Seeing Georgia Through Her Eyes: Marjory Wardrop's Feminist Translation of Georgian History and Culture

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life, work, and influence of Marjory Wardrop (1869–1909), a British scholar, translator, and activist whose engagement with Georgian literature, history, and culture represents a unique intersection of scholarship, feminism, and cultural diplomacy. Wardrop's translations and writings not only brought the richness of Georgian literary and historical traditions to English-speaking audiences but also highlighted the often-overlooked contributions of Georgian women to cultural preservation. Through a close study of her unpublished original texts and translations, this research demonstrates how Marjory's female perspective provided new insights into Georgian society and challenged prevailing Western narratives. By situating Wardrop's work within broader discussions about gender, historiography, and cultural translation, this thesis argues that her efforts functioned as both a reclamation of Georgian cultural memory at a time of Russian repression, and a feminist intervention in historical discourse. Ultimately, Marjory emerges as a pioneering figure whose intellectual and cultural legacy continues to shape understandings of Georgia in the West and underscores the vital role of women as creators of cultural knowledge.

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I wish to acknowledge Oliver Wardrop, whose careful curation of the Wardrop Collection at the Bodleian Library has preserved Marjory Wardrop's scholarly and literary legacy. His work ensures that her translations, writings, and insights remain accessible, enabling the study of her contributions to Georgian literature, culture, and history.

I am also grateful to the *Teach and Learn with Georgia* governmental program, which afforded me the opportunity to live and teach in Georgia -- a journey in which I learned far more than I taught. To Georgia itself, for being a land that will forever inspire me, just as it did Marjory. Finally, I wish to acknowledge Marjory Wardrop, whose dedication, vision, and scholarship continue to resonate; through the careful study of her life and work, I feel a connection that transcends time.

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Introduction

"Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts. And they've got ambition. And they've got talent as well as just beauty. And I'm so sick of people saying that love is just all a woman is fit for. I'm so sick of it."

-- Greta Gerwig, *Little Women (2019)*

Although separated by both time -- one hundred and twenty-five years -- and space, from England to the United States, I am certain that if Marjory Scott Wardrop, a bright young woman from Chislehurst, could have gone to the cinema in 1894 and heard the main character, Jo March, utter the epigraph above, its meaning would have resonated deeply with her. That year, she penned a letter to her brother and dearest confidant, Oliver, who was staying in the port city of Batumi on the western coast of the country of Georgia, lamenting the injustice of her situation. They had both grown up fascinated by ancient tales, especially of the Argonauts, and had dreamed of visiting the same far-off shores of the Kingdom of Colchis, now northern Georgia, that Argo had landed on after departing from Greece (Merabishvili). However, only her brother was granted the formal education and freedom to study, travel abroad, and pursue his goals.

She writes to Oliver, while on holiday in the British seaside town of Brighton, saying, "Naturally, I feel the strongest regrets in not being with you when you go to Georgia. I could cry with vexation if I think that I am only a horrid woman instead of an independent man!" (MS. Wardrop). While he traveled and studied abroad in various parts of the world, Marjory steadfastly studied the Georgian language on her own, against her parents' wishes, and was working on compiling the first Georgian-English dictionary as well as translating works of Georgian literature. She had fallen in love with Georgia from afar and had found her life's passion, yet was frustrated that she could not pursue it to her full abilities. In the letter, she confides her feelings to her brother:

> "I have got to stay home just doing nothing when I might be living, learning, and working. If I had been a man, I should have run away long ago and seen the world…But there is no help for it: a woman must not have strong feelings, and I must pretend I am delighted with my happy existence. Nobody seems to understand that the soul, or I suppose I must say heart as I am only a woman, strives and longs for something more than a well built house and good things to eat, with

> a certain amount of paternal and maternal affection and a few respectable acquaintances. I do not think that you can feel much more lonely in the far-away East than I often do at home. I do not know what I want, I am pining for what I shall never obtain. (MS. Wardrop Add. Coll.)

Despite the numerous obstacles and closed doors, Marjory's dedication to her work and passion for the country and people of Georgia led her to become the first person to translate into English Georgia's greatest literary treasure, the romantic epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, which many scholars agree "...remains the finest rendering of this medieval Georgian epic" (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 25). In her relatively short lifetime, she made two journeys to Georgia, became friends with esteemed Georgian writers, politicians, and activists, translated several works of Georgian literature, composed her own travelogue of the country, and acted in a diplomatic manner to aid in matters of Georgian politics and church affairs. Perhaps most affecting, she became cherished by the people of Georgia, who celebrated her for the same reasons her own society admonished her: for forging ahead against the societal norms of her time to follow her passion and introduce Georgian culture to the West.

Investigating Marjory Wardrop's lasting influence not only on Georgian literature but also on Georgian politics and society reveals the great extent of the impact she made as a woman in the late 19th century, despite many impediments. At a time in Georgian history when a new wave of national spirit and identity was taking hold after almost a century of subjugation under the Russian Empire, and prior to that the Persian and Ottoman empires, it was a revival of Georgian literature that helped reawaken pride and galvanize a national patriotic movement for self-government. Marjory's role as a liaison between the West and East, between female and male social spheres, and between the past and her contemporary present played a part in helping to usher Georgia into a brief but remarkably liberal democratic republic after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Marjory never witnessed the Georgian people reclaim their country for themselves, as she died suddenly from a stroke in 1909 at the age of forty—just nine years before the first Georgian republic. Yet all that she accomplished in her lifetime most definitely proved that she had soul, ambition, and talent, and that women were fit for so much more.

Marjory's impassioned words and stories are preserved for future generations of curious scholars and historians at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England. Soon after her death, Oliver collected all her papers, letters, notebooks, and scribbled papers and placed them in the newly

created Wardrop Collection, located in the special collections of the Bodleian archives. It was there that I traveled during the last week of April 2024 so that I could sit among her manuscripts and papers and try to piece together a picture of Marjory. A great deal of her work is unpublished, some of it unfinished, and so it exists only as a manuscript or typewritten document in the archival boxes of the Bodleian.

Peering into her private notebooks, never meant for any other eyes, I felt her morph into a real person -- a young woman hunched over her desk, practicing her Georgian characters over and over again and scribbling her name in Georgian. I saw myself in her, as I too had sat at my dormitory desk in the spring of my senior year of university, delaying other, more pressing homework assignments, and instead attempting to match, in likeness, the foreign, spaghetti-like Georgian characters of my own name over and over. I, like her, was longing to embark on a journey to that far-off, obscure country on the hazy border between East and West, whose capital's name had consonants never before strung together in the English language. However, I was just waiting until August, when I would take a plane and, with a brief layover in Moscow, land in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

Marjory's tale is special to me because I, too, fell in love with the Georgian country, its dramatic landscapes, people, and history. During my two years teaching English and living with a host family, I was able to fully appreciate the richness and generosity of Georgian culture. Upon learning of Marjory and her work, I immediately felt drawn to her story. I admire her not only for her remarkable linguistic skill and determination but also for her dedication to filling in gaps in the historical record with female voices and perspectives often absent from the written record. The aim of this thesis is to investigate Marjory Wardrop's engagement with Georgian history, literature, politics, and society through a close analysis of her unpublished works, demonstrating how her writings enhance female representation in Georgian cultural and historical narratives while offering fresh insights into both Georgian society and its understanding in the West. Since much of her work remains understudied and not widely accessible, I hope this thesis will also spark further research on her life and writings.

Overview of Georgia's Geography, Language, and Early History

What is this country that captured the hearts of a pair of siblings in the English countryside? The country which Greeks and Romans, docking on its pebbled Black Sea coast, described as "the ends of all the earth" (Nasmyth 8). A country that Marjory describes as "a fairyland" with "enchanted bounds," and which drove her to proclaim, "I do not know why I can think of nothing to speak about but Georgia!" (Wardrop, *Journey*, 1; Ward. Adds Collection). Why does a relatively obscure country the size of Ireland elicit such fascination? The Republic of Georgia today is home to just under four million inhabitants and is situated between the great powers of Russia to the north, Turkey to the southwest, and its Caucasian neighbors Armenia and Azerbaijan to the southeast. Its capital, Tbilisi, lies on the inner high plateau of central Georgia along the Mtkvari River. The country is nestled between the Greater Caucasus mountain range, with its soaring peaks along its northern border, and the Lesser Caucasus mountain range along its southern reaches. The Likhi Mountain Range runs vertically through the country, forming the divide between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea watersheds (Britannica).

Perhaps contributing to its "fairyland" quality, one can find almost every type of climate within its eleven administrative regions, and, as Marjory poetically describes, sometimes seemingly all seasons in one landscape: "All the seasons were united in making the scene fair: spring had spread a carpet of purple violets, while the rich green of summer leaves still decked the trees, striving to vie with autumn's bright hues, and, far away, winter looked down from the frosty mountain tops, fearing to play havoc in so lovely a land" (Wardrop, *Journey* 3). Protected from the cold northern winds by its mountains, western Georgia welcomes warm, moist air from the Black Sea, creating humid subtropical, and maritime climates in which palm trees line the main boulevards (Britannica). While much of the Black Sea basin is swampy with heavy rainfall, a great portion has been drained and is used to cultivate citrus fruits, providing the ever-present bowl of mandarins on the Georgian Christmas feast table.

Marjory was in awe during her first trip to Georgia: after she traversed the snowy mountains, she arrived at a monastery in the western foothills and remarked, "It was the beginning of January, but everywhere was spread a rich carpet of Christmas roses, snowdrops, violets, primulas, and other flowers" (Wardrop, *Journey* 22). While snow can be seen on the

highest mountain peaks year-round, the Black Sea coast has such mild, sunny winters that many Russians have nicknamed it the "Russian Riviera" (Nasmyth 6). Traveling further inland from Batumi to the central capital of Tbilisi by train, as Marjory did on her first voyage, her description of the scenery reveals her deep fascination with Georgian landscapes as they intertwine with the country's history.

> The journey from Batum to Tiflis is performed very slowly, but this is a matter for congratulations rather than regret to the tourist, as one has an opportunity of seeing the beautiful scenery which gradually unfolds itself. The clouds had cleared away, and before our eyes was spread the fairest picture of earth's beauty that one could well imagine. Hill after hill, commanded by ancient fortresses and towers, around whose ivy clad, ruined walls clings many a legend of bygone days; limpid streams, whose waters have oft been dyed crimson by the blood of heroes; shadowy forests, into whose devi-haunted depths the timorous peasant dare not venture, and, far to the North, the frosty Caucasus, with its eternal snow-clad peaks, which seem to reach to heaven, all these we had leisure to look upon as we passed along. (Wardrop Journey 2)

Continuing east, forested valleys give way to poppy-dotted fields, apple and plum orchards, and grassy plains populated by the occasional shepherd and his flock -- all of which are framed on either side by the high and frosty Caucasus mountains. Rainfall and temperatures decrease so that the central regions of Shida Kartli and the eastern region of Kakheti have excellent conditions for the cultivation of wine, a practice that archaeologists have concluded first started in a small village south of Tbilisi some eight thousand years ago (National Geographic). Two different ancient cave cities, Uplistsikhe and Vardzia, are also hidden in the central and southern regions; these were complex mazes of communal and private living spaces with built-in ventilation and water supply networks, the earliest dating from the 8th century BC—one used as a shelter during war, and the other as a pagan holy city (E. E. Rayfield 20).

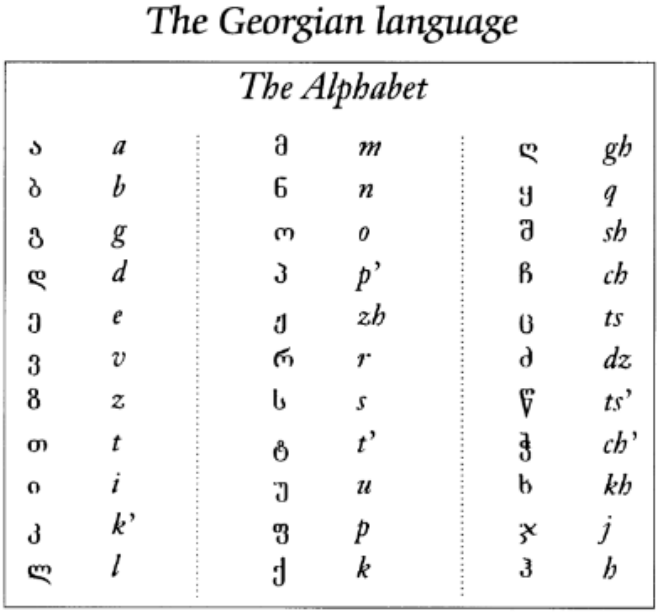
To complete the diverse range of climates, the southeastern regions are the driest and contain a desert-like, semi-arid steppe climate. Oliver recounts the scenery while en route eastward from Tbilisi in his travelogue *The Kingdom of Georgia: Notes of Travel in a Land of Woman, Wine and Song*, saying, "The sun had now reached the meridian, and beat down upon us with terrible force, for our carriage was an open one; we were half-choked with the dust, a thick white layer of which covered us from head to foot; on either side lay bare, brown fields, baked hard as stone, and deeply fissured; no water anywhere" (Wardrop, *Kingdom* 73). Indeed, the juxtaposition of all these landscapes in a small country makes Georgia quite unique to behold.

Despite persistent invasions and battles with surrounding foes, what has united and preserved Georgia throughout the tumult has been its language. This rebellious sentiment can be seen in the language used to greet people in Georgian, as Oliver describes in his travelogue in an episode of a Georgian telling his group: "Gamardjweba, which is, being interpreted, 'I wish thee the victory,' to which we answered Gaguimardjos -- 'May God grant thee the victory'" (Wardrop, *Kingdom* 84). The meaning behind these greetings evokes Georgian perseverance through times of war, and for Oliver, he finds, "These salutations are as eloquent as a dozen volumes of history. I never heard them without thinking of the sad but glorious past of the Georgian kingdom…" (Wardrop, *Kingdom* 84).

In their own language, Georgians call themselves *Kartvelians* and their country *Sakartvelo*. The origin of the name Kartveli is somewhat unclear, but Donald Rayfield, an English academic and professor of Russian and Georgian at Queen Mary University in London, suggests it comes from "kart," a cognate of the Indo-European word "gard," meaning people who live in fortified citadels, as the ancient Georgians did in the central plains (Rayfield, *Edge of Empires,* 13). The English name Georgia, meanwhile, likely derives from the Persian/Turkish term "gurj," which comes from the Armenian word "virk," meaning Iberia (12). In ancient times, central Georgia was indeed called Iberia, and its inhabitants Iberians—a name traced back to the Phoenician "ebr," meaning "over there" (12). Through centuries of conflict and foreign rule, the language and the names the Georgians have given themselves and their land reflect both their perseverance and their enduring connection to their history.

The Georgian language is part of the unique Kartvelian language group, which has not been proven to be related to any other language (Rayfield, *Edge of Empires,* 7). The three other languages in this group are spoken by ethnic subgroups of Georgians: Svan, a very ancient language spoken in the Greater Caucasus mountain region; Laz, a language distantly related to Turkish, spoken along the lower Black Sea coast; and Mingrelian, slightly similar to Laz, spoken in the upper Black Sea coastal region. A few Georgian words related to aristocracy, such as terms for noble hunting animals like deer and boar, have Indo-European links, suggesting that the settled community was invaded by outside forces at an early point (11). Given that the ancient Svan language also contains these links, linguists estimate that the Georgian language is very old, perhaps dating from three to four thousand years ago when Indo-Europeans moved from the

Balkans to Anatolia (12). Written Georgian, however, appears much later, with the first Georgian alphabet dating from the 4th century during the Christianization of Georgia (Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia*, 1). The modern Georgian alphabet, closely related to this first alphabet, dates from the 9th century and consists of 33 letters, some of which are aspirated (denoted with ’) (Nasmyth 9, chart as well).



The earliest history of Georgia can be understood by distinguishing three general entities: Iberia, encompassing the central and southern regions of Georgia; Colchis, which at the height of its power stretched from Trabzon in modern Turkey to Sukhumi on the northern Black Sea coast; and Svanetia, which at points in the past occupied not only the Greater Caucasus mountain range but also extended to the Black Sea coast (Rayfield, *Edge of Empires,* 13). Rayfield refers to these as “entities” because at times they were more unified than others, and each had a variety of religions, languages, and governing methods throughout the centuries. More is known about Colchis due to its interactions with the Greeks; archaeological data show that by the sixth century BC there were Greek trading posts all along the Colchian coast and that the Colchians were already prolific in creating linen, gold mining, and many other exports (13). Interestingly, although Georgia has often been invaded, conquered, and subjugated since prehistoric times, the DNA of eighty percent of the modern population shows continuity with its prehistoric people (16). The Persian Achaemenid Empire controlled a large portion of Iberia for three hundred years

until Alexander the Great destroyed it in 331 BC and placed a southern Georgian named Azon as a Macedonian satrap of the region (23).

From then on, Georgian history is recounted in a collection of medieval manuscripts, *The Georgian Chronicles*, partly compiled in the 9th century by the Georgian monk Leonti Mroveli using copies of earlier texts (L. G. Rayfield 52). These texts have several unknown or potential authors, and the events are often a mix of myth and fact; however, general events can often be corroborated by outside sources. The chronicles recount Kartli's first king, Parnavaz, who reigned from 299 to 234 BC. He was born to a Persian mother, and his uncle was chieftain of the Kartvelians of central Iberia. Parnavaz established a religion based on worshiping the moon god Armazi, who took the form of an idol with golden chain armor and a sabre. He was followed by his Ossetian son-in-law, Saurmag, who added other idol gods based on the sun and five planets to the state religion (E. E. Rayfield 23). A unified Georgian kingdom would not emerge until the early 11th century, when King Bagrat III of the Bagrationi dynasty inherited the powerful kingdom of Abkhazia along with Kartli and fought wars to unite the outlying regions.

The Female Tradition in Georgia

For Marjory, she might have argued that the subsequent pivotal moments of Georgian history could be told through tales of the powerful women who have shaped Georgia into the country it is today. A study of the strong lineage of women who would alter the path of Georgia's evolution would have to begin right after Christ's ascension, when, as ancient tradition tells, the disciples drew lots to determine who was to preach the gospel in each part of the world. Marjory writes in her unfinished text, *On Women in Georgian History*, that Mary "…begged that she too might have a share in the work. Georgia, the ancient Iberia, fell to her, and ever since she has been the protectress of her chosen people" (Marjory, *On Women in Georgian History*). The idea of Georgia being "the lot of Mary" has been entrenched throughout the centuries by artists, poets, and singers asking Mary to "spread the hem of her dress" over Georgia to protect her lot ("In Times of Trouble" par. 2).

Even among young people today, they ironically use the term *Tsilkhvedri*, meaning "the lot," to refer to Georgia (par. 2). The trope has infiltrated political practices, as the line between state and church in Georgia is not well defined. In 2019, the Georgian government created a new national holiday on May 8th to celebrate "the Virgin's selection of Georgia" (par. 3). Congresswoman Sopo Kiladze voiced the impetus for the new holiday, saying, "It is important that we officially make Georgia a country allotted to Mother Mary" (par. 4). Right from the very beginning, fate had cast Georgia as a land under feminine jurisdiction, and it has remained so in the hearts and minds of its inhabitants.

The theme of Georgia as the chosen land of Mary has run throughout the nation's history and continues to shape its identity today. Nikoloz Aleksidze, Professor of History of Religion and Political Thought and author of *Sanctity, Gender, and Authority in Medieval Caucasia*, recounts in the introduction to his book a modern episode that reflects this tradition: in 2002, the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church established a committee of Georgian elites to oversee the construction of a massive new church on a hill outside Tbilisi. He was prompted by the visions of a mystical woman who, for several years, claimed to see an ancient icon of the Virgin Mary, the Portaitissa, housed at the Georgian Iveron Monastery on Mt. Athos in Greece (Aleksidze, *Sanctity, Gender, and Authority*, Introduction). According to tradition, this icon was

given by Mary herself, escaped persecution during the Byzantine Empire by being thrown into the sea by a widow, and was later, around the year 1004 A.D., retrieved from the sea by a Georgian monk who walked on the water to reach the icon, which was illuminated by a pillar of light ("Iveron Icon" par. 5).

The icon earned its name, Portaitissa, or "gate-keeper," because every morning the monks on the Greek island would find the icon hanging at the gates of the monastery despite having placed it in the sanctuary of the church the night before (par. 8). A millennium later, in the visions of the woman from Tbilisi, the Portaitissa appeared, declaring that it had chosen a specific hill on the outskirts of Tbilisi as the site of its return, where it would protect the Georgian nation from an imminent apocalyptic war (Aleksidze, *Sanctity, Gender, and Authority*, Introduction). Taking these visions seriously, the Patriarch commissioned the church as an "empty throne," awaiting the miraculous reappearance of the icon and serving as a lasting monument to the enduring belief in Georgia as the favored land of Mary, the Mother of God.

The second woman to take center stage in the unfolding drama of Georgian history, and to profoundly alter its course, was a young girl named Nino, born in the Roman province of Cappadocia in 288 AD. Her story is preserved in the collection of ancient writings known as the *Conversion of Kartli*. Although the original manuscript has not survived, two codices remain, the earliest of which was copied in 978 AD at the Georgian monastery of Shatberdi, now in northeastern Turkey (Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia* 50).

The narrative begins with Nino recounting her life at the time of her death to Salome of Urjuma, daughter-in-law of King Mirian, who committed it to writing ("Life of St. Nino" 7). At the age of twelve, Nino moved to Jerusalem, where she served as a lady-in-waiting and studied under the Armenian noblewoman Niaphori of Dvini, renowned for her knowledge of religion and ancient law (10). After two years, Niaphori declared that she had taught Nino all she knew, telling her, "I see, my child, thy strength, like the strength of the lioness, whose roar is louder than that of any four-footed animal, or like the female eagle, which, soaring in the highest air, beyond the male…" (10). Niaphori then spoke of a distant land that was holy yet still bound to idolatry. Inspired, Nino resolved to go to Queen Nana of Georgia so that Christ might speak through her to bring about the conversion of the Queen and her people. She set out with a

company of fifty holy women, but when the Armenian emperor pursued them, her companions were martyred, and Nino escaped by hiding in a briar bush (16). Alone, she journeyed northward, eventually reaching a lake and following its river until she arrived at the ancient city of Mtskheta.

On the banks of the river, terrified of arriving in the city of idol worshippers whose language she did not speak, and daunted by her great task to convert the people there, she lay down and tried to sleep ("Life of St. Nino" 17). As she slept, she had a vision of a tall man giving her a scroll and commanding her to give it to the heathen king of Mtskheta. The scroll he gave her contained a list of ten commandments, like the stone tablet delivered to Moses. Her commandments were of a feminist nature, including items such as "Wherever they preach this gospel, there shall they speak of this woman," and "Neither male nor female, but you are all one" (17). She prayed, knowing this was a vision directly from God.

Thus she set off, and after a sojourn in the border town of Urbnisi, where she learned some of the Georgian language and customs, she headed to the capital with a group of Georgians. There she came upon a great celebration of the moon god Armazi, where people were worshiping the idol with pomp, awe, and fear (19). Nino started praying to God for the Georgians' souls, and immediately after her prayer ended, a great storm ensued, with hurricane winds and hail the size of two hands, which broke the idols until only pieces were left scattered (21). Nino then set up shelter in a bramble bush and began to preach the word of the Lord to small groups of people, performing many miracles such as healing the sick and raising a living pillar for a church.

Nino and her God rose in popularity among the people until Queen Nana, who had been sick with a grievous illness that none could cure, heard about her healing miracles. She then visited Nino in her bramble bush abode, and after Nino had prayed over her and blessed her with the sign of the cross, she rose immediately cured ("Life of St. Nino" 32). From that moment on, the queen became a true believer in Christ, but her husband, King Mirian, was not convinced. A little while later, he was taking a hunting trip on horseback on a high mountain filled with woods overlooking the plain of Shida Kartli when suddenly "...the sun was darkened, and it became like black, eternal night" (36). He became very fearful and anxious for his safety and cried out for his

idols to save him, yet nothing happened; he wondered if this blackness was happening only to him or to all around. He then began to pray to God, saying, “O God of Nino, lighten this night to me, and show me the world again, and I will confess Thy name” (36). Immediately it became light, and the sun shone down brightly upon him. He then quickly wrote a letter to King Constantine of Greece, and Queen Nana wrote to Queen Elene, both telling of Nino’s miracles and asking for priests to come to baptize the people of Georgia (38). The Georgians quickly adopted Christianity, and from that day forward Georgia has remained a country true to the Christian faith despite a series of invasions and hardships. Through these remarkable events, Nino made an everlasting mark on the Georgian collective psyche, forever altering the nation’s trajectory and leaving a strong feminine impression that would be further strengthened by the women to come.

In the centuries that followed, history preoccupied itself with the reigns of royal kings and queens, the latter perhaps looming larger than their male counterparts in the national memory, especially in the realm of spirituality. Queen Shushanik in the 5th century and Queen Ketevan in the 17th century, though separated by twelve centuries, are revered for similar reasons. Both steadfastly refused to renounce their Christian faith in the face of political and societal pressure, torture, and imprisonment at the hands of the Persians (Machitadze, *Queen Ketevan*; *Queen Shushanik*). The most famous of royals -- a queen given the title “King of Kings” -- is Queen Tamar, who reigned at the end of the 12th century and served as the inspiration for Rustaveli’s epic poem *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*. Marjory shared the Georgians’ awe for this historical figure, as she translated the romantic poem’s six thousand lines of verse and wrote an original text about Tamar, which will be discussed later. Georgians’ esteem for these leading ladies of history is evident in daily life, as the most common names for baby girls in 2020 -- as throughout the ages -- were Nino, Tamar, and Mariam (“Top 10 Most Popular”). Women continue to play an important role in the nation’s culture, as Georgia was among the first countries to give women the right to vote in 1919 and, since the fall of the Soviet Union, has had two female presidents (“Women’s Suffrage” par. 5). The power of the feminine remains a trope alive in the nation’s imagination and continues to be alluded to in popular culture.

Marjory was undoubtedly inspired by these great women of Georgian history and the place they hold in the cultural heritage of the country -- and, likewise, Georgians were inspired by her love for their country, culture, and language. During Marjory's first visit to Georgia, she was greeted in the northwestern city of Kutaisi by a large group of Georgians eager to welcome her to their city and to befriend the Georgian-speaking Englishwoman. They held a grand feast, a *supra*, in her honor, during which one gentleman, Kote Bakradze, gave a toast to Marjory. In his lengthy speech, he expressed the sentiments shared by many Georgians: that Marjory belonged among the ranks of their celebrated women of history.

> "Very rarely will you encounter a country where a woman would have a similar influence in the history of a nation, as among us. The best moments of our history are connected to the names of an individual woman: the equal to the apostles Nino brought into Georgia Christ's faith,... she is followed by other numerous and famous women who gave their lives for the faith, among whom were in particular Shushanik and Ketevanm and finally great Tamar, under whose rule the power of the entire country has elevated Georgia to an unmatched degree, both in its political and educational senses… However, this wonderful influence of women has now ceased among us, just as the name of the Georgians has disappeared from history… Maybe the Blessed One has chosen you [Marjory] to once again confirm her care… Whence and where has she arrived and has cultivated love and sympathy towards us? Whence have you arrived that you encountered us, and studied us, and introduced us to Europe? You have raised their sympathy towards us, and give us hope that this forgotten land may one day leave obscurity. God willing you fulfill this great mission!" (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 17).

Bakradze thus inducts Marjory into the Georgian tradition of powerful women who influenced the nation for the betterment of its people. He outlines the mission evident in her original works, translations, and letters: to help paint a portrait of Georgia for the West in order to elicit cross-cultural understanding and to bring sympathy and aid to the repressed nation under Russian rule. Marjory, often described as humble and sweet, recalls the banquet in her travelogue only through her descriptions of the wonderful songs, dances, and hospitality of her Kutaisi friends; yet there is no doubt that Bakradze's speech fueled the fire of her heart's desire to share the uniqueness of Georgian culture with the English speaking world.

Marjory Wardrop's Representation of Georgian Women

Perusing her papers in the Wardrop Collection at the Bodleian Library, it is clear that her interest lay in collecting and documenting the female voices and figures of Georgia's past. In a manuscript draft of an article she wrote for the British *Bell Magazine*, she proudly tells her audience she would like to introduce them to some of the women she met abroad, and then states, "In few countries has the woman played a greater role than in Georgia, the beautiful, romantic region between the Black Sea and the Caspian" (M. Wardrop, "Tamara the King," 1). After her first visit to Georgia in December of 1894, Marjory wrote a travelogue recounting her journey in the country. The manuscript, which remains unpublished in the archives, comprises thirty-six handwritten pages filled not only with her observations of her trip but also replete with her insights on Georgian culture, society, and politics. A major theme in the text is her fascination with the powerful female tradition in Georgia, a perspective that was lacking in previous popular texts written about the country and is still a rare viewpoint in Western books about the Caucasus today.

Reading through her papers and texts preserved in the Bodleian Library, written in her tidy, swirly cursive script, it seems as though Marjory knew exactly which void in the Georgian literary canon she wished to fill. With original texts about the women of Georgia -- including a Georgian princess's view on historical events, the celebrated Queen Tamar, and Saint Nino, the female saint who brought Christianity to Georgia -- and with her translations from Georgian, which include the epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, a historical document titled *Petition from Queen Mariam to the Emperor Alexander*, an article on marriage customs in the Kakheti province, and an essay by renowned author Ilia Chavchavadze titled "Is That a Man?", the majority of Marjory's works form a treasure trove of feminist texts. The fact that much of her work remains unpublished could be explained by her untimely death and the difficult reality of publishing in the 19th century as a woman. Marjory was also somewhat of a perfectionist, as evidenced by the fact that at the time of her death in 1909, she was still editing her completed translation of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, which she had been working on for eighteen years, having started in 1891 (Kaladia 36). She wrote to her Georgian friend and the wife of Ilia, Olga Chavchavadze, in 1899, saying, "It has been several months since I finished the translation work, but it is still very poor in English, and I would like to compare it to the original text. I want

it to be excellent" (Kaladia 36). It is thanks to Marjory's drive for perfection that the text her brother Oliver published after her death remains the primary English version of the epic today.

Marjory was widely read on the topic of Georgia and the Caucasus, as evidenced in a letter to her brother: "By the way, there is a good secondhand bookshop down here [Brighton]. The other day I bought there: (books about travels in Central Asia, Turkey, Caucasus, Savage Svanetia, Guide to Persia and Turkey, Black Sea, Caucasus and Caspian). They are all illustrated and look very interesting. My Georgian library is growing!" (MS. Wardrop Adds. 2, folio. 316r). After teaching herself the Georgian language, Marjory voraciously read any and all Georgian texts she could obtain from abroad. While living in Bucharest with her brother as he served as a diplomat there, she wrote to Arthur Leist -- a German writer and translator of Georgian and Armenian literature who lived in Tbilisi -- asking him, "Would you be so kind as to tell Mr. Kus or some bookseller that I should like to receive all Georgian newspapers and all new books (except translations) in Georgian or about Georgia…" (M. Wardrop, *Letter to Arthur Leist*, par. 3). The emphasis she adds by underlining "all" underscores her seriousness as a writer and translator of Georgian and her devotion to her studies. In the same letter, she asks for the parcels to be addressed to "The B. L. B. (without my name on wrapper). Trouble at the Cust. It is thus avoided. Parcels are often so badly tied up that books arrive crumpled and even torn" (par. 5). It can be assumed that her trouble at customs was due to the fact that she was a foreigner, or perhaps a foreign woman, receiving parcels from Georgia. The fact that simply addressing the packages to ungendered initials remedied the situation suggests the latter. Yet despite such discrimination, she persevered, continuing to perfect her Georgian and to translate Georgian articles and literature she felt were important to bring to English-speaking audiences.

The majority of texts about Georgia available to English audiences prior to and during Marjory's lifetime were written by men, and so there was very little information about Georgian women and their contributions to Georgian history, society, and politics -- save for the "beauty of Georgian women" trope, which appears in many previously published works. For example, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a gem merchant and one of the most famous travelers in Europe in the 17th century, traveled in the East and published books about his journeys under the patronage of Louis XIV ("Travels to India"). In his early descriptions of Georgians in *Les Six Voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier*, he writes: "*Tous ces peuples ont le sang beau & le teint vermeil, on ne*

peut guère voir d'hommes mieux faits, & pour ce qui est des femmes elles sont estimées les plus belles de l'Asie" (Tavernier 294). In English, this would be translated as: "All these peoples have fair blood and rosy complexions; one can hardly see better-formed men, and as for the women, they are considered the most beautiful in Asia". He praises both the good looks of Georgian men and women but goes further to declare Georgian women the most beautiful in all of Asia. This is problematic because it reduces Georgian women to a single, superficial characteristic, offering no insight into their roles, achievements, or contributions to society.

Echoing this notion, Sir Robert Ker Porter, a Scottish diplomat and author of the 1821 travelogue *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia*, writes: "The beauty of the Georgian women cannot be disputed; having fine dark large eyes, very regular features, and a pleasing mild expression of countenance; and, from these characteristics being general, if there be any thing in physiognomy, we must conclude that they are naturally sweet-tempered and amiable" (Porter 123). These descriptions are highly objectifying, as Georgian women are judged solely on their appearance. There is no further engagement with the women themselves, which may have reflected the customary separation of genders. However, in Georgia, there was not as strict a divide between men and women as in surrounding countries. Tavernier even comments, "*Outre leur grande beauté, les Georgiennes ont un autre avantage, & elles se peuvent vanter sur tout à Teflis d'avoir plus de liberté, que les femmes n'en ont dans tous les autres endroits de l'Asie*" (Tavernier 294). In English: "Besides their great beauty, Georgian women have another advantage, and they can boast, especially in Tiflis, of having more freedom than women have in all other parts of Asia." Thus, male-authored scholarship from this period presents a narrow and superficial image of Georgian women, emphasizing aesthetics over agency, and thereby erasing their active roles in society, culture, and history from the English-speaking historical record.

It is interesting to compare her travelogue with that of her brother Oliver, who wrote his a few years earlier after taking an extended visit to the country as part of his travels following university. His published travelogue, titled *The Kingdom of Georgia: Notes of Travel in a Land of Women, Wine, and Song* (1888), includes very little information about the women of Georgia, despite his characterization of the country as a "land of women." He devotes only one paragraph to Georgian women in the 168-page text, in which he defends their beauty against those who would disagree:

> The beauty of the Georgian women has been called in question by some travellers, but these are nearly all men whose acquaintance with the people has been extremely limited. The favourite observation of these critics is a stereotyped phrase about "undeniably good features, but want of animation." Surely Alexandre Dumas the elder knew a beautiful face when he saw it; he says: "*La Grèce, c'est Galatée encore marbre; la Géorgie, c'est Galatée devenue femme*." (O. Wardrop 30)

Therefore, Oliver's text merely perpetuates the long-standing trope that Georgian women are beautiful, a notion reiterated by many, including Alexandre Dumas in his book *Adventures in Caucasia* (1859). However, it largely ignores their social, cultural, and historical contributions, offering a superficial portrayal that contrasts sharply with the more nuanced and feminist perspective found in Marjory's writings."

The only other part of Oliver's text that describes Georgian women is found in the section "The Language and Literature of Georgia," during his discussion of the Georgian epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli. He recounts the importance of the poem to Georgians and how it was kept alive through centuries of invasions and war:

> During nearly seven centuries of ceaseless struggles for freedom, the Georgians have kept this great work fresh in their minds. It has inspired them with hope and courage in the darkest hours, and at the present day it is as great a favourite as it ever was. Not only are many of its verses household words in cottage and hall, but there are not a few Georgians, especially among the women, who know every word of it by heart ; indeed, there was a time when no woman was allowed to marry unless she could repeat the whole poem. (O. Wardrop 139)

Oliver's account highlights the importance of Rustaveli's poem for Georgian culture. While he does mention that women played a role in preserving the poem, he does so in an appositive phrase, or non-essential clause, following "Georgians," thereby rendering their contributions slightly less central than if "women" had been the subject of the sentence. He then adds that women had to learn the poem by heart before they were allowed to marry, as if implying that their primary motivation for memorizing it was to meet a marital requirement rather than for the value of the poem itself.

If one contrasts Oliver's description of Georgian women's role in preserving the epic poem with that of Marjory, a different picture emerges. Marjory devotes a paragraph specifically to Georgian women as agents of literature, using gender roles as a lens through which to explore the preservation of Georgian texts. She writes:

> There are many literary men, and what is, in the East, remarkable, literary women. From the earliest times Georgian women have had the greatest influence on the race, owing possibly to the early adoption of Christianity, While the men were engaged in fighting the wars against Islam, in which the country has so often been plunged, the women were at home teaching their children to read and write, arts often times unknown to the sterner sex. Much of the literature has been preserved from oblivion by the women, who studied their ancient classics, learning many of them by heart; even now, in the country, many a maid and matron beguiles the winter evenings in repeating by heart the whole of the beautiful epic poem "The Man in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rust'haveli. (Journey Marjory pg 7)

Here, Marjory directly credits women as the preservers of Georgian classical literature, highlighting their essential role in the nation's literary history -- one largely overlooked in English-language sources. She emphasizes that women not only safeguarded the knowledge of ancient Georgian texts but also transmitted the fundamental skills of reading and writing to further knowledge production. Georgian author Aka Morchiladze supports this perspective, noting in *Character in Georgia* that women in noble families often read more than men (Morchiladze and Nasmyth 8). Unlike Oliver, who frames women's memorization of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* as a precondition for marriage, Marjory underscores that Georgian women recited its 6,648 lines for the sheer joy and beauty of the poem -- a testament to their devotion to literature and its enchanting quality.

Historian Nikoloz Aleksidze highlights the significance of the poem for women, explaining that the epic has been transmitted matrilineally since the twelfth century because of the enduring meaning it held for women across generations. He writes that they preserved the poem in their hearts and minds as "...a reminder of the possibility of equality, of the power that Georgian women could have, and of their momentous and overlooked place in history" (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 48). Through her travelogue and translation, Marjory not only emphasized the enduring role of Georgian women in preserving the knowledge of their cultural past but also gave the poem new life for English-speaking audiences, encouraging them to engage with its insights on gender and equality. Her female perspective demonstrates how a shift in viewpoint can illuminate an entirely different understanding of history. Perhaps most importantly, Marjory's recognition of women as agents of knowledge and power was especially significant at a time in the West when they were largely excluded from such roles.

Early Women Travel Writers and the Male-Dominated Genre

Hence, by the 18th century, a well-established form of the travelogue had emerged -- one predominantly shaped by male authors who often portrayed foreign cultures through a lens of exoticism and superiority. In this tradition, it became commonplace for male writers to objectify local populations, particularly women, reducing them to symbols of difference and desire rather than presenting a nuanced or respectful understanding of their roles in society. Anna Geurts highlights these gendered differences in her paper, frequently citing Brian Dolan's *Ladies of the Grand Tour*. He contends that men traveled the continent during their "Grand Tour" to return home with a heightened sense of the superiority of British culture, whereas women "saw home as somehow inadequate" and thus traveled as a means of escaping their discontent with British society (Geurts, par. 3). Marjory can be included in this group of women, as she laments her unhappiness at home in a letter to her brother, saying, "I do not think that you can feel much more lonely in the far-away East than I often do at home" (MS. Wardrop Add. Coll.). As a result of these differing intentions, Dolan concludes that women's portrayals of foreign cultures were often more detailed and less prejudiced than those of their male counterparts. However, as pioneers challenging the social status quo, they were also burdened with the pressure to defend their femininity, domesticity, and patriotism to deflect criticism (Geurts par. 3).

Until the latter part of the 18th century, travel was largely viewed as an exclusively male pursuit. Men were presumed to possess both the physical endurance and intellectual authority required for such undertakings, while women were generally confined to the domestic sphere. Consequently, male travelogues dominated the 18th century and were frequently presented as objective or "truthful" representations of the places visited, despite reflecting only a male perspective of different cultures. This is problematic, as male observers were often preoccupied with categorizing, ordering, and observing with "authority yet static detachment" (Geurts, par. 4). From this position, male travel writers frequently reinforced colonialist ideologies and Western perspectives under the guise of factual observation. In contrast, women travel writers, writing from the viewpoint of "critics and escapees of restrictions at home," exhibited a "...refreshingly open-minded attitude toward foreign cultures and a lack of nationalist bias" (par. 5). Women were less concerned with categorizing foreign cultures to justify a supposed superiority and were therefore more empirical -- focusing on the interplay of relationships and

engaging more sympathetically with the people they observed (par. 4). When female writers offered alternative narratives -- especially those that contradicted previously published male-authored travel accounts -- they inadvertently exposed gaps and omissions in what was assumed to be factual, comprehensive reporting and often subtly challenged imperialist ideologies (Zold 3).

Even before the gradual inclusion of women in mainstream travel narratives in the late 18th century, notable exceptions existed; a handful of women had been journeying across continents and chronicling their experiences long before it was socially acceptable. These early female travel writers defied societal norms and left behind valuable literary records that challenge the traditionally male-dominated archive of travel writing. In fact, the tradition of women documenting their travels dates back as early as the 4th century AD. The earliest known example is attributed to Egeria, a devout Christian pilgrim believed to have originated from northern Spain. Between 381 and 384 AD, Egeria undertook an ambitious pilgrimage to the Holy Lands, including visits to Mount Sinai and Constantinople. Throughout her journey, she meticulously recorded her experiences in a detailed and reflective narrative addressed to her "sorores" -- a term scholars interpret as either fellow sisters in a convent or religious female companions ("Egeria"). Her text, often referred to as the *Itinerarium Egeriae*, offers not only a rich depiction of early Christian pilgrimage practices but also serves as a rare and invaluable female-authored account from antiquity. Scholars theorize that Egeria likely came from an affluent background and may have lived outside the conventional gender roles of her time, possibly as a nun or member of a religious order, which would have granted her an unusual degree of autonomy and mobility. Her account survives today thanks to a copy preserved in the *Codex Aretinus VI*, discovered near Monte Cassino in Italy and dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries ("Egeria"). Egeria's legacy stands as a powerful testament to the early presence of women in travel literature and challenges the notion that such early narratives were exclusively the domain of men.

Simply managing to travel was a difficult task for most women, but to then write a text and have it published presented an entirely different set of obstacles. Transforming travel experiences into published literature required a level of privilege, access, and determination that few women possessed, particularly in the 19th century, when societal expectations tightly

restricted female mobility, expression, and independence (Geurts, par. 24). For a woman, publishing was not merely about recording a journey; it was a form of resistance against dominant gender norms and a bold assertion of intellectual authority in a male-dominated literary space. Gender scholar Sandra Adickes argues that travelogues were a popular genre for women writers because "they directed the attention of her readers to her view of the world, and her actions in it" (par. 27). At a time when women were often left without a voice in the public sphere, the ability to share their perspective represented a rare and significant opportunity.

One of the first well-known female travel writers to successfully publish a series of travelogues was Ida Pfeiffer, an Austrian woman from a modest background who had received little formal education, yet possessed a relentless and lifelong desire to explore distant and unfamiliar territories. Her first major journey was a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands and neighboring regions, which she documented in a travelogue published in Leipzig in 1845. The publication of this book not only brought her recognition but also provided the financial means to continue traveling and writing about her increasingly ambitious adventures (Watt 340). Unlike her male counterparts, Pfeiffer did not begin her explorations in youth or as part of a government or scholarly mission. Her story is particularly remarkable given that she only began traveling seriously at the age of forty-five, after raising her two sons and fulfilling the domestic expectations placed upon her as a mother and wife. Yet despite this late start, she went on to complete five major journeys, covering enough distance to circumnavigate the globe nearly seven times.

In a journal article about Pfeiffer, Helga Schutte Watt, a scholar at the University of Denver, notes that Pfeiffer's ability to travel alone to distant, often remote locations was partly enabled by her age and life stage (Watt 341). According to Watt, Pfeiffer's advanced age afforded her a kind of social invisibility that paradoxically granted her greater freedom. In a traditionally gendered society, "...an older woman is considered of less importance and therefore is subject to less control," since she had already fulfilled her societal duty of bearing and raising children (Watt 341). This status allowed her to navigate both public and private spaces with a degree of liberty that would have been denied to a younger, unmarried woman. No longer perceived as a sexual object or constrained by the social imperative to protect her virtue, Pfeiffer was spared much of the scrutiny and restriction imposed on younger women. She traveled by

relatively humble means -- using local stagecoaches, riding horseback through rugged mountain regions, and staying in simple lodgings, often with the assistance of male guides. These practical and economic choices gave her a more grounded and immersive experience, though such arrangements would likely have been deemed inappropriate for a younger woman like Marjory Scott Wardrop, whose "honor" and reputation society insisted she protect. At that time, a young, unmarried woman was expected to travel only with chaperones or male family members, making Pfeiffer's independence and self-reliance all the more extraordinary.

In some cases, her sex provided unique advantages over male adventurers, such as when she ventured into the wild inland territories of Borneo, Singapore, and Sumatra, where she was occasionally the first white person the natives had ever seen (Watt 345). She was often warned against visiting these areas due to the presence of hostile and dangerous natives, but she disregarded these cautions, driven by her sense of adventure and discovery. To go where no traveler had gone before, she relied on the perceived weakness of her gender, which led the locals to view her as neither a threat nor a spy, allowing her to avoid immediate harm (Watt 345). Watt recounts one of her most perilous journeys through the land of the Batak in Sumatra, where a village of cannibals greeted her with extreme hostility and threatened to make a meal of her. She responded by rising and… patting the nearest and meanest man on the shoulder. With a smile, she addressed him in a mixture of Malay and Batak: "*Ihr werdet eine Frau nicht töten und auffressen, am wenigsten eine so alte wie ich bin, deren Fleisch schon hart und zähe ist*"(Watt 345) Translated to English as: "You will not kill and devour a woman, least of all one as old as I am, whose flesh is already hard and tough." As a result of her courage, warmth, and humor -- and thanks to her skillful use of their native language and comedic gestures - the tense situation was diffused by laughter.

Watt emphasizes that Pfeiffer's travelogues are distinguished not only by her determination and resourcefulness but also by the unique lens through which she viewed the world -- a perspective inherently shaped by her gender. As a woman traveler, she had access to spaces and experiences largely inaccessible to men: she could enter domestic areas, attend female-only gatherings, and gain insights into the lives of local women, including those living in harems or other gender-segregated environments. This perspective allowed her to produce narratives that diverged from dominant male travelogues, which often prioritized political,

military, or geographical observations while neglecting social and domestic dimensions. Pfeiffer paid particular attention to aspects of daily life that male writers tended to overlook or dismiss, such as the preparation of food, the education of children, clothing customs, family dynamics, and the nuanced roles of women within each society she visited (Watt 344). These details enriched her narratives with human depth, offering readers a more intimate and multifaceted portrayal of the cultures she encountered -- even arguably more authentic. Her presence as a woman in foreign, often patriarchal, societies enabled her to form connections with other women that male travelers could not, ultimately resulting in a body of work that challenges the conventional views of male-authored travel literature.

In comparison to Ida Pfeiffer, Marjory was wealthier and far better educated, yet in some ways faced greater obstacles in pursuing her wanderlust. Although born roughly seventy years later, Marjory, according to the archival record, was never afforded the opportunity to travel alone or independently lead her own journeys; she was always accompanied by her mother, her brother, or trusted friends. Unlike Pfeiffer, who could move with the relative freedom granted to her as an older woman and widow, Marjory remained under the watchful eye of her family throughout her travels. She only managed to live abroad in far-reaching cities such as Saint Petersburg or Bucharest because she was following her brother Oliver in his work placements, rather than acting on her own initiative. In many ways, her limited mobility reflects the constraints of her upper-middle-class social standing, which in British society at the time demanded strict adherence to social codes and proprieties. Women of her class were expected to uphold ideals of femininity, modesty, and domesticity -- expectations that often conflicted with the independence and risk-taking associated with solo travel.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Marjory's father was a joiner and partner in a building firm -- a profession that signified a respectable and established standing in the town -- while her mother was a homemaker ("Wardrop, Marjory Scott (1869–1909)"). Her family's social position is further reflected in the fact that Marjory, their only daughter, was educated at private schools, first in their hometown of Chislehurst and later in Eastbourne, a seaside town roughly a hundred kilometers to the south. She received several years of formal schooling, studying French, German, and Latin, which likely sparked her early fascination with languages and cultures. This interest deepened as she took it upon herself to learn additional

languages, including Russian, Romanian, and, most notably, Georgian. In this way, she had a stronger academic and linguistic foundation than Ida Pfeiffer ever did, yet she was still discouraged by her parents from transforming these intellectual pursuits into a formal academic path. While her older brother Oliver was permitted to attend university and pursue a diplomatic career, Marjory was steered toward roles considered appropriate for women (Merabishvili, "Marjory Wardrop Part I"). Her story highlights the paradox that, even with financial stability and access to education, pursuing travel and intellectual goals as a woman in the 19th century required extraordinary persistence, internal motivation, and quiet defiance of societal limitations.

Perhaps Marjory was inspired to travel -- and even to write her own travelogue -- after reading the works of pioneering female travelers who challenged male-dominated societal norms to document their experiences. At a time when even leaving home without male accompaniment could be considered improper, women like Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu carved paths for others to follow. Marjory may have been engrossed in Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), which combined a woman's perspective on foreign landscapes with emotional introspection and political critique. She may also have found influence in Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (1817), written during the Romantic period, which blended personal narrative with keen observation. Most likely, she was particularly interested in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), which offered insight into Eastern culture and the private spaces of Ottoman society, including the harem -- something male writers could only speculate about. The significance of these works would not have been lost on Marjory, who would later produce translations and studies of Georgian texts that combined scholarly rigor with a sensitivity to cultural nuance.

These texts did not emerge in isolation. Benjamin Colbert, a reader in English Literature at the University of Wolverhampton and the principal researcher behind *Women's Travel Writing, 1780–1840: A Bio-Bibliographical Database*, cataloged 204 travel writings published by women in Great Britain and Ireland between 1780 and 1840. Importantly, Colbert estimates that this figure represents only about five percent of the total number of travelogues published during that period (Moffat and Sharron). This striking imbalance underscores the extent to which women's

contributions to the genre were minimized or overlooked, even when they offered perspectives that differed radically from prevailing male narratives. Yet, a lingering stigma against women travelers persisted well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

An example of a British female author who traveled east and disrupted the status quo with her work is Julia Pardoe, best known for her travelogue *The City of the Sultan; and Domestic Manners of the Turks* (1837). Like Marjory Wardrop with Georgia, Pardoe discovered her passion for writing at an early age, publishing her first book of poetry at just thirteen (Johnson 52). Unlike Marjory, however, she appears to have enjoyed her family's encouragement -- or at least their approval -- for she was able to travel with her father, a field officer in the British Army, and reside with him in Constantinople for six months. During her stay, she gained rare access to Turkish women in harems, experiences that informed the empathetic and observational tone of her work.

In the preface to *The City of the Sultan*, Pardoe criticizes the political agendas and prejudices of most Western visitors to the East, whom she describes as afflicted by "party-spirit," a bias that prevents genuine understanding of Turkish culture. Pardoe also expresses frustration with the way previous writers had misrepresented Turkish women, noting that they were understandably reserved around foreigners who had "absurdly and even cruelly… misrepresented [them] by many a passing traveller, possessed neither of the time nor the opportunity to form a more efficient judgment" (Pardoe IX). In response, Pardoe commits herself to "hazard no assertion or opinion which did not emanate from personal conviction" -- a pledge that underscores both her methodological integrity and her distinct position as a woman who, unlike many of her male contemporaries, was not entangled in political allegiances and thus able to observe with greater empathy and independence (Pardoe X).

Her travelogue became widely popular and was republished three more times in the following years as a three-volume set. It was praised for being "the first to furnish reliable information on the peculiar institutions of the East" (Johnson 54) -- a comment that most likely refers to her detailed and unprecedented descriptions of the harem, a space previously inaccessible to male travelers. Pardoe's account portrayed Turkish women in a markedly

different light from the oppressed and powerless figures often depicted in male-authored texts. Instead, she asserts:

> "If, as we are all prone to believe, freedom be happiness, then are the Turkish women the happiest, for they are certainly the freest individuals in the Empire. It is the fashion in Europe to pity the women of the East; but it is ignorance of their real position alone which can engender so misplaced an exhibition of sentiment." (Pardoe 100)

Her privileged position as an "insider" within the harem allowed her to describe its internal hierarchy with rare insight. She explains that the wife occupied the apex of authority -- often holding greater influence than her husband in matters concerning the domestic affairs of the harem (102). In doing so, Pardoe restored a degree of agency to the women of the harem and provided her readers with a more balanced and nuanced understanding of their lives, one that challenged long-held Western assumptions about Eastern female subjugation.

While many women who wrote travelogues departed from conventional narratives by employing their distinct perspectives, they were nonetheless writing within an established literary tradition and influenced by earlier works in the genre. To secure publication and readership, they often had to appeal to audiences familiar with specific literary conventions and themes, particularly those associated with Eastern destinations. Orientalism, as Edward Said famously defines in *Orientalism* (1978), functioned as a framework through which the East was represented as "the other," thereby affirming the superiority and authority of the Western observer. This trope was especially prevalent in travel writing during the Enlightenment, the Romantic period, and the era of Western nation-building. Shehla Burney, professor of Cultural Studies and Education at Queen's University, likens this Western gaze to the "deadly 'male gaze' in feminist theory," which "subjectifies and objectifies all that it sees in its own image, through its own colored lenses, and from its own position of power" (Burney 26). Whether explicitly male or broadly Western, this gaze also shaped the perspectives of female authors such as Marjory Wardrop and Julia Pardoe, whose works, despite their empathy and cultural sensitivity, were not entirely free from the influence of Orientalist discourse.

In her travelogue, Julia Pardoe also perpetuates the familiar trope of the "beautiful Georgian woman" when she focuses her narrative on a particular woman she encounters in the harem. Upon first seeing her, Pardoe describes the woman's extraordinary beauty, claiming she

possesses “a form as is not looked on above half a dozen times during a long life” (Pardoe 213). What might have begun as a singular observation quickly becomes a sweeping generalization, as Pardoe attributes these qualities to all Georgian women, writing:

> “The character of Georgian beauty is perfectly dissimilar from that of Circassia; it is more stately and dazzling; the whole of its attributes are different… the Georgian is a creature of another stamp: with eyes like meteors, and teeth almost as dazzling as her eyes. Her mouth does not wear the sweet and unceasing smile of her less vivacious rival, but the proud expression that sits upon her finely arched lips accords so well with her stately form, and her high, calm brow, that you do not seek to change its character.” (213)

This passage could easily have appeared in a male-authored travelogue, as it objectifies the Georgian woman by reducing her to her physical features and aesthetic value. Pardoe’s lingering, evaluative gaze mirrors the “male gaze” frequently found in European travel writing, positioning her as the arbiter of beauty and race while leaving the subject of her observation without agency or voice.

Marjory’s Travelogue: A Feminist Lens on Georgia

In contrast, Marjory’s travelogue on Georgia stands out for its sustained focus on women as cultural agents. Her descriptions of Georgian women are both detailed and informative, revealing an intention -- implicit though it may be -- to document the fashion and cultural practices surrounding female dress. Earlier travelogues about Georgia occasionally mentioned women but rarely offered such attentive depictions of their clothing or adornment. Marjory’s account is therefore remarkable for the depth of its observation and its emphasis on women’s appearance as a meaningful expression of identity and tradition. During a visit to the winter residence of the Princes of Guria, a western Georgian region once ruled by a local royal family until the mid-nineteenth century, Marjory observes that both men and women appeared in traditional attire. Yet she focuses her description exclusively on the women’s clothing, writing:

> "To give an idea of the dress of the women, I shall describe one worn by a tall well-built lady. Over a long princess front, of rich white silk embroidered heavily in gold, was worn a robe of pale sea green silk, and from the waist hung to the feet two ends of a white sash also embroidered in gold. The neck was bare, and adorned with necklaces, and the sleeves flowed loose from above the elbows. The Kart'hlian headdress consists of a band of velvet or silk about two inches wide, embroidered in silks or precious stones, placed round the brow and meeting on the top of the head. From this there hangs over the shoulders a lace veil, and the hair is usually arranged with a plait behind and a long curl at each side of the face. The Gurian headdress is formed by gracefully arranging a lace scarf, black or coloured, the hair falling in a long plait behind. Both of these headdresses are very pretty—the Gurian perhaps lending a more youthful appearance to the features, while the Kart'hlian gives an air of dignity to the wearer. This suits the characters of the inhabitants of the different provinces, for while the Kart'hlian is serious and thoughtful, the Gurian is more volatile and gay." (*The Georgian Journey*, p. 26)

The length and precision of this passage reveal Marjory's fascination with the richly ornate elements of Georgian dress and her desire to document them with ethnographic care. Her attention to the nuances of color, fabric, and regional variation suggests a respect for the artistry of Georgian women and positions clothing as a vital medium through which culture, identity, and character were expressed.

Throughout Marjory's travelogue, as with many female travel writers, there is a marked emphasis on the daily lives and experiences of women -- an aspect often overlooked in male-authored texts. She visits the home of the Georgian nobility, Prince George Matchutadze, and his wife, Princess Matchutadze. Had a male travel writer made the same visit, he would most likely have focused on the Prince, speaking with him more extensively and taking greater interest in his affairs. However, Marjory's account demonstrates that she was particularly attentive to the life of Princess Matchutadze, aiming to document the experiences of this remarkable woman, a British citizen born Hanna Georgievna Tersey. Interestingly, the Princess had worked for six years as a governess in Count Leo Tolstoy's household before leaving to serve his sister, Sonya, who was living in the Caucasus ("Marjory Wardrop and Guria," par. 6). Marjory's description of the visit focuses almost entirely on the Princess:

> Leaving Kutais, with many promises to return, we went with our kind host to pay a visit to Princess Matchutadze at Nigoili. This lady is English, and, in all the country, she is greatly admired for her goodness of heart. She looks after the peasants on her estate with the utmost consideration, and in sickness or trouble all go to her for advice and comfort. Her children speak

> English quite fluently, as well as Georgian. Here we were hospitably entertained by Princess Matchutadze and her husband. (Marjory 22 journey)

Marjory's numerous praises of the Princess are grounded in her good deeds and generous character, rather than her physical appearance. The details of her description reveal Marjory's interest in documenting the lives of women in Georgia and securing their place within the country's historical narrative -- a goal made all the more significant given the scarcity of other sources chronicling their experiences. Even through her syntax, it is clear that Marjory intends for the Princess to be the central figure in her account. She writes that it is "her estate," and that "her children speak English quite fluently" (Marjory 22, *Journey*). She could have written "their estate" and "their children," but instead chooses to highlight the Princess's active role and accomplishments. Marjory also notes that the peasants on the estate "go to her for advice and comfort," implying that the Princess functioned as the de facto head of the household rather than her husband, the Prince. She concludes by stating that they were "entertained by Princess Matchutadze and her husband." Her choice to emphasize the woman's title while referring to the Prince simply as "her husband" underscores her intention to center the Princess as the figure of importance in her narrative.

As a woman from a different society, Marjory's perspective and experiences often illuminate cultural differences that were likely absent from male-written travelogues on Georgian society. Her unique position as both an outsider and a woman allowed her to notice and record details that male contemporaries may have dismissed or overlooked entirely. This shift in focus provides readers with insights into aspects of Georgian culture that had not been widely explored in English-language travel literature of the time. Marjory made a point of including her own perspective on Georgian culture, whereas other female travel writers, such as Ida Pfeiffer, often refrained from expressing opinions on cultural matters. Watt observes that Pfeiffer concentrated on nature rather than culture, perhaps because it was more socially acceptable -- "…since men seemed better qualified to compare civilizations" (Watt 342). The reluctance to comment on cultural topics likely stemmed from broader gender norms that discouraged women from making authoritative judgments, particularly in print. In this light, Pfeiffer's restraint can be understood as a strategic navigation of a publishing world still skeptical of women's intellectual authority.

Marjory, however, enjoyed a different kind of freedom. Since she never published her travelogue, it was never subjected to the scrutiny or censorship of editors or publishers, allowing her to express her perspective on Georgian culture without constraint. Free from the oversight of an external institution, she wrote candidly in her own voice, unfiltered by the expectations of an audience or a publishing house. She observes Georgian women as maintaining a notable degree of equality with men in the workplace and positions of leadership, writing, "Georgian women of today keep up the ancient traditions: in Tiflis we find lady editors of papers, and contributors too. Indeed it seemed to me that the gentler sex have more energy than their lords" (Marjory, *Journey* 8). Her statement is striking, both in its praise of Georgian women and its implicit critique of Georgian men. Not only does she highlight the prominent role of women in Tbilisi society, but she also boldly suggests that men lag behind in the public sphere -- an observation rare in contemporary English accounts of Georgian culture. Her words convey a quiet yet pointed critique of Victorian gender norms while subtly endorsing the progressive dynamics she witnessed in Georgia.

As previously discussed, travel writers etch their experiences and perspectives into the written word, which is then taken as an objective "truth" and subsequently reverberates through public discourse to generate ideas, generalizations, and myths. Thus, all truth contains some myth, and all myth contains some truth. Travel writing forms part of a larger cultural network, where written impressions help shape a nation's identity not only in the eyes of outsiders but also for its citizens. Through this lens, Marjory takes her turn in shaping the Georgian discourse by underscoring the epic achievements of famous Georgian women, as she pronounces:

> But it is not alone in the arts of peace that Georgian women have excelled. It was here that the Amazons fought their battles, and in modern times there are many tales of warlike, heroic deeds performed by delicately nurtured princesses. The great Queen T'hamara an Ket'hevan used to lead their armies themselves, clad in armour, against the Persians. (Marjory 8 *Journey*)

This powerful statement is not just a celebration of past heroines; it is Marjory's way of contributing to the cultural mythology of Georgia, reinforcing a legacy of female strength and agency that defies the stereotypical image of passive, ornamental womanhood. By foregrounding the military exploits and leadership of women in Georgian history, Marjory situates her travel narrative within a broader historical and feminist context, giving weight to stories that challenge patriarchal assumptions.

She draws on the Greek "myth" of the Amazon female warriors to bolster the powerful image of Georgian women. Many Greek sources, including Homer and Herodotus, mention these formidable women warriors, and after extensive scholarly debate, it is now believed that the Amazons were female warriors among the Scythian nomadic tribes, skilled in archery and horseback riding, whose territory stretched between the Black Sea and Central Asia from approximately 700 BC to 500 AD (Papamichali). Once dismissed as mere myth, the Amazons are now understood to have been inspired by real women living on the frontiers of ancient empires, whose lifestyles demanded physical prowess and martial skill.

Whereas the Greeks told tales of the Amazons' defeat at the hands of Greek heroes -- never of their victory -- thereby reinforcing patriarchal superiority, Marjory uses them in the opposite way. She subtly implies that these fearsome Amazonian warrior women are the ancestors of Georgian women, perhaps from Colchis, who have inherited their independence, strength, courage, and matriarchal tendencies. This implication is historically evocative, reclaiming and reinterpreting the myth of the Amazons to empower rather than subjugate. It is thus fitting that Georgia's famous queens, Tamara and Ketevan, followed in the Amazons' footsteps, leading their armies into battle. Marjory paints a landscape of Georgian history with a feminist palette, layering myth and truth to create a vision of womanhood that is strong, central, and active. In doing so, she does more than record a country -- she elevates its women and rewrites their place in history.

Marjory does not explain her sources nor include a bibliography, so one must surmise that she gained her knowledge through conversations with the many Georgian women and men she called her dear friends, from reading all the source material she could find about the country, and from her connections with fellow Georgiaphiles. Her understanding appears to be the product of years of devoted study, lived experience, and genuine emotional investment, rather than formal citation or academic procedure. While the absence of references may raise questions of academic rigor by today's standards, it instead highlights the deeply personal and immersive nature of her scholarship. Marjory was not merely documenting a foreign culture; she was living it, learning from it, and becoming a part of it. By the time she journeyed to Georgia to write her travelogue, she was already an expert on its history, literature, and language. Her fluency in Georgian, both ancient and modern, and her familiarity with cultural nuances placed her in a rare

position among Westerners of the time: she was not a casual traveler or distant observer, but someone fully engaged with the life and spirit of the country.

It can be assumed that Marjory wrote the travelogue with the intention of eventual publication. The Bodleian archives contain her first draft in messy handwriting, marked with edits and lines crossing out errors; a second, more finalized copy, written in the neatest swirling cursive of all her manuscripts -- revealing the care and importance she placed on the work; and a third copy produced on a typewriter. The transformation from rough draft to polished manuscript reflects not only a process of refinement but also her deep respect for the work she was creating. Curiously, her brother Oliver did not edit the travelogue posthumously or publish it as he did with her translation of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. Whether due to oversight, changing priorities, or uncertainty about how to present a work that was both scholarly and deeply personal, the manuscript has remained unpublished. In any case, *Notes of a Journey in Georgia* endures, now available electronically for future readers to accompany Marjory as she explores her beloved Georgia for the first time.

Marjory's Other Original Work

Although Marjory is best known for her moving translation of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, along with other significant works of Georgian literature that undoubtedly occupied much of her time and intellectual energy, she also wrote at least two other original texts apart from her travelogue. Like her travelogue, these works were never published and remain in archival boxes at the Bodleian Library. The rarity of her original writings makes these two extant manuscripts especially significant; they likely reflect topics that were deeply important to her mind and heart. Both are undated but must have been written sometime after her first trip to Georgia in 1894. One manuscript is an introduction to a Georgian princess she met during her travels and her courageous act of defiance against Russian occupiers, while the other is an article detailing Queen Tamar and the legends surrounding her. Both texts reveal Marjory's enduring admiration for powerful female figures in Georgian history and her desire to chronicle their lives for English-speaking audiences and posterity.

Evidence from the manuscripts -- visible corrections, struck-through lines, and handwritten marginalia -- indicates that these were first drafts, suggesting she had not yet reached a final version. Whether she intended to revise and publish them later, or if more polished versions once existed but are now lost, remains uncertain. In any case, these manuscripts provide a rare and intimate glimpse into the themes that occupied her imagination and scholarship outside of her better-known translation work.

Babo Bagration Davithashvili

The first is a short article written for a ladies' magazine titled *"*Babo Bagration Davithashvili (of the Royal Family of Georgia).*"* She begins the piece by expressing her desire to introduce the ladies of "Bel. mag" to some of the women she met while traveling abroad (M. Wardrop, "Babo" 1). There was a popular women's magazine titled "La Belle Assemblée," which was published in Great Britain until 1832, when it merged with another publication and changed its name to "The Court Magazine and Monthly Critic" ("La Belle Assemblée"). Even this merged magazine ceased publication in 1848, well before Marjory's time. It is possible, then,

that Marjory used “Bel. mag” as a placeholder for women’s magazines that accepted original submissions from readers. Her introductory phrase, “some of the women I met,” suggests she intended to discuss other women besides Babo, perhaps planning a longer article or a series of shorter pieces. The only draft in the archives is a brief, two-page handwritten manuscript. Despite its short length, the article is valuable for study due to Marjory’s evident admiration for Babo’s personality and bravery, her desire to share these qualities with a British female readership, and the global-historical significance of the story she recounts.

She introduces Babo as a Georgian princess whose family claimed descent from King David of Israel -- a bold and attention-grabbing detail for readers. Marjory describes meeting her at a party in Western Georgia, portraying her as a “...girl who had just finished her education,” and “...the gayest of the gay, throwing herself heart and soul into the enjoyment of the moment” (M. Wardrop, “Babo” 1). From the outset, Marjory emphasizes that the Georgian princess was both educated and possessed a large, engaging personality. She provides a flattering account of Babo at the party, noting that she “...leapt up again and again to toast and welcome us strangers”—a Georgian ritual demonstrating hospitality and respect -- and that she danced for Marjory and the other guests while delivering “eloquent little speeches” (M. Wardrop, “Babo” 1). After presenting this lively and passionate portrait, Marjory transitions into Babo’s own narrative, recounted to her in a “simple straightforward way” (M. Wardrop, “Babo” 1).

Babo was alone at her country house when a group of eighty Doukhobors -- “Russian Quakers,” as Marjory explains -- came seeking shelter. The Doukhobors were a pacifist religious group of peasants from southern Russia who had been banished to parts of Georgia and other regions by Tsar Nicholas I for refusing to obey civil laws and church liturgy (Rak and Woodcock, par. 5). Fleeing from Russian authorities in Georgia for “...refusing to bear arms and doff their hats to earthly authority,” Babo “...took them all in, men, women, and children, housed them in barns, stables, and outhouses, fed them, gave them work, and kept them for two years until they were able to emigrate to Canada” (M. Wardrop, “Babo” 2). This was a remarkable and generous act for a young woman. The writer Leo Tolstoy, sympathetic to their pacifist beliefs, contributed half of the emigration fund to cover the cost of ships departing from Batumi to Canada. Marjory concludes the article by noting that the Doukhobors were “...not very easy people to deal with, these stiff-necked dissenters, as our Canadian authorities have since

discovered, but Babo seems to have won their hearts and even now she receives letters from them" (M. Wardrop, "Babo" 2). Marjory's admiring portrayal makes clear that Babo Bagration Davithashvili had deeply impressed her, inspiring Marjory to share her story so that other women might be moved by her courage and generosity. Babo would later become the first actress to perform dramatic roles in the renewed Georgian theater in Tbilisi in 1879 and engage in charity work as a member of the supervisory committee of the Association of Georgian Women ("Women from the Past" 8).

Tamara the King

The second article, titled "Tamara the King," is written across five loose pages of unlined paper. The title, printed at the top center of the first page in Marjory's neat, curly cursive and boldly underlined, is straightforward and declarative. She chose to refer to the late twelfth-century Georgian ruler as "king," not queen, because that was the title Georgians used -- in fact, not just king, but the official designation of "King of Kings" (Gigineishvili, par. 3). Of all the figures in Georgian history, Queen Tamar holds the title role, a remarkable distinction given that she reigned during a time when women had little agency. It is no wonder that Marjory dedicated an article to her; Tamar inspired the epic poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli and stood as a powerful example of a courageous Georgian woman who championed women's rights, religious piety, and peace.

Tamar's prowess in both the political sphere and on the battlefield demonstrated that women could not only match men in the highest domains but could surpass them in achievement. By the end of her reign, she had established the greatest, most peaceful, and most cultured kingdom Georgia had seen, a standard that would endure for centuries. Historians mark her reign as the apex and final stage of the Georgian Golden Age (Gigineishvili, par. 1). The gender equality she promoted inspired Rustaveli's line: "The lion cubs are equal be they male or female" -- a line Marjory must have found profound, as it is the only one she quotes from the more than six thousand lines of the poem in her travelogue, highlighting it in the section dedicated to the influence of women on Georgian history and culture (M. Wardrop, *Journey* 8).

Who was this “King of Kings,” this woman who, in the late twelfth century, was able to build a small Christian nation sandwiched between great Muslim empires into a flourishing kingdom of human rights and culture that stretched from the Black to the Caspian Seas (Gigineishvili, par. 4)? Tamar’s reign as the first female ruler of the kingdom of Georgia began in 1184, at the young age of twenty-four. For the six previous years, she had been co-ruler with her father, Giorgi III, who gave her the title of co-regent and heir to protect the throne from his nephew Demna. When her father died and she took control of the throne, most of the public expected her to transition back to the co-ruler role upon marriage, and she was quickly coerced into marrying the Russian Prince Yuri Bogolyubsky of the Grand Principality of Vladimir (Jagiashvili, par. 4). However, the marriage was an unhappy one, and Tamar publicly accused him of misconduct, sodomy, and drinking—banished him to Constantinople—and convinced the Christian Georgian nobles to grant an official divorce (par. 4). She then married a second time, this time by her own choice, and had a loving marriage with the Alan Prince David Soslan (par. 4). Dramatically, her scorned ex-husband attempted to invade from the southwestern border twice, but she successfully fended off his army's advances (par. 4). Thus, the start of her rule as Queen of Georgia was unique in more ways than one.

Tamar’s reign from the year 1184, to her death in 1213 at the age of fifty-three, is considered great for her remarkable advances in the political and cultural spheres, along with great military achievements. Tamar implemented several marked changes in how the kingdom was run to promote peace and human achievement, and a more just and efficient society. Previously, officials were placed in high positions based upon noble rank, which often led to favoritism and inefficiency, but Tamar appointed officials based on merit (Gigineishvili par. 6). This meritocratic approach ensured that capable individuals were given authority, which in turn improved the administration of the kingdom. Tamar created a more compassionate kingdom by abolishing the violent system of punishments of her father’s reign, and outlawing torture and the death penalty (Jagiashvili par. 7). These actions demonstrated her progressive views on justice and human dignity, which were exceptional for the time. She also supported remarriages and religious tolerance, leading to a society with more human rights for all (par. 7). By encouraging personal freedom and religious coexistence, Tamar fostered a more inclusive and stable society that was less prone to internal strife and better able to thrive culturally and intellectually.

During Tamar's reign, women were employed as government officials, most likely for the first time in Georgian history. It could be wondered whether this change helped bolster Tamar's government and contributed to the many achievements that marked her reign. Among the most notable of these women were two noblewomen, Kravai Jakheli and Khvashak Tsokali, whom Tamar appointed to high-ranking positions. Both were known to be highly competent and effective in their respective roles. Their skills became particularly evident during a moment of political crisis early in Tamar's rule. When she assumed power as sole monarch, a faction of noblemen and merchants attempted to undermine her authority by proposing the creation of a new legislative body -- staffed by themselves -- that would curb her powers as executive (Gigineishvili, par. 3). In response, Tamar demonstrated her confidence in her female officials by entrusting Kravai and Khvashak with the delicate task of quelling this rebellion. The two women successfully negotiated peace and neutralized the threat to the queen's authority (par. 3). This not only highlights Tamar's active support for women in positions of power but also illustrates the loyalty and capability of the women she empowered. Through their actions, Kravai and Khvashak reinforced Tamar's legitimacy and helped stabilize her reign, showcasing how Tamar's inclusion of women in governance played a significant role in her political success.

All of these legislative changes were bolstered by the academic, multidisciplinary learning that was cultivated at the Gelati Monastery and Academy in Kutaisi, where texts by Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists were taught (Gigineishvili, par. 3). Founded by Tamar's grandfather, King David IV, Gelati had become not only a spiritual center but also an intellectual hub, where theology, philosophy, science, and literature were studied side by side. This institution played a crucial role in shaping the ideological and educational foundation of the kingdom, nurturing a generation of scholars, clerics, and advisors who were instrumental in supporting Tamar's rule. Scholars deem the period a "Georgian Renaissance," as Gelati scholars harnessed their position between East and West to combine Biblical wisdom and Christian theology with Persian literature, Sufi mysticism, and Greek philosophy (par. 6). As a result of such intellectual stimulation, Georgian society enjoyed a more liberal mindset. Tamar was also quite successful in establishing vassal states and conquering new territories, so her kingdom benefited monetarily and could fund a great deal of literary works, as well as many artistic endeavors such as architecture, painting, metalwork, and mosaic art (par. 6). It was during this time of flourishing arts, society, and culture that Tbilisi was called the new Rome by panegyrists

of the period, and Tamar an Augusta (Roman goddess) (par. 5). Such titles reflect how deeply her rule was revered and how closely it was associated with grandeur, divine favor, and cultural supremacy in the medieval Christian world.

This unique synthesis of diverse intellectual traditions gave rise to a flourishing cultural and philosophical environment that supported critical thinking, creativity, and a broader vision of society -- which included women as more equal participants than in previous years. It was likely this liberal and cosmopolitan academic mindset, combined with Queen Tamar's extraordinary leadership and unprecedented success as a female sovereign, that inspired the renowned Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli to famously proclaim the equality of male and female lion cubs in his epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. This metaphor, embedded in verses dedicated to the Queen, can be interpreted not merely as poetic flattery but as a powerful rhetorical device that both reflected and reinforced the gender ideals emerging within the elite circles of Tamar's court. While the symbolic weight of Rustaveli's declaration arguably applied more directly to the aristocracy, it nonetheless resonated broadly within the cultural consciousness of the time and was embraced by the public as an ideal of social harmony (Targamadze 77).

However, this raises a critical question that continues to engage historians and gender scholars: did Tamar's reign bring about substantive changes in legal frameworks or societal norms regarding the status of women, or was her elevation to power a singular historical anomaly, a "goddess-like" figure whose exceptionalism did not translate into lasting structural transformation? Scholars such as Zurab Targamadze, a research fellow at the Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology, continue to grapple with this complexity, weighing the symbolic legacy of Tamar against the actual legal and social conditions experienced by women in medieval Georgian society.

At the beginning of his paper *"Social and Legal Status of Women in Medieval Georgia,"* Zurab Targamadze acknowledges the challenges of studying gender in the distant past, particularly due to the scarcity of surviving sources written by women. Despite this, he explores the status of women during Queen Tamar's reign by analyzing legal documents that reveal how women were treated under the law, especially in comparison to men. Interestingly, Targamadze opens his discussion with an examination of Georgian linguistic roots, focusing on the cultural

significance of the word for "mother," which in Georgian is *deda*. He highlights a number of compound words that incorporate *deda* and reflect its central role in Georgian life and identity, such as *dedaena* (native language), *dedabodzi* (the main supporting beam of a house), *dedamitsa* (earth), *dedakatsi* (a compound of "man" and "mother"), and *gutnis deda* (plow mother—a term combining the name of a farming tool with "mother" to describe a man tilling the soil) (Targamadze 72). Through these examples, Targamadze argues that the archetype of women in Georgian culture was closely tied to their role as mothers (73). This cultural ideal, he suggests, is echoed in the legal practices of the time.

When analyzing medieval Georgian law, Targamadze highlights the institution of the dowry -- which had existed in Georgia since at least the 9th century -- as evidence that women held a more active and legally recognized status. The dowry system, he argues, contributed to defining women as legal subjects rather than as property (Targamadze 73). To support this claim, Targamadze examines an ecclesiastical legislative document compiled during the reign of King George V, known as George the Brilliant (14th century). This document, part of the legislative collection *Dzeglisdeba*, was created to restore the disrupted legal order in the highlands of Eastern Georgia following Mongol domination and dates to a period after Queen Tamar's rule (74).

Significantly, the first chapter of this historic legal text addresses the legal status of women. One law stipulates that if a woman's husband dies and she does not remarry, the deceased husband's family is required to share responsibility for household expenses (Targamadze 74). Another law states that if a man divorces or abandons his wife without just cause, he must pay compensation to her family (74). In cases where a married woman is abducted, the abductor's family must pay a fine amounting to half of their property (74). The document also outlines different punishments for the murder of a woman, with the severity of the sentence depending on whether the woman was a warrior, a religious devotee, or an innocent civilian (74). In medieval Georgian law, a woman had the power to leave her fortune to female heirs of low or high social strata even if she had other male heirs -- thus this could be seen as an act of gender solidarity, and most certainly an act that gives women agency (78). These legal stipulations reflect the recognition of women as socially and politically significant individuals,

demonstrating the persistence of a tangible female legal identity in Georgia during the post-Tamar period of the late 12th and early 13th centuries.

Targamadze also seeks evidence of political and social change for Georgian women in the 12th century by analyzing the historical compilation titled *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, or *The Life of Kartli*. Kartli refers to the central region of the ancient Georgian kingdom, known to classical authors as Iberia, and served as the heartland of Georgian political and cultural life. *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, often referred to in English as the *Georgian Chronicles*, is a collection of historical manuscripts written by various authors over several centuries and represents the oldest and most comprehensive secular account of Georgia's past. The earliest manuscript in the compilation dates to the 5th century (Jones 5), and the initial sections of the text trace Georgian history from mythical and ancient origins up to the 8th century. Later additions extended the narrative through the 14th century, offering a long arc of historical reflection on the kingdom's development, rulers, and religious identity (Jones 8).

Within the texts of the *Georgian Chronicles*, Queen Tamar stands out as the most lauded and idealized figure. The language used to describe her is consistently exalted, portraying her not only as a successful political leader but also as a pious, just, and benevolent monarch. One passage, typical of the Chronicles' praise, reads: "Tamar the brightest of all the crown bearers, successful in everything, bathed in her glory. She began to serve God with yet more zeal, built and decorated churches and monasteries, cared for widows and orphans, and delivered upon them her just judgment. She rejoiced and enjoyed herself in her kingdom" (Smith 270). The tone here is both reverential and celebratory, casting Tamar as a divinely favored ruler whose moral character was as exemplary as her political achievements. Targamadze argues that this unusually effusive praise, along with the large body of oral traditions and popular narratives that emerged around Tamar's reign, suggests something more deliberate at work. He contends that such an idealized portrayal "...makes an impression of a well-organized campaign" (Targamadze 77), implying that the narrative construction of Tamar's reign may have served strategic political and cultural purposes. By elevating a female monarch to near-mythical status, chroniclers and court-sponsored writers may have been reinforcing the legitimacy of her rule in a patriarchal society while simultaneously promoting loyalty and unity among her subjects. In this light, the *Chronicles* function not only as a historical record but also as a cultural artifact that reflects the

broader ideological currents of the time -- currents that allowed, at least temporarily, for the expansion of women's symbolic and political roles.

It is this rich lore surrounding Queen Tamar that Marjory Wardrop engages with in her own composition, *Tamara the King*, a work that functions as a cultural homage to Tamar's larger-than-life role in Georgia's national identity. Fittingly, Marjory opens her text with a foundational "fable" that situates Georgia as the land allotted to Mary and "...ever since this has been her favourite land" (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 1). In invoking this legend, Marjory establishes Georgia as a land uniquely blessed by a maternal divine presence, setting the stage for the introduction of a sacred female ruler. Before delving into the legends of Tamar herself, Marjory writes that "it would almost seem as if some divine power (a gentle mother) had watched over the Georgians through the ages. A mere handful of people, they have withstood countless hordes…" (par. 2). Here again, the notion of a "gentle mother" serves as a symbolic force that Marjory uses to explain Georgia's endurance, resilience, and unique cultural presence in the face of historical adversity. This repeated invocation of maternal imagery connects the land, its history, and its leadership to a feminine divine continuity, thus creating a narrative arc in which Tamar's rule is not only politically significant but also spiritually ordained.

The following paragraphs recount several legends surrounding Queen Tamar that circulated during Marjory's time; however, she rarely cites specific sources. For example, she notes that "the inhabitants of Murghuli, in Artvin, claim…" (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 3), leaving the reader to wonder how she encountered these tales. Given her deep immersion in Georgian language, culture, and history, it is likely that she gathered them through oral transmission -- conversations with local Georgians and fellow foreign enthusiasts of Georgian heritage -- as well as from written sources such as folktale collections or historical texts. By compiling these narratives into a single work, Marjory highlights Tamar's significance in Georgian cultural imagination and underscores the longstanding prominence of powerful women in the nation's history and myth. The collection includes seven legends, presented in a somewhat informal format with blank spaces and editorial markings, suggesting it may have remained a work in progress. The stories vary in tone -- some mystical and folkloric, others more historically grounded -- reflecting Marjory's intent to capture the full spectrum of Tamar's enduring presence in Georgian cultural memory.

The more mystical legends suggest that Queen Tamar's presence still lingers in the Georgian landscape, her power undiminished and capable of reawakening. The mystery surrounding her burial fuels this mythology, allowing her memory to inhabit both history and the land itself. Some claim she rests at Gelati Monastery; others believe she lies hidden in mountain caves along Georgia's borders or in a monastery in Jerusalem. This uncertainty invites stories that elevate her legacy into the supernatural.

One such tale recounts that anyone who unknowingly steps on Tamar's grave loses their sanity:

> "One evening a shepherd fell asleep on her grave and in the morning he was mad… Once again he was led by God's command to Tamar's tomb and prayed to the King to cure him. He became well, but could not remember where the tomb was." (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 3)

Here, Tamar is a divine force capable of both affliction and healing, acting in harmony with God's will. The legend concludes:

> "Tamar, the King, is not dead but living; she rests in a golden coffin in a rocky cave, at her feet are never-ending candles. Sometimes she will rise in Murghuli." (par. 3)

The eternal candles symbolize her undying influence. Tamar is not simply remembered -- she endures, her spirit woven into Georgia's cultural and spiritual fabric.

Another magical tale illustrating how Georgians relate to Queen Tamar, through both awe and fear of her immense power, is set in Nino Tsminda, near Mt. Gartchkhali in southern Georgia. In this legend, Tamar's legacy manifests not only in memory but also in the landscape itself:

> "At Nino Tsminda near Mt. Gartchkhali there is a beautiful wood full of lovely wild flowers, trees, and cool springs. A huge coffin was found hewn out of a single stone… Inside they found a marvellously large head and bones, also various precious weapons and objects. The peasants were afraid, covered it up again and buried it untouched… The old people who were there say that it was the remains of one of Tamar's heroes and the Queen would be angry if they touched them." (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 5)

The story contrasts idyllic natural imagery -- “lovely wild flowers,” “cool springs,” and peaceful woodland -- with symbols of power and danger, such as “precious weapons” and encircling thorns. This tension captures Tamar’s dual nature: nurturing yet formidable, revered yet feared. The peasants’ decision to leave the tomb undisturbed reflects enduring reverence for Tamar’s sacred power. Though the account may not be historically verifiable, its anchoring in a real location reinforces her deep connection to Georgian soil. Another legend similarly merges geography and memory: “A lake was made by Tamar’s orders and stocked with fish… Signs of the lake can still be seen.” (par. 8) Through such tales, Tamar’s presence transcends history and legend, becoming etched into the physical terrain itself -- an enduring symbol of Georgia’s cultural and spiritual landscape.

One of the legends Marjory includes is curiously brief and seemingly incomplete, and prompts speculation as to why she chose to record it in its current form. It is possible she intended to return to it later, hoping to supplement it with more information. The legend reads: “Turks continually invading the country. Tamar threatened to [intentional blank space] them and make them wear women’s veils. They came again and were defeated. Tamar only ceased fighting when they agreed to do this” (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 7). In the margin next to this passage, Marjory jotted the Russian word *науськать*, which roughly translates as “to incite,” or more contextually, “to force someone to do something.” This note suggests she was deliberating over the best English equivalent to insert into the blank space. The fragmentary nature of the entry also raises questions about the legend’s origin and what type of Russian source she found it in.

Despite its brevity, the anecdote is compelling for its gendered symbolism: Tamar’s threat to force the invading Turks to wear women’s veils stands out as a punishment laced with both humiliation and subversion. Such a gesture, coming from a female sovereign, carries a distinctly feminist resonance. It turns a symbol of female modesty -- often imposed by patriarchal norms -- into a tool of political resistance and dominance. Whether the story is apocryphal or historically accurate, it offers a vivid example of how Tamar’s legacy is imagined through a lens that challenges and reconfigures traditional gender roles, a theme that Marjory was deeply attracted to.

Some of the other tales Marjory includes are more firmly grounded in historical research, reflecting her effort to consult a wide range of sources about Queen Tamar. In one notable instance, she quotes a lengthy passage from the Arab writer Shihab al-Din al-Qalqashandi, who wrote around 1418. Al-Qalqashandi, a scribe in the Mamluk chancery in Egypt, composed the extensive administrative encyclopedia *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá*. In it, he offers an effusive tribute to Tamar, describing her in exalted and reverent terms: "...may Allah glorify the life of her Highness the glorious, high-souled, renowned, fearless, heroic, holy, spirited empress, the glory of the followers of Messiah, the treasure of the Cross-bearing nation, the pride of the Christian faith, the Monarch of the Abkhazians, the Georgians…" (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 9). The second half of the quotation further emphasizes the vast geographic reach of Tamar's authority, situating her influence within a global and historical context: "...the defender of the lands of Rum and Iran, the essence of the Syrian Tsars, the choicest of the possessors of thrones and crowns…the ally of Popes, the friend of Musulman, the most fair friend of Tsars and Sultans" (par. 9). Marjory likely included this striking passage among her "Tamar Legends" because it demonstrates that even two centuries after Tamar's death, her legacy continued to inspire awe and admiration across cultural and religious boundaries. That a Muslim scholar would record such elaborate praise for a Christian queen is a testament not only to Tamar's remarkable reign but also to her enduring impact on the wider medieval world.

The final legend Marjory includes is a brief yet compelling description of a coin from Queen Tamar's reign. She writes: "Tamar's coins: on face in Georgian, 'Tamara, David'; reverse in Arabic 'Queen of Queens, glory of the world and religion, Tamara, daughter of George, follower of Messiah, May God bless her'" (M. Wardrop, *Tamara the King*, par. 10). Research conducted at Tbilisi State University on coins from Tamar's time corroborates Marjory's account. Scholars have confirmed that the names *Tamar* and *David* are inscribed in Asomtavruli script, the oldest form of the Georgian alphabet, while the Arabic inscription is written in Kufic script. Between Tamar's and David's names appears a monogram believed to be the Bagrationi family badge. Renowned paleographer T. Barnaveli has interpreted this badge as a monogram composed of Georgian letters representing both names ("Subgroup: Coins of Queen Tamar with Her Signature").

Coins serve as tangible expressions of historical memory, and it is likely no coincidence that Marjory chose to conclude her “Tamar Legends” with this physical artifact. While many of the preceding tales are steeped in myth and oral tradition, the coin stands as concrete evidence of Queen Tamar’s sovereignty. Its engraved titles, including “Queen of Queens,” serve as a powerful reminder that Tamar was not merely a figure of legend but a historical ruler who guided a Christian kingdom through its golden age amid a turbulent region. For Marjory, this coin may have symbolized the grounding of legend in material history -- the enduring legacy of a woman who truly excelled in her role as sovereign.

Marjory's Translations

While Marjory did attempt original compositions, the greater part of her time and energy was devoted to translating Georgian and Russian texts into English, and it was this translation work that led to her first journey to Georgia. In 1894, after completing her translation of *The Hermit*, a poem by Ilia Chavchavadze, she wrote to the author in Georgian, humbly introducing herself and requesting permission to publish her translation in Britain. At that time, Ilia was at the height of his influence in Georgian literature and politics and would later be honored with the title "the father of the Georgian nation" by the Georgian people (Morchiliadze and Nasmyth 64). Although some described him as a nationalist, his methods were subtle and artistic: educated in Russia, he returned to Georgia and founded the Georgian-language newspaper *Iveria*, through which he sought to foster civil society and promote liberal ideals of self-government and equal rights for all, including women (65).

In his first letter to Marjory, Ilia warmly praised her translation and emphasized that her efforts to introduce Georgian culture and literature to the West marked a vital step for the Georgian national movement and the country's cultural revival, since until then Georgia's only point of contact with the West had been mediated through Russia (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 115). He personally arranged travel for Marjory and her mother, ensuring that their arrival in Georgia was celebrated with great ceremony: at the train station in the old capital of Mtskheta, bands played, and poets and choirs exalted her in newly composed verses (Merabishvili, Part 2). A deep friendship soon developed between the Wardrops and Ilia and his wife Olga, and from 1894 onward the two families maintained a heartfelt correspondence that continued for years.

Immediately Ilia published Marjory's letter in the next issue of *Iveria*, and it sparked great excitement amongst Georgians, especially the women, as at the time there was a debate over the growing female emancipation in Georgia. A leading feminist, Ekaterine Gabashvili, reacted to Marjory's letter by using her as an example to incite Georgian women to rise up and act bravely and boldly as Marjory had done, saying "Weren't always women who were in the avant-garde of all goods among us? Weren't there many instances in our history when women restored what had been destroyed by centuries? Doesn't a Georgian saying say that 'even God

could not destroy what was built by a woman?'" (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 22). Just by the very act of following her soul -- her society's rules -- and pursuing her own studies of Georgian language, literature, and culture, as a role model, she was able to make such an impact on the Georgian feminist movement. A Georgian woman Mariam Qipiani reached out to Marjory that same year voicing her opinion and that of many women, writing, "You cannot imagine the joy that we experienced when we read in *Iveria* your letter to the great Ilia Chavchavadze. I am convinced you will remain a woman to look up to, and you will never be forgotten by the women of Georgia … Nowadays, we, the Georgian women, are lagging behind in education compared to other nations, however, now there is hope that your work will awaken many!" (22). Without setting out to be a leader of any sort, as Marjory was often described as shy and reserved, she inspired many with her determination to pursue her heart's desire and her Georgian-language translation skills.

During her lifetime, she published three major works: *Georgian Folk Tales* (1894), the first English-language collection of secular Georgian folk stories; *The Hermit* (1895), a translation of a short story by Ilia Chavchavadze; and *The Life of St. Nino* (1900), a translation of a medieval Georgian hagiography about the Roman woman who brought Christianity to Georgia in the 3rd century AD. Three years after her death, her brother, Sir Oliver Wardrop, published her translation of the Georgian national epic, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli (1912). Much later in 1987, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the famous Georgian author Ilia Chavchavadze, a publishing house in Tbilisi published a collection of Chavchavadze's works translated by Marjory and Oliver which had never been seen by the public before, under the title: *Ilia Chavchavadze Works*. Her published works are often the standard English version that is available, and the one which others are held to due to their "emotive and expressive depth" (Merabishvili "Part 3"). In the preface to the collection of Chavchavadze's works the compiler, Ia Popkhadze, wrote, "Today the greatest merit of these translations would seem to lie in the inner warmth and affection with which they were done, which will always be remembered by the grateful Georgian people." (Chavchavadze, preface).

In addition to these published works, Marjory left behind a number of unpublished translations, including selections from the Georgian and Russian newspapers, poems and short stories by well-known Georgian writers, and various other short texts of uncertain origin. While

officially she did not publish these works, there is evidence that at least a few of these texts were circulated among friends, officials of relevant public standing, and even the British Embassy. I would like to discuss a sampling of her lesser-known, unpublished translations -- many of which remain locked in the inky slopes of her cursive handwriting, housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and have yet to be made available in print or online. These pieces offer a unique window into Marjory's mind and heart: out of all the Georgian literature she encountered, these were the stories, poems, and articles she deemed worthy and most salient of translating and sharing with the English-speaking world.

Queen Mariam's Petition to the Emperor Alexander I at the Time of Her Removal from Tiflis to Voronzh

The first of her translated texts to be discussed is a letter written by the last Georgian Queen, Mariam, to Tsar Alexander I. It was originally published in the Georgian magazine *Iveria* in 1895, although the letter itself dates back to April 1803. The story is a kind of murder mystery intertwined with a broader, allegorical "murder of the Georgian nobility," and it was so captivating that it was written about in Georgia, Russia, and across Europe in numerous newspapers, books, and magazines. Almost all literature on the subject portrays the Queen as a murderess, whereas the text Marjory translated—the firsthand account by the Queen herself—is both a proud defense of her innocence and a scathing condemnation of the unjust treatment she and her family endured at the hands of the Russian authorities in Georgia. Marjory's translation, titled *Queen Mariam's Petition to the Emperor Alexander I at the Time of Her Removal from Tiflis to Voronzh*, stands out among translated sources for its defense of the Queen, and even contradicts Oliver's version of the story in his travelogue. In nearly all English-language accounts of the episode, Queen Mariam's own voice is strikingly absent, and Marjory perhaps aimed to restore that voice to the discourse surrounding the tragic events that befell the Queen and her family. What, then, were the fateful events of the evening of April 18 and the early morning of the 19 that so captivated audiences and ultimately led to Mariam's imprisonment in a convent in Russia for seven long years?

The episode takes place in 1803, during a period of volatile change in Georgia's social and political structures, as the region came increasingly under the administrative control of the Russian Empire. By the end of the 18th century, Georgia had declined significantly from the powerful position it once held at the close of Queen Tamar's reign in the early 13th century. The unified Georgian kingdom had fragmented into several principalities, the two most central and powerful being Kartli and Kakheti. Internally weakened by political factionalism and externally threatened by repeated invasions from the Ottoman Empire to the west and the Persian Empire to the south, the region was in a precarious state ("Annexation of Georgia" par. 2). In an attempt to secure Georgia's stability and sovereignty, King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti—the father of Queen Mariam's husband, King George XII—signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with Catherine the Great of Russia in 1783. This treaty made Georgia a protectorate of the Russian Empire while promising to preserve its territorial integrity and continue the rule of the Bagrationi royal dynasty (par. 3). However, Russia failed to uphold its side of the agreement when Persian ruler Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar invaded and sacked Tbilisi in 1795 (par. 4).

Upon King George XII's death in 1800, he entrusted his kingdom to the Russian Empire, fearing that internal political weakness and rivalries within the royal family would spell the end of Georgian autonomy (par. 5). The following year, on September 12, 1801, Tsar Alexander I issued a manifesto declaring the East Georgian kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti irrevocably annexed to the Russian Empire, removed the royal family from power, and outlined a new administrative system to govern the diminished population (Lang 42). This system divided the territory into five administrative centers -- Tbilisi, Gori, Dusheti, Telavi, and Sighnaghi -- each with four branches: executive, financial, criminal judiciary, and civil judiciary. Each branch was led by a Russian official with four Georgian committee members under him.

These administrative changes were a great shock to the system of Georgian nobles, who had presided over the country in a largely unofficial manner that was governed "... by the laws and rites of ancestral chivalry" (Morchiladze and Nasmyth, 10). Suddenly, Georgians found themselves under a cold regime that disregarded local cultural practices and exploited what few resources they still controlled. The ruling Georgian nobility had taken great pride in their identity and the respect and integrity it commanded, so being subjected to Russian rule of law dealt a difficult blow to their honor (9). To paint a picture of how business had traditionally been

conducted in Georgian society -- and how sharply it clashed with Western practices -- the authors of *Character in Georgia*, Morchiladze and Nasmyth, cite a story told by the celebrated poet Akaki Tsereteli. Akaki describes how his father, Prince Rostom, a member of the traditional Georgian noble class, was visited by a group of French businessmen who had heard reports of manganese deposits on the Tsereteli estate (9). Rostom welcomed the group as Georgians always do: feast of Georgian delicacies and hospitality of the warmest kind. Yet when it came time to formalize the business agreement, the prince refused to sign any papers, as "... he considered the act of putting pen on paper crude and unnecessary; an offence to his already expressed commitment as a nobleman" (9). It was during this clash of two different worlds that the events surrounding the last queen of Georgia unfolded.

At the beginning, Russian rule in Georgia was tenuous at best, with authorities truly controlling only the central region surrounding Tbilisi (Lang 44). David Marshall Lang, in his *Modern History of Georgia*, sets the scene, describing how the surrounding areas were filled with:

> Persian khans, Turkish pashas, wild mountaineers, and unsubdued Georgian princelings, most of them hostile to Russia. Marauding parties of Lezghis on their agile steeds roamed the countryside, defying the less mobile Russian garrisons. The Ossetes who dominated the Daryal Pass, Russia's only supply line over the Caucasus range, held up travellers and convoys. Trade was virtually at a standstill, while the peasantry scarcely ventured out to plough the fields (44).

It was in this chaotic milieu that the Russian authorities in Georgia -- most notably the Russian commander-in-chief, General Karl Knorring -- were operating. Yet Knorring's administration was notoriously mismanaged; official documents from the period are riddled with reports of rape and violence committed by Russian soldiers and officials, acts that were pushing Georgians to the brink of rebellion (45). In response, Tsar Alexander decided to replace Knorring with someone "of the people," a noble Georgian prince who had served with distinction in the Russian army and who, coincidentally, was a distant relative of Queen Mariam: Prince P. D. Tsitsianov (46). Though Georgian by blood, Tsitsianov believed that Georgia's best hope lay under Russian rule -- order, he thought, was the only remedy for the chaos within (Baddeley, 63). Acting on the Tsar's orders, he quickly set to work convincing, by persuasion or by force, the remaining members of the Georgian royal family to move to Russia, hoping to quell the dramatic vying for a return of the Bagratid dynasty (63). In the early hours of April 19th, he sent General Ivan

Petrovitch Lazarev and several soldiers to Queen Mariam's apartments in Tbilisi, and so the stage is now set for Queen Mariam's dramatic tale.

All accounts agree that General Lazarev and his men arrived early in the morning to deliver a message from General Tzitzishvili to the Queen: she must depart for Russia immediately, as she was suspected of planning to flee Tbilisi secretly. Most descriptions of the events, including John F. Baddeley's *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (1908), describe—though with minor variations—finding the Queen in her quarters, on the bed, with her children sleeping around her (Baddeley 64). After delivering their message and facing her refusal to comply, her son and daughter reportedly grabbed their kindjals—Georgian traditional double-edged daggers—and attempted to strike some of the soldiers. Lazarev is then said to have been fatally stabbed by Queen Mariam, who had concealed a dagger beneath the pillows or bedding (64).

In Oliver Wardrop's version, she hid her dagger beneath her dress and managed to kill Lazarev before being overpowered by the other soldiers (O. Wardrop 130). Lang's account even includes dialogue: "She drew the dagger and stabbed Lazarev through the body with such force that the tip of the weapon emerged through his left side. Mariam pulled the dagger from the gaping wound and threw it in the face of her prostrate tormentor, saying: 'So dies anyone who dares add dishonour to my misfortune!'" (Lang 47). Lang goes on to describe how the soldiers retaliated, cutting the Queen's left arm and leaving her bloody and bruised (47). Oliver adds that as the Queen and her children were transported to Russia through the Dariel Pass, "…a few Tagaur Ossets made a vain attempt at a rescue" (O. Wardrop 130). Marjory's translation of Queen Mariam's letter, however, provides much more detail and presents a very different ending to these escalating events.

Queen Mariam's letter, Marjory notes, was published in 1895 in *Iveria* no. 109. The Georgian literary and political periodical was founded and edited by the celebrated author Ilia Chavchavadze, and was widely read and in print from 1877 to 1906 (Morchiladze and Nasmyth, 65). Her English translation, scrawled across eleven pages of lined paper in the Bodleian Archives, appears to be the only one of its kind, and is complete with numerous editing marks and a few blank spaces—as though she were still searching for the most fitting words to finish

the piece. The first major discrepancy between her account and the others is the timing: she describes how General Lazarev and his company first came to her apartments in the late evening of April 18th, not in the early morning (M. Wardrop, *Queen Mariam's Petition*, 1). Interestingly, she is the only one to mention the exact date, noting that the following morning was a Sunday -- a fact corroborated by referencing the Julian calendar for the year 1803 (3; Collins). In Mariam's letter, she writes that not only were she and her children present during the confrontation, but also her mother, her son-in-law Aslan Orbeliani, and many maids and servants (M. Wardrop, *Queen Mariam's Petition*, 1). Lazarev accused her of preparing to flee Tbilisi because she had allegedly sent two of her boys away. However, Aslan pulled the two "missing boys" from the adjoining apartment and presented them as proof that there had never been any intention to flee (2). Lazarev then set guards around her apartment and took Aslan with him to deliver her message of innocence to Tzitzishvili (3).

The Queen states in the letter that at first, she was not overly concerned about the affair, it was not until later, when she asked a servant to fetch some food and the guards refused to allow the servant to deliver it unless the servant first tasted the food himself, that she became fearful. It was then that terror seized them: "'Were we in such a state,' said we, 'that they should think it worth our while to poison ourselves and to bid an eternal adieu to life!' Then we all began to lament and cry alas!" (3). When another servant went out and returned with the news that Aslan was in fact being held captive in another room of the palace, Mariam and her children became so distressed that they did not sleep the entire night (3).

It was the next day, Sunday the 19th, at dawn, that Lazarev returned, dismissed all her servants, and announced that she and her children must set out on a journey immediately—a vehicle was already waiting for them outside (4). One of her children, Okropiri, was ill, and she begged that he be allowed to stay behind until he recovered and could later be sent to her, but Lazarev refused (4). He left the room and immediately returned with thirteen or fourteen officers, ordering them to seize Mariam, her son Irakli, and her daughter T'hamara (5). The following then occurred:

> The officers and Cossacks fell upon us: some laid hands upon me and some pulled me from the bed. Upon this my son Jibraili, losing patience, drew his dagger and called out, "As long as I am alive I shall allow no one to take my Mother by force." I now entreated them to lead

> us out and we would come by ourselves—there was no necessity to use force. On the Cossacks offering insult to T'hamara, she seized a dagger which was on the window sill to protect herself against the guards. When the officers saw this, they retreated backwards and suddenly went out at the door. A little while after, the general rushed in with drawn sword and brought with him the same officers, also with drawn swords. On seeing this, I seized a dagger from the window. My mother, falling down before them, kissed their feet and tore her locks, entreating them not to use violence; but they paid no attention to her request and trampled her underfoot. Lazarev aimed a blow at my head with his sword—but it missed, striking my shoulder and making a deep cut (6).

She then continues to describe how Lazarev and others continued to strike her, and that one of the children's nurses was injured while trying to protect them (6). Notably, she never mentions inflicting an actual blow with her drawn dagger.

Once they were overwhelmed, Mariam and her youngest son were placed in one cart, and the rest of the children in another, and they were carried out of Tbilisi by forty to sixty workmen (7). She writes: "...like lightning my story flashed over all the town, and Russians as well as Georgians flocked from their houses and, distressed at the terrible scene, they wept..." (8). Once they were near Vera, about five kilometers from their point of departure, she says General Tzitzishvili sent a doctor to bind her bleeding wounds (8). It was at that moment that Mariam says she first learned of Lazarev's death: "I swear by the all-powerful God and also by your Imperial Highness's precious life, that until this moment I neither knew nor imagined Lazarev dead. Perhaps some one of his enemies -- my unhappiness -- did the wicked deed, for he had many enemies among Russians as well as among Georgians" (8). It is interesting how not only does she outright deny her culpability, but she also alludes to the possibility that one of his many enemies could have possibly killed him.

Her final two paragraphs describe how she later learned that General Tzitzishvili had sent a report to Tsar Alexander I, accusing her daughter T'hamara of injuring one of the officers present and accusing her, Queen Mariam, of killing General Lazarev (9). She proclaims these to be false accusations and urges His Highness to ask the allegedly "injured" officer or any one of the many witnesses to the scene for the truth (9). She beseeches the Tsar to grant her and her children mercy and assistance, referencing how her late husband, King Giorgi XII, "...gave to you two kingdoms and entrusted into your mighty hands his wife and children, in the last letter written in his life" (9). Mariam recounts arriving in the town of Voronezh in Russia on June 15th

and being locked up in a monastery under the "cruel orders" of the governor (10). She laments: "Oh woe is me! When they find witnesses to try men who have murdered a thousand, me, a Queen whom they have wounded, insulted and with six of her children placed in dishonourable exile, unto me will they not hearken" (10). She pleads with His Highness to investigate the allegations made against her and her children, to judge who is truly innocent and who is guilty, and humbly asks if she may come to see him in person (11). The postscript at the end of the letter, perhaps added by the editor of *Iveria*, reads: "P.S. This petition of Mariam's, like many others, received no attention, and it was not until 8 years after that she was released from the monastery at the request of her son Michael" (11).

Many questions arise when considering the Queen's letter. How did it travel from the desk of Tsar Alexander I to the offices of *Iveria*? Why was it only published in 1895, roughly ninety years after it was sent? Why does the letter lack an exact date if it was indeed written by the Queen and mailed to the Tsar? How would Georgians have accessed it if it was truly received by the Tsar? And why have so many sources, from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century across various countries, recounted the events in such detail but failed to mention the Queen's letter at all?

Ivane Imerlishvili, professor at Grigol Robakidze University in Tbilisi, investigates these questions in his paper "The Last Queen of Georgia Maria," published in the *European Scientific Journal* in 2013. He posits that most European accounts depicting Queen Mariam stabbing Lazarev with a dagger stem from a report by a Belgian colonel named Rottiers, who served in the Russian army. Rottiers published his version in the French-language journal *The Inhabitants of Asia* in June 1827, which was later translated into Georgian by Alexander Chkonia and published in *The Herald*, N 7, 1894 (Imerlishvili 393). According to Rottiers, the story was told to him by a parish priest, Onisime Ioseliani, who attended mass at St. George Church, part of Queen Mariam's palace complex (393). On the validity of the tale, Rottiers asserts, "I am completely convinced of the truthfulness of the story told by me and I am even responsible for it" (394). Imerlishvili concludes that the story's sensational and dramatic nature led many European sources to accept Rottiers' account as fact, portraying it as a Georgian Queen's final patriotic act of defiance in the face of a dying nation (393).

Apart from being a dramatic and gripping story, the narrative would also have fit neatly into the general theme of nationalism that was taking hold of Europe in the 19th century. It is intriguing that Rottiers' French version of events was published in Georgian in 1894 -- just a year prior to the circulation of Queen Mariam's letter -- and at a moment when Georgian politics was reaching its boiling point. Marxist social-democratic groups such as *Mesame Dasi* -- of which Stalin was an early member -- were organizing to demand workers' rights, while other groups led by Ilia Chavchavadze advocated gentry nationalism, and centrist groups focused on reformist liberalism (Sabanadze). All of these represented different political movements, but their central idea was the building of the Georgian nation.

Thus, the sensational story of Queen Mariam struggling with her children to cling to some dignity and proclaim her tale to the mighty Tsar of Russia would have served the image of Georgian nationalism quite well, without the need to provide details of the source letter or how it was obtained. This was despite the fact that, at the time of her writing in 1803, Georgia was split into two factions with no unified notion of nationhood, and the Queen's motives were simply to remain in her homeland with her family. The short postscript may have been added by Marjory as an attempt to explain the letter, or it could have been published with the letter in the Georgian paper; either way, it does not lend any more credibility to the source -- rather, it reads more like an epilogue to a tale.

Seeking to establish the validity of the story, Imerlishvili's research leads him to conclude that Queen Mariam was innocent but was framed by General Tsitsianov. He notes that there were many eyewitness accounts at the time of the incident defending her innocence -- namely Archbishop Papanui Khozashvili and other members of the royal family -- though he does not cite specific references. He does, however, cite the academician Nicholas Dubrovin (1837–1904), who claimed that General Lazarev was a straightforward, honest man who was well regarded at the Tsar's court, and thus was likely assassinated out of envy by General Prince Paul Tsitsianov (Imerlishvili 395). Queen Mariam's banishment, he argues, was simply an opportunity that presented itself at the right time and place, while the actual perpetrator was an assassin hired by Tsitsianov (395). His sole source for this conclusion is a Russian-language book titled *The History of the 13th Erivani Life Grenadiers Regiment of His Majesty*, compiled by staff-captain Shabanov of the same regiment and published in Tbilisi in 1871 (396). In the

appendix of book III, after page 177, the text allegedly states: “P. I. Lazarev /1791–1803/ was assassinated by chief” (396). Although the initials should have read I. P. Lazarev, Imerlishvili surmises that the printer must have made an error, noting that the years are correct and therefore it must be the right Lazarev. The simple title “chief” is interpreted as referring to his superior, which would have been General Tsitsianov. Imerlishvili speculates that the hired assassin who disposed of the loyal general could have been an officer or a soldier of low rank. Fittingly, he remarks that what goes around comes around: only three years later, in 1806, Tsitsianov himself was assassinated while serving in Baku, Azerbaijan (396).

Considering how widely read Marjory was in Georgian literature, news, and affairs, it is noteworthy that she chose to translate this lengthy letter as one of the few translations in her body of work that was not strictly literary in nature. The reverberations of this sensational story -- originating from the weak source of the Belgian general -- can be traced through the years into contemporary historical texts. Perhaps Marjory was drawn to the indignant yet dignified and elegant tone of the Queen’s supplication, written from the confines of her imprisonment to the Tsar himself. She must have noticed the translation discrepancy: the Queen’s letter, written in Georgian, had failed to insert its voice into the historical narrative of the event and had instead been overshadowed by the French-language version of the story. Although Marjory makes no remark on the letter’s authenticity, perhaps the fact that it had been published in Ilia Chavchavadze’s *Iveria* was, for her, credible enough. She may have viewed the Queen’s letter as a woman’s defiant defense of her position and an attempt to advocate for her own agency -- a theme with which Marjory could closely identify -- and thus used her skills as a translator to rescue the letter from historical obscurity and insert it into Western sources.

Marriage Customs in Kakheti

Another of Marjory’s few handwritten translations that remains unpublished is an article from *Iveria*, issue no. 156, printed in 1894, titled *Marriage Customs in Kakheti*. The manuscript begins in her perfectly neat, swirly cursive -- the title underlined with two bold decorative parallel lines -- but by the seventh and final page the handwriting has grown rougher and quicker, betraying the fatigue of a tired hand. The subject may have intrigued her for the striking contrasts

between courtship and marriage practices in Georgia's eastern province of Kakheti and those of England, customs with which Marjory, an unmarried twenty-five-year-old from an upper-middle-class family, must have been intimately familiar. The article describes the social customs surrounding a young boy and girl becoming betrothed and then married, incorporating a wealth of Georgian vocabulary specific to the rites and roles of the rituals. Written from an honest and intimate perspective, it carefully presents both genders' roles and points of view. The proceedings are portrayed as formal, yet infused with the universal informality of courtship and young love, and they highlight the close-knit networks of friends and neighbors that characterized Georgian community life.

Marjory herself never married, reserving the term "dearest" for her brother Oliver and Georgia (Wardr. Add. Coll.). While her personal views on marriage remain unknown, those who knew her might have said she was wedded to her work and to Georgia, which were her great loves apart from family and friends. In nineteenth-century England, as in much of the world at the time, women were expected to find fulfillment in marriage and motherhood. Yet census data reveal a notable imbalance between the sexes, which historian John Simkin attributes to higher male mortality, military service, and emigration (Simkin). As a result, women who could not -- or chose not to -- marry often endured the stigma of social exclusion. Charlotte Despard, reflecting on her youth in Britain in the 1850s, captured this frustration in her unpublished memoir: "It was a strange time, unsatisfactory, full of ungratified aspirations. I longed ardently to be of some use in the world, but as we were girls with a little money and born into a particular social position, it was not thought necessary that we should do anything but amuse ourselves until the time and the opportunity of marriage came along" (Simkin). Despard's position may well echo Marjory's.

As Marjory immersed herself in Georgian language and culture, she began compiling a dictionary, yet in a letter to her brother she asked him not to mention her Georgian work to their mother (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 21). Such intellectual pursuits were likely deemed improper for a young woman, but Marjory persevered despite both societal and familial disapproval. She found her heart in a culture where gender distinctions were, at least in idealized form, less rigidly drawn. Her translation of Rustaveli's epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* -- a work celebrating gender equality, respect for women, the value of friendship, and the injustice of

arranged marriage -- may have resonated so deeply with her own sensibilities that she rendered its lines with particular empathy. Historically in Georgia, a copy of the poem was given by the bride's family to newlyweds as a foundation for their marriage, a tradition revived in 2018 when the Georgian government began gifting copies to newly married couples (Lomsadze). Perhaps with this cultural resonance in mind, Marjory also chose to translate an article on Georgian marriage customs, highlighting alternative models of courtship, love, and partnership.

The article begins by emphasizing that courtship originates not from society imposing itself on the young couple, but rather from the couple presenting themselves to society. A young man wishing to marry does not declare his intentions directly to his family; instead, he signals them "...by various outward signs that such is his desire: at that time he either works extraordinarily hard or stands with bent head doing nothing at all. This his father and mother take as a sign that they must prepare for the wedding and search for a wife" (M. Wardrop, *Marriage Customs*, 1). If he already has a particular girl in mind, his family approaches hers, and if both sides consent to a meeting, an examination takes place at her house.

Before the girl appears, the families and the suitor converse, while the article lingers on the boy's visible anxiety: "...frequently he changes colour, with trembling hand he arranges his moustache and strokes his beard, now he places his hat on one side, now he handles his dagger, in a word, he tries not to seem contemptible before the intended bride and her master. He seldom joins in the conversation but sits silent awaiting with beating heart the arrival of his beloved" (M. Wardrop, *Marriage Customs*, 1)). Meanwhile, the girl is equally unsettled: "she weeps and refuses to appear, but her friends and neighbours encourage her to be brave, adorn her, joke and lead her to the place where her suitor awaits her" (2). These familiar traits of youthful love -- expressed with such honesty and vulnerability -- lend a natural cadence and emotional immediacy to the otherwise formal rituals of courtship.

The dramatic events of the love story reach their climax when the couple's eyes finally meet during the examination. The article portrays this moment as if the eyes were truly a window to the soul, with the force of the gaze revealing whether the two are destined to be compatible: "When the gaily decked maiden with down-cast eyes is led before the youth, he gazes with delight upon her. She keeps her head bent seeking to avoid meeting the young man's eye, but

nature conquers and several times their eyes meet, as if by force. This momentary glance is sufficient for the girl to decide whether her future master pleases her or not" (3). After this "...each of the parties is asked if the choice pleased," if either side is dissatisfied, the courtship ends (5).

Should the match proceed, the engagement -- *khebis dasadebi* -- is formalized with the presentation of a dowry, *mzithevi*, an agreed sum of money or piece of jewelry given by the young man to his intended bride (5). Once the gift is exchanged, he is permitted to visit her house and bed whenever he wishes, and the article notes candidly: "Therefore it often happens that a girl becomes pregnant before the ceremony of marriage has taken place, but this is not considered a disgrace" (7). It further stresses that abandonment is rare, since "Desertion is considered such a great crime among the people that no other woman would marry a man who had acted thus" (7). With the betrothal complete, the couple move toward marriage, and the article describes the joyful traditions observed during the holidays leading up to the wedding, when, amid much merriment between the two families, the groom-to-be continues to woo his bride-to-be.

The courtship practices described in the article differ notably from traditional English customs and generally suggest a greater sense of equality -- both between the young man and woman and between their families -- than was often present in England. Each young person is given an equal say in whether the match pleases them, and the primary pressure appears to rest on mutual attraction rather than on securing social or financial advantage. In contrast, English women of the nineteenth century were subjected to heavy societal expectations to secure both their futures and their identities through marriage.

Helena Swanwick, reflecting on her childhood in late nineteenth-century England, recalled that she was not regarded as a full person until she married. Her mother, she explains, treated her differently from her brothers: "A boy might be a person but not a girl. This was the ineradicable root of our differences. All my brothers had rights as persons; not I. Till I married (at the age of twenty-four), she never, in her heart, conceded one personal right" (Simkin). Similarly, Octavia Wilberforce, writing to a close friend in 1911, described the torment she felt when pressured by her parents to accept a proposal from a wealthy older man. Recalling the

moment she refused him, she confessed: “When he came and I walked along the lane with him I felt I was a beast and quite dreadfully sorry. But when he spoke of it… I suddenly felt so revolted at what it all meant from my point of view” (Simkin). From this experience, she concluded: “Some people are cut out for marriage; they are made for it and would be most happy in it. Perhaps people are made differently, but I am not cut out for it. Everybody I know would be shocked and horrified at that statement and at this: the very thought of it makes me shudder and it revolts me” (Simkin). For Wilberforce and many British young women at the time, marriage was equated not with personal choice or love but with compliance to parental and societal expectations, leaving them feeling trapped and repulsed. This starkly contrasts with the Georgian model of marriage described in the article, which originates instead in a glance of attraction and the stirrings of love.

Another difference in courtship practices that Marjory likely noted between the two cultures is that in Georgia, once a couple was promised to one another, they could spend both day and night together before the actual wedding ceremony. During this period, the force of community functioned as a safeguard: if the man deserted the woman, he bore the full weight of social condemnation. In contrast, marriage in Victorian England was governed by an intricate web of laws and formalities. A couple wishing to marry had to obtain either banns or a license, both of which required waiting periods and formal registration with a municipality or church before the ceremony could take place (Owen). The banns system, for instance, required the couple to notify clergy in both parishes, after which the announcement was read aloud for three consecutive Sundays to allow objections from the community (Owen). While some circumvented this process by traveling to Scotland or purchasing an expensive London license, these remained exceptions (Owen).

Premarital sex was heavily stigmatized in Victorian society, as reflected in Josephine Butler’s defense of Elizabeth Wolstenholme, who married in London while five months pregnant. Butler wrote: “They have sinned against no law of Purity. They went through a most solemn ceremony and vow before witnesses… They blundered; but their whole action was grave and pure. The English marriage laws are impure… It is a species of legal prostitution the woman being the man's property” (Simkin). Butler’s argument highlights the double standard in Victorian England: a woman discovered to have had premarital sex was socially disgraced, while

the man remained unmarred and attractive as a suitor. By contrast, the Georgian conception of marriage, as described in the article, placed greater weight on equality. If premarital intimacy occurred and the man abandoned the woman, he -- not she -- was deemed the guilty and dishonored party. It was perhaps these regional Georgian cultural differences that Marjory sought to introduce to English society.

Beliefs of the Svanetians Concerning a Future Life

Another of Marjory's unpublished translations may at first seem rather unexpected, as its subject lies outside her usual focus on feminism or literature. The piece, titled *Beliefs of the Svanetians Concerning a Future Life*, was originally published in *Iveria* in 1888 under the title *Thavisuphali Svani* by B. Nizheradze, and Marjory translated it in August 1895. The article describes the traditional beliefs about the afterlife held by the Svaneti people, an ethnic group living in the mountainous northern region of Georgia who speak a Kartvelian language related to Georgian. The work must have captured Marjory's attention -- perhaps she stumbled upon the seven-year-old publication, or perhaps she had been deliberately seeking material on this spiritual theme. Although initially appearing to be an outlier among her writings and translations, the piece's examination of Svanetian spiritual beliefs resonates with Marjory's own religious outlook and reflects the broader Victorian fascination with death and spirituality.

Marjory's interest in religion is evident throughout her letters and writings: she translated the entirety of the ancient hagiographic text, *The Life of Life of St. Nino* (1900), and was quite active in Georgian church news and politics. In some way, her travelogue to Georgia could be read as a tour of churches, as she recounts several beautiful old churches and monasteries, and their histories, and even meets with several Georgian priests. The strength of her religious belief shines through in her admirative tone when she describes meeting the Bishop of Imereti: "I shall never forget our visit to Bishop Gabriel. He was seated in his study -- a touching picture of the evening of a well spent life. His hair was snowy white and his eye had lost its youthful fire, but there was on his fine features an expression of calm content, which betokened the close of a life spent in leading others to seek goodness and pursue it" (M. Wardrop, *Journey*, 19). The

Svanetians' view of the afterlife has elements of traditional christian beliefs, but also a unique viewpoint which must have sparked Marjory's interest.

Situating Marjory within Victorian Britain, a society whose fascination with death and spirituality was heightened by high mortality rates and the social upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, helps explain the potential appeal of her translated article on the Svanetians' view of the afterlife. Living in an era marked by dramatic shifts in technology, modes of living, and social class structures, Victorians often turned to death as the great equalizer, a universal experience that united society through mourning (Cooke, par. 3). The Victorian "culture of death" functioned as a collective coping mechanism, ritualizing grief through an elaborate system of social practices (Cooke, par. 3). Simon Cooke, senior editor of the *Victorian Web*, identifies several of these practices, including funeral pageantry that reflected the deceased's social status, the wearing of black during mourning, and the ideal of a "good death" surrounded by family and friends, contrasted with the feared "bad death" resulting from sudden violence or accident. Other, more unusual but widely observed customs included post-mortem photography, mourning jewelry containing locks of hair, and the holding of séances to communicate with the departed. In this cultural context, Marjory's article on Svanetian beliefs would have found an eager readership in a Victorian society deeply preoccupied with death and the afterlife.

The Svantian ideas of an afterlife and of communicating with those who had passed would have found common ground with the Victorians, particularly with those familiar with the rise of the counterculture of Western spiritualism. Spiritualism -- the belief that the dead can communicate with the living through a medium during a séance -- is typically thought to have originated in New York in 1848, when two sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox, claimed to have communicated with the spirit of a man who had been murdered in their house (Diniejko, par. 3). It was imported to Britain shortly afterward and found a receptive audience in their culture of death, especially as Queen Victoria herself became a spiritualist who held séances at Windsor Castle to contact her beloved late husband Albert (par. 6). It is noteworthy that spiritualism was a movement that privileged women, as females were considered more powerfully connected to the spiritual realm than males, providing them with opportunities and an outlet at a time of rising gender disparity and social discontent (par. 5). In this way, spiritualism allowed women to circumvent the strict norms of class and gender in nineteenth-century England (par. 5). It is

therefore fitting that Marjory, as a Victorian feminist, would have been interested in espousing the mountain-dwelling Georgians' views on the afterlife.

The translated article begins simply with the line, "The beliefs of the Svans concerning a future life are original and characteristic," and then continues with ten pages of typed text to describe their beliefs and rituals, highlighting those that are unique from the traditional Christian beliefs (M. Wardrop, *Beliefs of the Svanetians*, 1). The greatest differences, which Marjory perhaps felt Victorian could learn from, are how they view Heaven and Hell, and how they understand the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual realm. Svanetians believe that both good and bad souls enter through the same door, which leads to a vast plain where the good souls will sit at a long table with Christ and enjoy the sights and smells of the banquet set before them (1). The bad souls -- instead of being trapped in a separate place called Hell where many Victorians would imagine demons and torment reign -- are instead simply in "a distant corner of the plain" where "utter darkness eternally prevails" so that it is impossible to see the divine light of Christ (2). The article points out that this conception of Heaven and Hell is quite different from the Christian ideas as sinners do not experience "fiery Gehenna, rivers of fire, red hot frying pans," and likewise those destined for heaven do not delight in "any exceptional joys and pleasures" (3). Svans believe that the afterworld is not too unsimilar from this world, except for the fact there is no work, matrimonial relations, and fighting is strictly prohibited (5). The mountain dwelling Georgians paint an interestingly different picture of the afterlife for others to ponder.

The article describes many traditions and festivals centered around the communion of the souls of dead family members with their living kinsfolk. The 5th of February is celebrated as "the day of the resurrection from the dead," and everyone prepares their homes meticulously to welcome their deceased relatives, who remain there until the first Monday following (M. Wardrop, *Beliefs of the Svanetians*, 6). The Svanetians spare no expense in preparing food and decorations, as much out of respect for the dead as out of fear, since they believe that if their deceased relatives are dissatisfied with the preparations, they will bring misfortune throughout the year in the form of illness and blight (6). In this way, the Svans have obligations to their dead ancestors, and during these festivities they fulfill those obligations by providing excellent hospitality: each day the family members stay inside and tell folk tales to entertain the souls, a

low table is laden with food and drink for the dead, and family members make toasts while naming deceased relatives and unnamed ancestors (9). On the following Monday, as the souls return to the great plain, the family opens the door, sweeps a path of snow, and lays a table of food outside as a parting meal. That evening, as all the dead depart, the living do not go outside for fear of displeased souls -- so much so that even if offered "mountains of gold," a Svan would not visit the graveyard that night (10).

The differences presented in Marjory's translation of the Svanetian view of the afterlife invite English readers to reevaluate and reflect on the implications of their own beliefs. Victorians were disciplined largely by fear of a torturous Hell that awaited them if they sinned. The Svanetians, by contrast, did not believe in such punishment after death; instead, they were guided by the fear that the souls of their ancestors -- or of those they had killed -- would torment them in this lifetime if they committed a transgression (4). Ancestors also offered comfort, easing the anxiety of death, as the Svans believed that loved ones appeared to the dying in their final moments to help them transition and provide hints about the afterlife (5). This close relationship with the deceased gave the Svanetians a sense of continuity with past generations and a wisdom about life beyond death, both of which alleviated much of the fear, sadness, and anxiety associated with loss. It was these exact negative emotions which had given rise to the Victorians' "cult of death"; in this light, Victorians -- and Marjory herself --may have had much to learn from the Svanetian perspective preserved in her translation. The only drawback, of course, was that in Svaneti, buying a new home meant inheriting not only the house but also the obligations to all the ancestors of its previous owner!

The Georgian Church Question, The Persecution of the Georgian Church, and Bishop Kirion

The number of Marjory's translations preserved in the Wardrop Collection at the Bodleian Library is limited, making it especially significant that three handwritten translations focus on the same subject: the Georgian Church's struggle under Russian subjugation and its pursuit of autocephaly, or ecclesiastical sovereignty. All three documents date to around 1909,

when the persecution and false accusations against Bishop Kirion intensified calls for the restoration of central ecclesiastical power to the Georgian Church. The first, "The Georgian Church Question," published in a St. Petersburg periodical in December 1908 and authored by Professor A. A. Tsagareli, argues for freedom from Russian control through a scholarly assessment of the legal and historical basis for autocephaly. The second "The Persecution of the Georgian Church," appeared in another Russian periodical in January 1909, edited by Professor N. Troubetskoy, and adopts a more emotional tone, portraying the Georgian clergy as martyrs to Russian oppression and calling for divine justice to restore autocephaly. The third, "Bishop Kirion" is a letter written from Kharkiv by academic G. Mousvenaridze, which recounts Bishop Kirion's ordeal in exile from a first-hand perspective, having accompanied him during his banishment. In addition to these translations, Marjory also wrote a letter to the Bishop of Gibraltar, urging him to use his influence to support the Georgian clergy.

The documents all reference the murder of the Russian Exarch of Georgia, Archbishop Nikon, on May 28th, 1908, as the catalyst to contest the practice of the Russian Church authorities, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, appointing the head of the Georgian Church. This practice started in 1811 -- a mere ten years after Georgia became part of the Russian Empire following the death of King Giorgi XII -- when an imperial order subjected the Georgian Church to the Russian Synod. Since then, Russian Exarchs had been sent to lead the Georgian Church, some of whom did not even speak Georgian (M. Wardrop, *The Georgian Church Question*, 1). However, as Professor Tsagareli highlights, this was in actuality the subjugation of the Georgian Church to the Russian Synod, not an official incorporation of the two, which would have had to be approved by both church councils or by sanction of the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs (2). After the murder of Exarch Nikon, a member of the Duma named Purishkevitch gave a speech in which he claimed that several Georgian clergy, including Bishop Kirion, were to blame (M. Wardrop, *The Persecution of the Georgian Church*, 2). He accused Kirion of holding conspiratorial meetings with other clergy members on two specific dates in Tbilisi, a claim refuted by all of the articles (2). Nevertheless, Bishop Kirion and several others were swiftly punished without trial and exiled to remote monasteries in Russia.

From the very beginning of Russian control of the Georgian Church in 1811, with the appointment of the first Exarch Vaarlam Eristavi, difficult times commenced as Russian

authorities began closing several eparchies and dismissing many bishops who were not amenable to the empire ("A Concise History" par. 3). In this way, they gained greater control over church politics and reduced expenses by limiting the number of Georgian clergy receiving salaries, while also embezzling funds from Georgian accounts (par. 6). They restricted the use of the Georgian language and forced priests to preach from the Russian Orthodox Bible. The deeply religious people of Georgia suffered, and in 1818 a group of rebellious Georgians began a war for the Mother Church of Georgia (par. 7). The Russian army razed villages to the ground and executed rebels en masse; by the end of the war in 1820, around 2,000 Georgians, including many members of the clergy, had died (par. 11). With so many bishoprics closed and Mass conducted in Russian, many Georgians began to turn away from the faith they had once held so dear; yet little could be changed as long as Georgia remained under the Russian Empire (par. 12). However, the sudden death of Exarch Nikon in 1908 reignited the impetus for an autocephalous Georgian Church.

In the text "Bishop Kirion" the long struggle and suffering for the Georgian Church's independence is felt quite strongly. His story is archetypical of many of those who were proponents of Georgian independence, violent or peaceful alike. Mousvenaridze writes that Bishop Kirion was an advocate of Georgian autocephaly and gave a speech at a meeting of the Synod detailing the historical aspects of the cause, as he was a great scholar of church history (M. Wardrop, *Bishop Kirion*, 1). However, Mousvenaridze contends that the bishop had no part in any form of violence or plotting murder. As he was exiled to various monasteries across Russia and given meager lodgings, the bishop accepted his fate and even continued his academic work, writing the text *The Civilizing Role of Iberia in the History of Russia* during his several-month stay at the Guriajhi Monastery near Kharkoff (2). Many Georgians, and those abroad in Europe including Marjory, were deeply worried as his health began to fail, accelerated by the dampness of his dungeon rooms where water ran down the walls (2). However, the bishop consoled them with the poetic line by the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli, saying, "'Not a single rose is plucked from this world without thorns.' We must bear our suffering with love, since suffering is the fruit of love and in suffering we will find our strength!" (Hieromartyr Kirion II, par. 12). In midwinter he was ordered to move further inland to Sanaksar Monastery, yet on the journey there with the author Mousvenaridze, his health failed further and he stopped at a

hospital near Moscow, where, even though sick and weak, police forced him to continue on his journey.

Marjory's letter to the Bishop of Gibraltar demonstrates her ardent support for Georgia and its people, revealing part of her motivation for persistently translating articles on Georgian news and culture. She writes that the "...persistent persecution of the ancient Ibrerian Church and its clergy has moved me to appeal to you" (M. Wardrop, *Letter to Bishop of Gibraltar*, 1). She urges him to use his connections with English churchmen who may be in contact with the Russian Synod to seek justice for the Georgian clergy, who suffer simply for "unanimously support[ing] the autocephaly of their church, which has existed for fifteen centuries" (1). To better inform him of events in Georgia and provide the opinion of an expert on the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, she encloses her translation of the article *The Georgian Church Question* by Professor Tsagareli of St. Petersburg University.

Marjory urges the Bishop to act, framing the events in their wider historical context: "This Christian nation which has held fast faith and freedom through centuries of invasion by Mongols, Arabs, Turks, and Persians is now likely to lose both under the protection of the great Christian power to whom she voluntarily united herself a hundred years ago" (M. Wardrop, *Letter to Bishop of Gibraltar*, 2). Through her deep knowledge of Georgian culture, history, and language, she transforms these messages into calls for action. She ends the letter humbly, writing, "I realize my utter helplessness, but I feel that I must do what I can for the brave Georgian people whom I so much admire and love" (2). It was perhaps her profound love for the Georgian people that enabled her to bridge the gap between Georgia and the West and to bring international attention to their struggles.

As a result of Marjory's heartfelt petitions, the Bishop of Gibraltar immediately contacted the Russian Synod and word spread among the high ranking ecclesiastics (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey,* 108). Due to pressure from Georgia and abroad, as well as changes within political structures, the Synod ceased punishing Kirion in 1915 and promoted him to Archbishop of Polotsk and Vitebsk in Western Russia, though he was still not allowed to return to Georgia ("Hieromartyr Kirion II" par. 13). It was not until the Russian Revolution of March 1917 that the Georgian Church immediately declared autocephaly and called Bishop Kirion back to his

homeland (14). As a testament to the love the Georgian people held for the Archbishop, one hundred and twenty cavalrymen met him at the border in the Aragvi Gorge to escort him, with the pomp and honor befitting his value, to the capital (14).

In September of that same year, the bishop was elected Catholicos-Patriarch, head of the independent Georgian Church. The celebrations continued as Georgia declared its independence from the Russian Empire on May 26, 1918, but this was short-lived as the Bolshevik threat loomed north of the Caucasus ("Hieromartyr Kirion II" 18). Just a month later, on June 27, Catholicos-Patriarch Kirion II was found murdered at his residence at Martqopi Monastery in the wooded hills outside Tbilisi (19). Though the guilty were never found, it may be surmised that Georgia's enemies targeted Kirion because they recognized the strength he and his followers possessed -- not just despite his long journey of suffering, but because of it.

The Gurian' Fight for Freedom

Georgians under the rule of the Russian Empire were not only striving for freedom within the ecclesiastical administration but also yearning for political and economic independence. The final text that explores these concepts is Marjory's translation of a Russian piece titled *The Gurian's Fight for Freedom*. It recounts the remarkable story of how Georgians in the western province of Guria began a peasant revolt in 1902 that culminated in the short-lived but influential Gurian Republic of 1905. Though short-lived, this social democratic experiment had a profound impact on the Georgian population, demonstrating the rich political action possible when communities unite with a collective intention. It also proved that socialism was not merely theoretical but genuinely functioning in Guria even before the establishment of the first so-called "socialist" republic of the Soviet Union. In twenty handwritten pages, Marjory presents the Gurian struggle for freedom to English readers as a powerful example of how Georgians were not simply passive subjects of the Russian Empire, but active agents fighting for justice, knowledge, and liberty. The document underscores both the repressive, reactionary policies of the Russian administration in Georgia and the fairness, courage, and organizational strength of the peasants of Guria.

The roots of the Gurian peasant uprising lay in a culmination of several injustices, primarily economic, that created the perfect storm for demands of reform. The first in a series of calamities was the failure of the 1901 and 1902 harvests, when Gurian peasants were able to gather only about twenty-five percent of the normal crop yields (M. Wardrop, *Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 1). Landlords, mostly local nobles, still demanded the usual rent, which, combined with rising government taxes -- of which the Russian administration spent only a twelfth in the region -- became unbearable for the peasants (1). The crop failures forced many to seek factory work in nearby Batumi, where they were exposed to socialist ideas, until a general factory strike in 1902 sent them back to their villages (2). Returning workers spread the ideas they had learned, envisioning a future "...where there would be no private property in land or in instruments of production, where all would work for each and each 'for all' when the day of freedom, equality, brotherhood would come upon earth" (2). Although traditional Marxist theory depicted peasants as too backward for organized socialism, the Gurians proved to be "ready pupils in the school of socialism," uniting to refuse rent payments and demand reductions (2). News of the successful strikes in Guria "...contributed considerably to shaping Lenin's views on the revolutionary progressive potential of peasants" (Nakhutsrishvili 17).

The agitated landlords appealed to the police to enforce rent collection; however, the peasants met the police and Cossack soldiers with deputations to explain the injustices that led to their strike and present their demands (M. Wardrop, *Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 2). They resolved that no payments would be made until their demands were met. Time and again, peaceful deputations were met with uncompromising disregard, and members were arrested, often sent to Siberia (3). Eventually, an executive order was issued: Cossack troops broke into peasant homes, seized their possessions, and sold them cheaply to forcibly satisfy the landlords' rents (3).

After these episodes, the Gurians realized they would find no justice within the Russian administration and decided to create their own. Each village selected its most intelligent and respected members to form a council, a popular tribunal called the *Narodny Sud*, which issued regulations and was protected by a secret armed militia (M. Wardrop, *Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 4). Luigi Villari, an Italian diplomat and historian, traveled to the Gurian "republic" around 1904 and recorded his observations of the self-governing peasants in a chapter of his

book *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus* (1906). While visiting the capital of Guria, the small town of Ozurgeti, he attended a trial that astonished him. He described their administration of justice as "...a return to the most primitive forms of human institutions, and is probably unique in modern times" (Villari 93).

The trial he witnessed involved a 40-year-old man appealing a sentence of perpetual boycott for committing adultery and breaking up two homes (95). He addressed the roughly two hundred men, women, and children gathered—who acted collectively as judge, jury, prosecutor, and counsel—saying: "'I admit my sin… and the justice of your punishment; but I am deeply penitent, and swear in future to lead a reformed and virtuous life. The sufferings I have undergone since you boycotted me have been so great, so unbearable, that it would have been better if you had killed me outright. I am lost, ruined beyond hope, unless you relent, and I have come to ask you to forgive me and withdraw the boycott'" (95). An animated discussion followed: supporters of clemency cited "the apparent sincerity of the man's repentance" and "the failure of punishment to effect reform if pushed too far," even referencing "'the latest results of science'" and quoting obscure German philosophers and Socialist writers (96). Opponents argued "...that the man was an old offender in this respect, that at his age his reformation was not likely to be lasting, and that as he had caused the break-up of two homes an example should be made of him" (96). After over an hour of debate, votes were cast in secret, and the man was forgiven and readmitted into the community (97). On their way back to his host's house, Villari was shown a building that served as the "official" Russian courthouse, which lay deserted and deteriorating.

The Gurians excelled not only in justice but also in the pursuit of knowledge aimed at building a more humane way of life. Although socialist propaganda was primarily directed at the proletariat, the Gurian peasants found in revolutionary proclamations what they had long sought in newspapers and other texts: an explanation of their condition and the injustices of the social order. As one Gurian explained to a government representative, the proclamations clearly articulated "our position, our needs, our aspirations" (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 8). By 1903, socialist ideology had taken firm root among the Gurians, and a general strike against landlords spread across the region (5).

The Gurians' commitment to socialist ideals extended beyond strikes. "They had founded public libraries and eagerly read newspapers and books. Every day the children went to school, often running five miles barefoot. Women tried to broaden their minds so that they might be worthy mothers and train their children…in a free revolutionary spirit. The peasants met together and pronounced ardent speeches" (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 5). Luigi Villari, who visited the region, remarked on the communist organization of Gurian villages: "...each man contributing his share of money or labour for the common good. They worked in shifts to maintain the roads and bridges, and one sometimes saw nobles, priests, peasants, and shopkeepers all manfully doing their turn of work" (Villari 92). Alarmed by such self-empowering actions, the Russian authorities shut down the libraries and imprisoned large numbers of peasants, attempting to suppress the movement at its source (5).

Even under constant government oppression, the Gurians continued their resistance, united in their vision of a more just future. After years of violent struggle, by February 1905 Guria was effectively independent, with political refugees from other parts of Georgia seeking safety there (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 7). The local administration, desperate to restore order, requested Cossack troops from Tbilisi. Just as Commander-in-Chief General Maluma issued the order, the Georgian nation mobilized: newspaper editors and members of the Tbilisi elite urged him to delay, instead sending Sultan Krim-Girei -- a Russian officer and descendant of the former Crimean Khanate ruling family -- to investigate the unrest (7).

Sultan Krim-Girei was struck by the reception he received. In each village, thousands of men, women, and children voiced the same grievances, summarized by one young Gurian: "Before everything else we need land. We cannot understand why those should possess the land who do not cultivate it. Surely the land was not made for the squires! We are dying of hunger, while the barns of the landlords are full of that maize which we sowed and which we reaped. Could there be greater injustice!" (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 9). They also demanded freedom of the press, assembly, and compulsory education, criticizing the government for closing their libraries: "Why does the government want to keep us ignorant! Is it not because it is easier to exploit an ignorant unenlightened people?" (9). After reporting his findings, the

Sultan prompted the government to withdraw its troops, recognizing that it was "...powerless against the awakened people" (10).

How did such a small rural region of Georgia gain autonomy under Russian rule and, for a brief time, create a society in which every resident's liberties and rights were respected? Nakhutsrishvili traces the success of the Gurian Republic back to the early strikes of the 1890s, when workers in Batumi swore oaths of allegiance to one another in churches before striking (Nakhutsrishvili 29). Pledging allegiance to a cause was, so to speak, in their blood, as oath-taking was a well-established tradition in Gurian village culture (29). The Gurians also carried an underdog mentality, as Guria had long been the poorest region of Georgia, combined with a history of chivalrous bandits, *pirali*, who took justice into their own hands for the good of their villages, both of which lent weight to the villagers' oaths (Morchiladze and Nasmyth 142). The connection between striking and this cultural tradition becomes clear when examining the etymology of the practice. In Georgian, the word for "strike" -- *gapitsva* -- literally translates to "taking an oath" or "creating a bond through an oath" (Nakhutsrishvili 29). *Gapitsva* became the preferred term for "strike," prevailing over other words such as *mushaobis aghkvetha* ("cessation of work"), *shek'eneba*, or *shethqmuloba* ("conspiracy") (29).

Perhaps it was this deeply rooted commitment to one another that enabled the Gurians to succeed in their revolts and strikes, forming the strong backbone of the Gurian Republic and making it resistant to government tyranny. Luigi Villari expressed a similar view in his travelogue, noting, "What is peculiarly remarkable about the movement is the unanimity with which it has been carried out, all classes agreeing in the necessity for getting rid of the Russian authorities…Even most of the landlords, who have lost income by the new arrangement, acquiesce in it fully" (Villari 98). He also revealed that the government itself shared this view, writing, "A high Russian official at Tiflis admitted to me that the movement was most difficult to deal with, 'for it is not,' he said, 'merely the work of outside agitators; it is backed up by the whole population'" (98). The Gurian Republic was thus a true republic, born of and sustained by the loyalty and character of its people.

The Gurians envisioned eventually joining a widespread rising of all the peoples of the Russian empire, awaiting the moment when the people would rise against the ruling classes. That

moment came when news arrived from Moscow that all of Russia was on political strike and the railways were at a halt (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 14).(M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 14). On October 15, 1906, the Gurian Councils ordered a general strike, and people immediately set to work blowing up railway bridges and cutting telegraph lines (14). Reflecting the turmoil, Chief of Police Lazarenko attempted to send a request for military reinforcements to Batumi by footman, as all other forms of communication were cut, but the message was intercepted. It read: "18 Oct. midnight. The Ozurgeti district is completely cut off from the rest of the Empire. I have twice tried to communicate with the governor of Kutais, but my runners have been seized on the road. The whole of Guria is enveloped in the flames of revolution" (14). After several days of fighting, the government issued a manifesto, which the Gurians received with indifference, distrusting promises of justice but ceasing hostilities nonetheless (15). Only days later, on October 22, Cossack troops marched on Gurian villages, burning houses and killing indiscriminately. The Gurians resisted, but after months of struggle -- despite support from across Georgia -- they were overpowered. In early January, upon learning of the failed Russian uprising, they surrendered their arms but refused to surrender their comrades.

Although the Gurian Republic was short-lived, its very existence is an inspiration -- the true story of a minority group who united to embody their ideals of a better present in the face of an oppressive majority. Many leaders of the movement, bringing with them the lessons they learned, would later go on to help create the progressive government of the First Republic of Georgia in 1918. The Gurians rejected the reality reflected around them, even dismissing the promise of a kingdom of heaven after death, declaring, "But we leave the kingdom of heaven to them, the priests; let them give us the means of living here on the earth in a human way" (M. Wardrop, *The Gurians' Fight for Freedom*, 12). In a way, they succeeded in building a kingdom of heaven on earth, for their society ensured that every person had the right to justice, knowledge, and liberty.

Marjory brought this story into the English language, planting a seed of hope that one day a society like the Gurian Republic might be recreated. When the esteemed Russian author Leo Tolstoy learned about the Gurian Republic, he wrote to a friend with great emotion and awe:

"What is happening in Guria is an event of immense importance. Although I am aware that the Gurians have not even heard of my existence, I have nevertheless a great desire to express to them the ideas and sentiments which they have awakened in me by their admirable movement…If it is possible, tell them how great was this old man's joy when he learned that what he had been thinking and writing for so many years, what the wise and those who think themselves wise did not understand and would not admit, is just what is understood, and not understood only but realized, by thousands of men on their own initiative, on their own reasoning, and according to their own consciences, and that they are carrying out this task so well and with such firmness that their neighbours are joining them. Tell them that not I alone, but many others rejoice in their work and are ready to help them if it is necessary and possible, and that we are all convinced that, having undertaken this great task for which they have done so much, they will not abandon it, but will continue in the same road giving an example to the world" (Villari 85).

What the Gurians' tale stirred in Tolstoy are perhaps the sparks of truth found in all great stories. Stories hold the power to influence reality, and so Marjory's translations -- stories from a small country in the Caucasus -- have the power to change lives, as they certainly changed hers.

Discussion: Digital Object & Thesis Limitations

As part of this project, I created a digital platform that brings together Marjory Wardrop's unpublished work, making it readily accessible to both researchers and the broader public. This website functions as a digital humanities resource, enabling engagement with primary materials that were previously difficult to access. In addition to her writings, the site provides a beginner-friendly Georgian alphabet section, designed to inspire interest in the language and reflect Marjory's enduring enthusiasm for the language. The platform also features an immersive image gallery and storymap, offering users a sense of being transported back to Marjory's Georgia and visually experiencing the landscapes, people, and cultural contexts that shaped her work.

At the same time, this thesis faced certain limitations. I relied primarily on English-language sources, which necessarily restricts the scope of interpretation and omits important perspectives from Georgian-language scholarship. My research trip to Oxford, where a substantial portion of Marjory's materials are held, was limited to three days in the archives, constraining the depth of direct archival engagement. Additionally, there were few sources that detailed the ultimate destination or dissemination of her translations found in her notebooks. While it is unclear whether some of these works were formally published, evidence suggests that Marjory circulated them, as seen in her letter to the Bishop of Gibraltar in which she included a translated article. These limitations shaped the scope of the thesis while highlighting opportunities for future research and digital projects that can further explore and disseminate her story.

Conclusion

In the end, did Marjory accomplish the great mission proclaimed at her Kutaisi banquet -- a mission that had first taken root in her imagination, as she envisioned the ancient land of Jason and the Golden Fleece, of Medea and Prometheus, a land where a young girl brought Christianity to a people, and a queen ruled with such wisdom and justice that she bore the title "King of Kings"? Did her love for Georgia, tireless work ethic, linguistic brilliance, and courage to follow her own path succeed in bringing the country's virtues to the English-speaking world? Did her translations, correspondence, and original writings awaken sympathy for, and awareness of, Georgia's peril under Russian rule? In the closing of her travelogue, she leaves no doubt of the stakes, writing: "The oppression and despotism with which Georgia is treated must result either in the total Russification of the country, with the merging of a higher civilization in a lower, or else in the rising of the people, stung into action by the insidious and cruel attack on its national life." (M. Wardrop, *Notes of a Journey*, 35). Her words are both a warning and a call to action -- a plea to the peoples of Western Europe to aid Georgia in the shadow of a dark future. Yet even with this grim forecast, she leaves a spark of hope: in the courage of the Georgian people and in the possibility of understanding and solidarity from the West.

If the contents of the Wardrop Collection at the Bodleian are any indication of Marjory's influence beyond her texts and translations, her reach was both widespread and heartfelt. The items tucked into the archival boxes that bear her name are carefully preserved pieces of the past, kept there to be part of her story. As I opened box after box, I found myself constructing not only a fuller picture of Marjory, but also of her brother Oliver and his love for her, since it was he who carefully curated the collection after her passing. Among the treasures is a petition written by the women of Georgia, and published in the English periodical *The Women's Tribune* in 1906, which details the brutal treatment of women and children in Georgia by Cossack soldiers and pleads for the aid of women in free countries. Beneath it is printed a statement by English women appealing to the British government to intervene, followed by signatures penned in both ink and pencil. Perhaps Marjory herself translated the Georgian women's words; most certainly, she was part of the campaign. Also preserved is a twenty-page handwritten article in Georgian, titled *Oppozitsia*, a clandestine political journal created by the boys of the Grammar School in Kutaisi and prepared especially for Marjory and Oliver during her first trip in December 1894. Decorated

with hearts and intricate embellishments, the manuscript radiates the authors' affection and admiration for the siblings. And finally, as a fitting conclusion to their story, the collection contains a French copy of the Act of Independence of the Georgian Republic from 1918 -- a document that seems to embody the very hopes and aspirations to which both Marjory and Oliver had devoted their lives.

Though Marjory did not live to witness Georgia's independence, she would have taken pride in the First Democratic Republic, which realized the very ideals she had long believed lay within the Georgian people themselves. After the fall of the Russian Empire, amid the chaos that followed, Georgians organized and, on May 26th, 1918, declared themselves a free republic. They set to work drafting a progressive constitution that would establish one of the first social democratic states in Europe, enshrining the rule of law and private property, free elections with both male and female participation, civil and political liberties for all citizens, women's rights, and anti-discrimination protections for religious and ethnic minorities ("The First Democratic Republic" par. 3). With the aid of Oliver's lobbying, the new republic was officially recognized by the Allied nations on January 14th, 1920, and was celebrated with church bells ringing and people pouring into the streets in joy. Strikingly, this date coincided with the feast of St. Nino, marking Georgia's evolution once again: in the past from paganism to Christianity, and now from subjugation to freedom. The festivities of that day are preserved in the diary of a young woman, who recorded how crowds gathered at Oliver's house in Tbilisi, where he "...congratulated everyone and wished them a long life, and said in Georgian: 'Long live beautiful Georgia!'" (Aleksidze, *A Cultural Journey*, 134).

Yet the joy proved fleeting. On February 25th, 1921, the Red Army marched into Tbilisi and occupied the city once more, turning Oliver's house into Communist headquarters, and later into the offices of the Georgian Soviet Writers' Union (137). Many members of the Georgian government fled to France, and Georgians would endure seventy years of Soviet occupation before they could once again raise the flag of an independent nation, finally realizing their and Marjory's shared dream of freedom.

Marjory accomplished a great deal in her time as a Georgian scholar, translator, activist, and historian. She inscribed into the historical record a vision of Georgian culture and history

shaped by a feminist perspective -- a viewpoint largely absent from Western scholarship.The eminent historiographer Walter Benjamin reminds us that "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin, par. 6). Marjory seized hold Georgian history and culture as she perceived it: a land steeped in the ancient wisdom of the Amazons, where Rustaveli's line proclaiming the equality of male and female lion cubs rings true, and where women who shape history are embraced and upheld. The moment of danger was not only the Russification imposed by the Russian administration, but also the formation of an overly patriarchal society. If one adopts Walter Benjamin's definition of a historian -- when he writes, "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (par. 6) -- then Marjory fits it perfectly. Although bereft of a university degree as a result of her gender and moment in history, she perceptively recognized Georgia's finest qualities of the past and brought them into the present moment as her own, thereby acting as a beacon of hope, and a true historian, for a nation on the cusp of transformation.

Marjory is celebrated for her beautiful portrayal of Georgian literature, history, and culture, garnering admiration for the country both from the West as well as from within -- an achievement especially significant at a time when Georgia was redefining itself after decades of Russification under the Russian Empire. In reading her work, one can feel her ardent love for Georgia encrusting every sentence, imbuing her writing with its transformative power. In her travelogue, she depicts a scene in the capital city of Tbilisi with the eye of an artist surveying a landscape:

> "At sunset one gets a magnificent view of the plain of Kart'hli, with its capital lying in the bosom of her rocky hills. The roofs, many of them flat, are painted sea green, terra cotta and blue in many shades, and present a most picturesque appearance; commanded by the fortress, "the muddy and peaceful Kura" flows through the town, while over all hills, town, plain -- there is a soft misty rose colour which gives an air of enchantment to the scene." (M. Wardrop, *Notes of a Journey*, 6).

It is difficult not to share her feelings for the country, as her vivid description creates a painting in the mind's eye not only of striking composition and form, but also of a captivating quality of which, if one delves deeper, stems from her great love for Georgia.

If Marjory could take a stroll through Tbilisi today -- wandering down the main Rustaveli Avenue, past the flags of Georgia and the European Union rippling together in the wind -- and then turn off the bustling street toward the green slope of Mount Mtatsminda, just behind the Parliament building, she would find herself in a quiet little square shaded by tall pine trees. Though she would officially be standing in the Oliver Wardrop Garden, the bronze life-sized statue of her and Oliver tells a deeper story. Created in 2015 by Georgian sculptor Jumbar Jikia, the monument was commissioned by the city as a testament, in the words of the mayor, to "remember that Georgia has always had friends and supporters," and to celebrate the enduring relationship between Europe and Georgia -- one strengthened by "the track these two great people, together with Georgian diplomats and Ilia Chavchavadze in particular, have marked for our nations" ("Oliver and Marjory Wardrop" par. 5). If Marjory stood before the statue, she would see Oliver turned toward her, his arms lifted as explaining something to her. And if she turned to look upon herself, she would see what the Georgians saw in her: a woman standing beside her brother, yet not facing him -- her gaze fixed straight ahead, resolute and visionary, a copy of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* clasped firmly to her chest. In the composition, it is she who commands the viewer's eye: determined, forward-looking, carrying Georgia's future in her sight and its cultural soul in her hands.

In the end, when one looks at her life and work as a whole, it was perhaps Marjory's love and compassion for the people of Georgia that stood as her greatest gift. This deep affection enabled her not only to achieve remarkable accomplishments of literary and linguistic value, but also to inspire in both Western Europeans and Georgians themselves the hope and vision of a brighter future for Georgia. In return, Marjory received love in even greater measure, forming lifelong friendships with Georgian authors, political activists, and feminists. They recognized in her the person she longed to be -- but felt she could not become in her own country: someone capable of making a true difference in the world, despite the limits imposed by gender and society. In Georgia, she was free to be her authentic self -- and that self now lives on, a thread of light woven into the tapestry of women who have shaped Georgian history.

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