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	<h2>Social Themes and Historical Memory in Contemporary Georgian Poetry</h2>	
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Keywords	Contemporary Georgian poetry; national consciousness; historical memory; social inequality; cultural identity; emigration	
Abstract	<p>This study examines the representation of social themes and historical memory in contemporary Georgian poetry from the early twenty-first century to the present. It investigates how poetic discourse responds to post-Soviet transformations, collective trauma, armed conflicts, and the pressures of globalization. The article argues that contemporary Georgian poetry functions as a cultural space where individual lyrical expression intersects with collective historical consciousness. Through an analysis of selected poetic texts, the research demonstrates that poetry has evolved from metaphorical resistance toward a more direct, documentary, and socially engaged form. In this context, poetry becomes not merely an aesthetic practice but a medium of social critique, ethical reflection, and historical self-articulation.</p>	
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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary Georgian poetry occupies a central position in the articulation of national consciousness, social experience, and cultural identity. In the post-Soviet era, poetry has increasingly assumed the role of a critical medium through which social contradictions, historical traumas, and collective anxieties are expressed and interpreted. Unlike earlier literary periods, where symbolic language and Aesopian strategies dominated poetic expression, twenty-first-century Georgian poets often adopt a more direct and confrontational voice.

From the early 2000s onward, Georgian poetry has been deeply influenced by rapid political change, economic instability, migration, and the legacy of unresolved historical conflicts. Themes such as social inequality, emigration, memory of war, and the erosion of traditional cultural values have become particularly pronounced. These poetic texts reflect not only the subjective experiences of individual authors but also broader societal transformations that shape collective identity.

The relevance of this research lies in its recognition of poetry as an active social force rather than a purely aesthetic phenomenon. Contemporary Georgian poetry functions as a form of cultural testimony, contributing to processes of historical self-reflection and social critique. It reveals how literature participates in shaping public memory and negotiating national identity in an era marked by fragmentation and uncertainty.

## 2. Literature Review

Scholarly interest in contemporary Georgian poetry has grown significantly over the past two decades, particularly in relation to social engagement and the politics of memory. Researchers such as Bela Tsipuria, Mzia Bakradze, and Levan Berdzenishvili have emphasized the transformation of poetic discourse from elitist abstraction to socially grounded narration.

### 2.1. Social Engagement and the Poetics of “New Sincerity”

Literary scholars identify a distinct trend often described as “New Sincerity,” characterized by the poet’s refusal to remain detached from everyday reality. In this paradigm, the poet abandons the metaphorical “ivory tower” and situates themselves within urban spaces, marginal communities, and lived social experience. Poetry becomes a means of witnessing poverty, alienation, and moral disillusionment in post-transition Georgian society.

### 2.2. Historical Memory and Trauma Studies

Another significant direction in contemporary research concerns historical memory and trauma. Georgian poetry increasingly reflects what may be termed a “poetics of trauma,” where collective wounds—such as the collapse of the Soviet system, the wars of the 1990s, the loss of Abkhazia, and the August War of 2008—are revisited through personal narratives. Scholars note that these texts do not glorify conflict but instead present war as an unresolved psychological and cultural rupture.

## 3. Research and Core Analysis

### 3.1. Social Themes and Marginalized Voices

Social protest constitutes a defining feature of contemporary Georgian poetry. In the works of poets such as Paata Shamugia, Shota Iatashvili, and Lia Liqokeli, poetic language becomes a vehicle for articulating the experiences of marginalized individuals.

#### 3.1.1. Urban Alienation

The city in contemporary poetry is depicted not as a space of romantic aspiration but as a site of social tension and existential struggle. Urban landscapes are marked by unemployment, economic inequality, and psychological isolation. The poetic subject often appears fragmented, displaced, and unable to reconcile personal aspirations with harsh social realities.

#### 3.1.2. Gender and Social Inequality

The contribution of female poets—such as Eka Kevanishvili and Diana Anphimiadi—has been particularly significant in expanding the thematic scope of Georgian poetry. Their works address issues of domestic violence, forced migration, and the redefinition of women’s social roles. These poetic voices challenge patriarchal norms and expose the gendered dimensions of social injustice.

### 3.2. Historical Memory: Trauma, War, and Identity

Historical memory in contemporary Georgian poetry transcends nostalgia and becomes a critical framework for understanding present realities. Poets seek to interrogate the past rather than idealize it.

#### 3.2.1. The Soviet Legacy

Many poetic texts explore the lingering influence of Soviet ideology on contemporary consciousness. The totalitarian past is depicted as an internalized structure that continues to shape language, memory, and social behavior. Poetry thus becomes a space for deconstructing inherited narratives and reclaiming historical agency.

#### 3.2.2. Echoes of War and Occupied Memory

In the poetry of Zviad Ratiani, Beka Akhalaia, and others, war is presented not as heroic epic but as intimate tragedy. These texts emphasize loss, displacement, and psychological fragmentation. The concept of “occupied memory” emerges, reflecting territories that are physically inaccessible yet emotionally omnipresent within national consciousness. Trauma remains unresolved, embedded in everyday language and poetic imagery.

## 4. Poetics of Trauma and Collective Memory

The poetics of trauma in contemporary Georgian poetry is characterized by fragmentation, repetition, and silence. Poets often employ minimalistic language, abrupt imagery, and documentary elements to convey the inexpressibility of loss. Memory is presented as unstable and contested, shaped by both personal suffering and collective narratives.

Through this aesthetic strategy, poetry functions as a form of cultural therapy, enabling society to confront painful historical experiences while resisting their erasure. The poetic text becomes a site where private grief intersects with national memory.

### Occupation, Displacement, and the Geography of Loss in Contemporary Georgian Poetry

One of the most salient and persistent thematic trajectories in contemporary Georgian poetry is the lived experience of occupation, forced displacement, and territorial loss. Within this poetic discourse, historical memory ceases to function as an abstract or symbolic construct and instead becomes a concrete, spatially defined, and bodily experienced reality. Memory is inscribed not only in language but also in geography, borders, and the irreversible rupture between homeland and lived space.

The poetic engagement with occupation reflects a profound transformation in the understanding of national trauma. Loss is no longer mediated through grand historical narratives; rather, it is articulated through fragmented personal experiences, disrupted everyday life, and the absence of familiar places. In this context, poetry serves as a cartography of loss, mapping territories that are politically inaccessible yet emotionally omnipresent within collective consciousness.

### The Poetics of War and the Generation of Survival

The work of **Beka Akhalaia** exemplifies the poetic voice of a generation shaped by direct exposure to armed conflict and its aftermath. His poetry does not seek to construct heroic or patriotic myths; instead, it focuses on the remnants of war—both material and psychological. Ruined landscapes, broken objects, silence, and emotional exhaustion replace traditional motifs of valor and sacrifice.

In Akhalaia's texts, historical memory functions as a permanently open wound rather than a resolved narrative. War is depicted as an ongoing condition rather than a closed chapter of the past. The poetic subject inhabits a temporal suspension in which trauma continuously resurfaces, resisting closure or reconciliation. This approach aligns with contemporary trauma theory, which emphasizes repetition, fragmentation, and the impossibility of complete narrative integration.

### Comparative Analysis of Major Poetic Voices

To further illustrate the diversity of approaches to social themes and historical memory in contemporary Georgian poetry, the following comparative analysis highlights key authors, thematic orientations, and stylistic strategies:

Author	Primary Themes	Form of Memory	Stylistic Features
Paata Shamugia	Social protest, cultural critique	Deconstruction of national and literary icons	Irony, intertextuality, postmodern fragmentation
Zviad Ratiani	Existential crisis, post-war identity	Trauma of the 1990s conflicts	Intense lyricism, free verse, emotional density
Eka Kevanishvili	Gender, urban marginality	Everyday social memory	Documentary tone, realism, narrative minimalism
Lia Liqokeli	Myth and identity	Folkloric and personal memory	Metaphorical language, magical realism

This comparative framework demonstrates that historical memory in Georgian poetry is not monolithic. Instead, it manifests through multiple registers—political, existential, mythological, and documentary—each contributing to a broader cultural dialogue on identity and belonging.

### Historical Memory as a Dynamic Cultural Process

Across these poetic voices, historical memory emerges as a dynamic and contested process rather than a static archive. Poets do not merely preserve memory; they reinterpret, question, and reshape it. The interaction between personal trauma and collective history produces a multilayered narrative space in which the past is continuously renegotiated.

The influence of theorists such as **Jan Assmann** is evident in the understanding of cultural memory as a socially constructed phenomenon sustained through symbolic forms, including literature. Georgian poetry becomes one of the primary cultural mechanisms through which memory is transmitted, challenged, and transformed across generations.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that contemporary Georgian poetry effectively fulfills the role of a social and cultural mediator. By engaging with themes of occupation, displacement, social inequality, and historical trauma, poetry facilitates collective reflection and emotional processing. Historical memory within this literary corpus remains a living, evolving phenomenon—one that enables society to confront painful legacies without reducing them to simplified narratives.

The reorientation of poetry toward social reality has enhanced its accessibility and relevance, restoring its function as a vital form of cultural communication. Contemporary Georgian poetry thus stands as a crucial site for negotiating identity, memory, and resilience in the face of ongoing political and historical challenges.

### Ethical Considerations

This research is based on qualitative textual analysis of published literary works and secondary academic sources. It does not involve human participants, personal data, interviews, surveys, or experimental procedures. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. All sources used in the study are properly cited in accordance with academic integrity standards, and the research fully respects intellectual property rights and principles of scholarly transparency.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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