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# ENGLISH LYRICISM OR TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF POETRY

**Carmen ANTONARU**[1]

***Abstract:*** *This article is based on the essay "English Lyricism or towards poetry being internationalization" written by Dragos Protopopescu, one of the greatest English translator, in 1936 and continues presenting the literary English phenomenon by offering a bird's eye view of English poetry at the end of the 19th century and up until 1936.*

***Keywords:*** *English lyricism, internationalization, poetry.*

## 1. Introduction

The essay English lyricism or towards poetry being internationalization, which was initially published in Revista Fundațiilor Regale, continues presenting the literary English phenomenon by offering a bird's eye view of English poetry at the end of the 19th century and up until 1936.

In the introduction of this essay, one of the greatest English translator Dragoş Protopopescu states: "All romanticism is the exasperation of the renewing self" and "each century's literature is romantic, at least at its beginning". The entire evolution of contemporary poetry appears like "a head down escalation aimed at the depths within".

Along this line of modern poetry, there unfolds a process of crystallization that modern poetry gains once it is touched by the English lyricism. Romanticism is the infrastructure of English poetry. But romanticism is emancipation as well. And it is this emancipation that accounts for English poetry "ever hospitable of the novel and the unlikely, from the diurnal exercise of surprise, the suppleness that keeps excess and artificiality at a distance, a type of practice that maintenances it healthy and vigorous, a revolutionary disposition that makes it temperate"

As far as symbolism is concerned, the Romanian Anglicist's attitude is equivocal: "the definition of symbolism finds its refuge in the confusion of French speculation on the never satisfying materializing and revealing of the infinite".

Instead, the new generation came to its senses from the symbolist chaos so easily and created the new poetry. Under such circumstances, between 1890 and 1910, the great poets of England make their mark: Robert Bridges, Thomas Hardy, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, William Butler Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Doughty, Alice Meynell.

"On this velvet road", there occurred the transition towards the *Georgian poetry*. Its name was inherited from the tradition that still binds poetry to kings' names in England (the Caroline poetry, the Jacobine poetry). This is the group known in Anthologies under the name of *Georgian Poetry, Oxford Poetry, Cambridge poetry, Poems of To-day, Wheels*. The Georgians sweeten the range of English symbolism

[1] *Transilvania* University of Brasov.

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by its mellow soul while also integrating the daring movement of the Imagists. Moreover, T. S. Eliot Gerard Manley Hopkins are defining names for the "last minute" English poetry, the Eduardian poetry whose refreshing breeze blew on other gifted young individuals.

## 2. Seven distinct moments of contemporary English poetry:

The Post-Victorians, led by Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Sir Eduard Bridges, Alice Meynell, Charles Doughty, who further generates the Symbolists and Yeats "the only Symbolist who outlived the movement and of course England's most precious poet today".

*The Pre-Georgians*: John Masefield, A. E. Housanan, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

*The Georgians*: with their main representative Walter de la Mare and the well-known William H. Devies, Gibsson, Robert Graves, Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell, etc.

*The Imagists,* "a diversion and at the same time an act of adherence to Georgianism": Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, Hulme, Ford, Joyce Lawrence, Aldington, Flint.

*The Criterionists* or the neo-Catholics with T. S. Eliot, "the most interesting figure of today's English poetry".

*The Eduardians :* Auden, Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, Dylan Thomas, Archibald MacLeish, Bottrall, William Empson, Barker, Madge

True poetry moves towards "the within and authenticity" so that "the only lyricism possible in poetry is authenticity".

Among the Post-Victorians he thinks Thomas Hardy to be the pioneer of a new kind of poetry. He is the only modern and the greatest of them, "a poet of invincible stamina". Kipling is "too popular and equally old-fashioned" deems the Romanian Anglicist.

Doughty, author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* and *The Dawn in Britain,* is seen as "more typical for the English".

The entire series of symbolist motifs are "absorbed" by W. B. Yeats' poetry, which portrays "a journey into the subconscious into the unknown"

"Wrapped up in giftedness and innocence", Yeats belongs by birth to "a race of druids and Crusaders, to the Kelts. His thirst for the absolute is not dogmatic or a matter of attitude but substance and vital capacity"

Though he is part of the 1896 generation, that of the English decadents, Yeats "has nothing decadent in his soul or his art", believes the Romanian Anglicist. Yeats' entire poetry is "a journey into the subconscious into the unknown". He was an admirer of Mallarme and of Verlaine's. The Irish school of *Abbey Theatre*, founded by Yeats alongside with genius actor William Fay and stage director Miss Horniman, offered Synge, A. E. Russel and a "renovated" Shakespeare to the world – it is a cumulation of dramatic art in its tendency to free itself and approach the absolute". Assisted by Gordon Craig's advice, Yeats gave Europe a "theatre of the subconscious therefore of the infinite". It was due to Yeats' school that art took a great leap ahead. Following Yeats, the poet who "was more influential on the first Georgian generation is Alfred Edward Housman (1859 – 1936)". His *A Shropshire Land* gathered a bundle of folk ballads whose primordial philosophy is equaled only by the subtleness of their musicality, of raw flavor and soaked in originality"

Housman's pessimism is not an "allegorical obsession" similar to that of Thomson's whose pessimism stemmed from an sharpened sense of life and from the incompatibility of a powerful self and the cowardly illusion of the idealistic viewpoint".

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One might say that modern English poetry came to life out of a "poet of death, maybe one of the greatest universal poets of death". Housman "was content to be born a poet and die a latin teacher" , says Dragoş Protopopescu. John Masefield, who was more English than Yeats and even Houseman, was "the healthiest poet of England". His contact to life was Kiplingian". So was his debut poetry, inspired by the soldier songs of the famous *Barrack Room Ballads*' author.

Doing art "not for art but for life; attracted by the epic of life more than its mysteries", John Mesefield is in Dragoş Protopopescu's eyes the poet of "the diverse and the divine of the average".

Between 1913 – 1914, English poetry found itself in an impasse, the symbolist moment had consumed itself. It is amid that crisis moment that literature witnesses the birth of the Europeanism which was later on to generate some changes: "in place of the Georgian acceptance receptivity at all costs is embraced and *surface emotion* leave room for those of the subconscious. The Georgian lyricism develops in a time when "a century had consumed its issues, while the next one was yet to discover them. . James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Edith Sitwell, Wilson Gibson and Siegfried Sassoon struggle to part from the previous poetry tradition, dwell on the emotions of the subconscious returning to the experience of pre-Shakespearian poets and more so to John Donne's work.

The phenomena which sparked up the revival of English lyricism was G. M. Hopkins' work (1844-1889). Hopkins' pessimism was that of Hardy and Housman, but his was generated by the tension between sensuality and the spirit. The Romanian Anglicist saw in his strong personality "all the best in his time's spirit". His joyous return towards the past and "feeding from the Anglo-Saxon source of poetry" is what he had in common with Doughty. Discontent just like Doughty with the infinitely metaphorical patterns of the Shakespearian verses, Hopkins practices the pre-Shakespearian verse. And therefore his is a "cry of the heart". To the translator Dragoş Protopopescu, Hopkins appears to be "almost impossible to translate" as there is rarely "a poet more attached to his verb and more devoted to his divine art". And just like with Eliot's, his poetry could only be understood after thorough reading. The Georgian poetry, "showing traces of Symbolism, Realism, lyricism, a bit epic, sweet, bitter, restless" and "at peace" wages its war for a decade more.

The Imagists trigger the first round of the changes brought about by Europeanism. One of the traits of this movement is the apparition of Americans in this literary context. Europeanized Americans, converted by Laurent Tailhade and the French Riviera, those since as early as 1913 – the exact moment when Georgian lyricism starts feeling restless".

It was against such background, out of Cubism and Futurism, that *Vorticism* was born in 1913 with the American poet Ezra Pound, the critic Wyndham Lewis and the poets Richard Aldington and Ford Madox Ford and Amy Lowell.

In his preface to *Imagist Anthology*, 1930, Glenn Hughes wrote: "Imagism made the free verse legitimate, it cleared the air of the molding artifice and shallow feeling, revived the clarity and the conciseness of the Greeks, substituted the Romantic cosmos, the classical objectivity, gave evidence of the effectiveness of the Oriental miniature and achieved to bring intellect and emotion together" .

Dragoş Protopopescu marks the two folded standpoints which make the movement important: "during its first crisis, the English lyricism convulsed at the touch of the continent; but though generated by Cubism and Futurism, this convulsion, the Imagism (which had been

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known as Vorticism the previous year) produce neo –classicism rather than degenerating into Dadaism or Surrealism as expected of it.

The appetence for Anglo-Saxon poetry grows with the new poets, notices the Romanian Anglicist: "the medieval" Langland, Skelton "the laureate poet" of Henric al VIII-lea, with his "clergy whipping verse", Peele, Shakespeare's predecessor, "the poet of strong flavor phantasy" or Green "the vigorous dramatic and pamphleteer poet" .

Restored from all that the English poetic past had most profound, the Eduardian poetry "flees from the continental heresies and saves itself in the well-being of the centuries" .

Dragoş Protopopescu singles out T. S. Eliot to be the representative of this era, an American by origin but not "by profession". He displayed repulsion against the vulgarity of the time, and becomes well-known in 1912 with *The Waste Land*, the most commented and modeled poem of the time.

Eliot's poetry draws its inspiration from the verse and the cadence of several symbolist poets, Elizabethan or metaphysical. For him poetry is a subject of transmission but that of understanding, accuracy being replaced by ability to create meaning.

Eliot's most original feature of art is his manner to think and mould the poetic material. To Dragoş Protopopescu, Eliot is one of the greatest poets of the subconscious, maybe the most precious since Yeats and the most valued by the next generation" .

The critic end his presentation by referring to Four New Poets, Edith Sitwell's essay published in *London Mercury* of February 1936. Dragoş Protopopescu highlights the personality of Dylan Thomas, "this trumpeter of the subconscious and the mysterious powers surrounding us", a poet "who moves along the broad lines of the enigma of creation".

William Empson is the most metaphysical of the four new poets, given his dazzling association of images and ideas. Ronald Botrall is endowed with an "amazing mastery of cadence" and a "unique and intense sensibility and expression, though remaining the "poet of disillusion and inner fear".

Charles Madge, the second to last author Miss Sitwell refers to, has a "cosmic vision of the world", his poetic images make us dwell on Geology, Astrology, Astronomy, to "solar creation".

While George Barker's name is only mentioned in only one phrase which speaks of his two poems volumes *Thirty preliminary poems,*1933 and *Poems*, 1935, the focus is on the new generation poet Dylan Thomas, who is a "poet with great potential" from Dragoş Protopopescu' opinion.

In the conclusion of his essay, *Contemporary English Lyricism*, Dragoş Protopopescu signals in the Eduardian poets, "these young individuals burdened by thought and mystery and uniquely original", "revolutionary as they are traditionalists", their intense participation "of a luxury of inspiration" in the English literary phenomenon.

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