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GEORGE BYRON AS A CHAMPION OF NATIONAL AWAKENING AND FREEDOM

Byron's concept of freedom (liberty) includes different aspects – individual, intellectual, political, national. Though the desire for liberty is a universal value, for Byron it didn't mean neglect or disregard of national peculiarities. On the contrary he was very attentive to the history and culture of other nations and by his poetry and practical activity inspired and fostered their national awakening.

Key words: *freedom (liberty), Byron's idea of freedom, Byron and Armenia, Byron Studies, Byron's Armenian translations, national awakening*

The idea of freedom predominates in the whole poetry of Lord Byron. Already during his lifetime Byron achieved international recognition not just as an outstanding representative of the Romantic movement in poetry and the arts but as his epoch's most eloquent champion of freedom (Beaty 1985: 196). His social and political attitude towards the concept of liberty is well expressed in the following lines: "When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home, / Let him combat for that of his neighbours".

To conceive Byron's idea of freedom semantic and metasemiotic as well as metametasemiotic levels of analysis should be applied. For example, the key concept of Byron's poem "The Prisoner of Chillon" is freedom, though the words freedom and liberty are used in the poem only once and this idea is conveyed by the adjective "free". The words freedom and liberty are also used only once in the "Sonnet to Chillon", which precedes the poem. Besides pure linguistic means Byron uses extralinguistic contexts, cultural codes and symbols to enforce the main idea of the poem. For example, Byron uses nature and its different elements such as mountain, river, eagle, fish, wind, sunbeam and so on as a symbol of freedom as compared with a person confined in dungeon. But a person even in confinement can be free. According to Byron, the eternal and everlasting spirit of the chainless mind of a patriot is free even when his body is in chains.

While a man struggling for freedom may be in chains as an individual, his ideals cannot be so easily restrained.

In concise form this idea of the poem is expressed in the "Sonnet to Chillon".

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!

Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,

For there thy habitation is the heart –

The heart which Love of thee alone can bind;

The sonnet describes the “chainless Mind” and how it cannot be imprisoned even if the body is in chains. The prison itself is set up as a “holy place” because of what happened there – the imprisonment of Bonivard, who rose against tyranny and was imprisoned there thus becoming himself a symbol of freedom. The sonnet concludes with an interpretation of Bonivard’s imprisonment as an “appeal from tyranny to God”.

Byron was a European poet who with his revolutionary rhetoric broke all possible boundaries, making his poetry the poetry of personal experience (McGann, 2008: VII). No wonder Byron advised the Lake Poets – his compatriots representing the first wave of Romantic movement – to “change your lakes for ocean” (Don Juan, Dedication. 5), distinctly implying to the narrowness of their views.

Though Byron’s satire was aimed at the destruction of the established order, his main role as a social satirist Byron saw in educating people: “My Politics, as yet, are all to educate”. Remaining true to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason , Byron declared his opposition to “all who war / With Thought”.

*And I will war, at least in words (and – should
My chance so happen – deeds), with all who war
With Thought; – and of Thought’s foes by far most rude,
Tyrants and sycophants have been and are.*

*I know not who may conquer: if I could
Have such a prescience, it should be no bar
To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation
Of every despotism in every nation. (DJ, 9. 24)*

As an implacable foe of despotism in any form and “in every Nation”, Byron argues the right of people and nations to control their own destiny.

In the anti-war cantos of Don Juan Byron addresses oppressed people and nations with the call to unite their efforts in the struggle for liberty, against their tyrants.

*Raise but an arm! 't will brush their web away,
And without that, their poison and their claws
Are useless. Mind, good people! what I say-
(Or rather Peoples)- go on without pause!
The web of these Tarantulas each day
Increases, till you shall make common cause:
None, save the Spanish Fly and Attic Bee,
As yet are strongly stinging to be free. (DJ, 9. 28)*

By his poetical works and practical deeds Byron helped to arouse the national self-consciousness of the oppressed nations demonstrating deep knowledge of their history, culture, traditions. Their national identity is reflected in numerous place names, names of historical and legendary people, religions, philosophies, art, architecture, interior decoration, costume, and the like used in Byron's writings.

Close acquaintance with the different nations helped Byron compare them and make general conclusions. Byron was dedicated to the struggle for the freedom for Italy and Greece in his last years. But before that Byron became interested in Armenians and in 1816 established close contacts with the Mekhitarists in St. Lazarus Island in Venice and under the guidance of Harutiun Avgerian (Father Pascal) began to study the Armenian language and culture.

Byron's attitude towards national languages and cultures is well expressed in

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, where Byron writes:

I've taught me other languages – and in strange eyes

Have made me not a stranger... (IV, 8-10)

In his letter to John Murray Byron characterized the friars of the Armenian convent known as Mekhitarists (named after the founder of the order Abbot Mekhitar of Sebastia) as

“very learned and accomplished men” who “have a press, and make great efforts for the enlightening of their nation” (Walker, 2005: 31-32). With H. Avgerian Byron wrote “Grammar English and Armenian” in 1817, and “Grammar Armenian and English” in 1819 (reprinted in 1832 and 1873). Byron also participated in the compilation of the English Armenian dictionary (1821). Byron made translations from Armenian into English. His main translations included the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, two chapters of Movses Khorenatsi’s History of Armenia and some other translations, including section’s of contemporary Armenian poetry (Nerses of Lambron’s Orations). In 1870 the Mekhitarists compiled Byron’s translations from Armenian in a collection entitled Lord Byron’s Armenian exercises and Poetry (in Armenian and English) along with separate extracts from his letters and other valuable documents (reprinted in 1907).

In the preface intended for the “Armenian - English grammar” Byron wrote of the “neatness, the comfort, the gentleness, the unaffected devotion, the accomplishments, and the virtues of the brethren of the order” – men who “are the priesthood of an oppressed and noble nation”. “This nation has attained riches without usury, and all the honours that can be awarded to slavery without intrigue”. On the political and social condition of the Armenian nation, Byron said: “It would be difficult, perhaps, to find the annals of a nation less stained with crimes than those of the Armenians, whose virtues have been

those of peace, and their vices those of compulsion. But whatever may have been their destiny – and it has been bitter – whatever it may be in the future their country must ever be one of the most interesting in the globe; and perhaps their language only requires to be more studied to become more attractive. If the Scriptures are rightly understood, it was in Armenia that Paradise was placed – Armenia, which has paid as dearly as the descendants of Adam for that fleeting participation of its soil in the happiness of him who was created from its dust. It was in Armenia that the flood first abated, and the dove alighted. But with the disappearance of Paradise itself may be dated almost the unhappiness of the country; for though long a powerful kingdom, it was scarcely ever an independent one, and the satraps of Persia and the pachas of Turkey have alike desolated the region where God created man in his own image” (Moore 1908: 336-337).

“What was Byron’s role in the destiny of the Armenian people?”, - asks Christopher Walker in his book “Visions of Ararat”. What Byron did for the succeeding generations of Armenians, - he writes, - “was to open the door in Europe to the idea of ending serfdom in the east, especially for the non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman empire, hitherto religious flocks and now becoming national communities. He gave a western articulation to the aspirations of the Greeks, and by extension to those of other Ottoman nationalities. He showed that they were real people with real aspirations. As a result of

Byron's brilliant and ironical love of liberty, and his value of the individual in an age dominated by despotic imperial collectivism, their oppression began to be understood. The members of the communities came to be seen as people whose individual liberty mattered, when hitherto they had been perceived as mere cogs in some antique imperial system, or as half-forgotten relics exotic in their medievalness" (Walker, 2005: 35).

It would be difficult to name a European poet who had a closer relationship with Armenian culture than Byron. His works were translated into Armenian in different times and different places. Child Harold's IV canto was translated into Armenian by Ghevond Alishan under the title "Italia" and published in Venice in 1860 (reprinted in 1889, 1891, 1901). In 1840- 1850-ies Armenian translations of some Byron verses were published in Armenian periodicals in Calcutta by Mesrop Taghiadian. In 1857 The Armenian translation of the Prisoner of Chillon was published in Shamakhy (translator Movses Zohrapeants). More translations were done at the end of the XIX century – beginning of the XX century. The geography of these translations is very wide – from Calcutta to Moscow, from Tbilisi to Constantinople. Among Byron's Armenian translators was famous Armenian writer Hov. Tumanian, as well as the author of Shakespeare's Armenian translations H. Masehian.

They, as well as other Armenian poets, writers, translators and scientists provided substantial basis for the development of Byron Studies in Armenia.

The translation of Byron's works is not an easy task and is characterized by some peculiarities – both linguistic and extra linguistic. The latter, as well as the former, are essential for understanding Byronic texts. Very often to achieve precise comparisons and contrasts, especially in his satires, Byron resorts to an extraordinary number of literary, historical, biblical, and mythological allusions that result in cryptic condensations of thought. Much of the ironic satire depends upon a reader's (and why not - translator's) comprehension of the clever incongruity of carefully wrought epithets – e.g., "power's foremost parasite" for Metternich, "inglorious Cincinnati" for English landowners during wartime, etc.

Very often phraseological units, metaphors, metonymies, similes, comparisons and other stylistic devices used by the poet express vertical context. The other problem occurs when the above mentioned stylistic devices in the source language don't have equivalents in the target language.

Byron's three ottava rima satires (Beppo, The Vision of Judgment, Don Juan) remain the most highly esteemed of his works, being unique and distinctly Byronic. From a stylistic perspective, they represent Byron's effort to transpose into English the Italian burlesque ottava rima tradition of the

fifteenth-century poets (Luigi Pulci and Francesco Berni), which speaks about his deep knowledge of the Italian cultural heritage. The result is the creation of a hybrid style which adapts the malleability of Italian rhyme scheme to the rigidity of the English language, which arouses additional challenges for the translator.

Many Armenian poets were influenced by Byron's poetry. Among them was Armenian national poet Hovhannes Tumanian. In the 90's Hov. Tumanian tried to improve his English by taking English lessons with the aim of reading Byron and Shakespeare in the original. This period of Tumanyan's interest in Byron is called the period of Byronism. He translated "The Prisoner of Chillon", "Child Harold's Pilgrimage", "Manfred" and a number of other Byron's poems. The separate edition of "The Prisoner of Chillon" published in 1896 opened with Hov. Tumanian's poem consisting of 10 lines and devoted to Byron. He showed that not Bonivard's political struggle, but the history of his soul full of suffering was described in the poem and the character of the hero became the symbol of freedom and struggle against tyranny. Hov. Tumanian characterized Byron as a genius and a great poet.

History as Byron conceived it, – writes Frederick Beaty, – is a continuum guiding both present and future – a lesson that humanity must learn or be doomed to repeat the errors of the past. As the opening lines in *The Age of Bronze* assert, the

present can be better if men actively will it to be so. Thus the poem is not only a graphic account of declination in 1822 after the Congress of Verona but also an impassioned exhortation to all peoples to free themselves from tyranny. In denouncing what is wrong, the satirist as prophet assumes unequivocally that right will ultimately triumph, for despite a dismal present the awakening of liberty heralds a brighter future (Beaty, 1985: 176-177).

By his poetry and his personal participation in national liberation movements in Italy and Greece Byron inspired oppressed nations to struggle for their liberty and self-determination and laid foundations for national self-government in Europe.

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ՄԱՄՎԵԼ ԱԲՐԱՄՅԱՆ –Չորջ Բայրոնը որպես ազգային զարթոնքի և ազատության ջատագով - Բայրոնի ազատության գաղափարը ընդգրկում է տարբեր ասպեկտներ՝ անհատական, մտավոր, քաղաքական, ազգային: Թեև ազատության ձգտումը համընդհանուր արժեք է, Բայրոնի համար դա չէր նշանակում ազգային առանձնահատկությունների անտեսում: Ընդհակառակը, նա շատ ուշադիր էր այլ ազգերի պատմության և մշակույթի հանդեպ և իր պոեզիայով, ինչպես նաև պրակտիկ գործունեությամբ ոգեշնչում և նպաստում էր նրանց ազգային զարթոնքի:

Հիմնաբառեր. ազատություն, Բայրոնի ազատության գաղափարը, Բայրոնը և Հայաստանը, Բայրոնի ստեղծագործությունների հայերեն թարգմանությունները, Բայրոնազիտություն, ազգային զարթոնք:

САМВЕЛ АБРАМЯН – Джордж Байрон как поборник национального возрождения и свободы -

Байроновский концепт свободы включает разные аспекты – индивидуальный, интеллектуальный, политический, национальный. Хотя стремление к свободе является универсальной ценностью, для Байрона это не означало пренебрежение или игнорирование национальными особенностями. Наоборот, он очень внимательно относился к истории и культуре народов и своей поэзией и практической деятельностью воодушевлял их и способствовал их национальному возрождению.

***Ключевые слова:** свобода, идея свободы Байрона, Байрон и Армения, армянские переводы произведений Байрона, байроноведение, национальное возрождение.*