translation.

Katharine Vivian