

Nikoloz Baratashvili's poem "Napoleon" and its approach to Byron's poems from "Napoleonic Poems"

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Abstract: Baratashvili is a national poet, his lyrical -world responds to mankind's values and thoughts. Regarding the essence of his works, he stands side by side with Russian and European poets, namely: Byron, Shelley, Mewes, Lamartine, Hugo, Heine, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz and others. George Gordon Byron is the most remarkable representative of Romanticism in Europe, likewise Nikoloz Baratashvili in Georgia. In 1815-1816 Byron writes *Napoleonic Poems*. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* he repeatedly speaks of Napoleon. In 1838 N. Baratashvili writes a poem *Napoleon*, which is presented as a lyrical monologue and depicts Napoleon's impressive and powerful character. Napoleon's face in the world literature has become the image-idea, which, in the European consciousness, is related to the new and the progressive. N. Baratashvili poem's *Napoleon* joins the West-European literary tradition and makes the poems of *Napoleonic cycle* even more impressive.

Key words: *Byron, Baratashvili, Napoleon, world poetry*

Romanticism, as a universal and literary phenomenon, was deeply reflected in the cultural life of the people of the world. It is also noteworthy that the term World Literature was first employed in the works of the Romanticists. Johann Wolfgang Goethe was the first to introduce the term *World Literature*. Goethe remarks in the conversation with Eckermann that the national literature was a rather meaningless term; the epoch of the world literature is was approaching, and everyone had to strive to hasten its approach. However, according to Goethe "while we thus value what is foreign, we must not bind

ourselves to some particular thing, and regard it as a model.” [1, p. 2].

In spite of the fact that N. Baratashvili is a national poet, his lyrical universe responds to the mankind's thoughts. With the essence of his works, he stands side by side with Russian and European artists, such as: Byron, Shelley, Mewes, Lamartine, Hugo, Heine, Pushkin, Lermontov, Mickiewicz and others.

In Georgian literary studies Ilia Chavchavadze was the first to associate Baratashvili with the genius of Byron. In the *Letters on Georgian Literature* he writes: “Doesn't a rather restless life of a human, whose mind sharpened with suspicion constantly builds the temple of faith and then destroys it with his own hands, requests the same place of coziness, like our poet? Is not the heart of the mankind tired of this building and destroying, since the beginning of the world till today, of this search for the place to rest and isn't this general thirst for discovering this place universal? Is not the grief of humanity that has gives rise to search of this place of rest, and cannot find it? That's where the human despair, selflessness, confusion of intelligence begin, and that is where the denial of everything can be found, which, at times, conquers the whole intellectual mankind and fills the life of a human with black, rapidly flowing thoughts. Isn't Byron and the whole era of spiritual life of Europe he conquered as shining example of this?” [2, p. 541-542].

George Noel Gordon Byron is the most remarkable representative of Romanticism in Europe, likewise Nikoloz Baratashvili in Georgia. We do not come across the name of Byron either in Baratashvili's poems or his letters, but his environment and literary interests during the period of his study at the Gymnasium lead us to think that he was aware of Byron's literary works, although through Russian translations.

Ideological and artistic affinity between Baratashvili's and Byron's works is clearly seen.

As noted in scholarly literature dedicated to Georgian Literary studies, The *orphaned soul* by Baratashvili reminds us of the first verses in the seventeenth song in Byron's *Don Juan*, whereas the horse described in *Mazeppa* looks like *Merani*. In addition, “*Merani* by Baratashvili is believed to be related to the famous lines from Byron's poem dedicated to Mary Chaworth, *The Dream* [3, p. 31], known as a prelude of *Manfred* in the literary works of the English poet” [4, p. 174]. It is also noteworthy that “Still young Byron bitterly complains about the vanity of this world in his letters and poems: “Though I am not old, I still feel that life is not for me”... “I am an old soul, though I have just left the school desk”... Thirty years old, I feel that there is not much for me anymore”.

All the mentioned has an analogue in Baratashvili's letters: "Alas, those poor men, who are twenty-eight years old and no longer expect satisfaction from this world".

"I have no friends, no comforter and no person who would give me hope or encourage me" – complains Byron to his friend.

"I have a father, a mother, sisters, many relatives too and my heart still doesn't feel attached to any of them, it is still orphan in this vibrant and wide world!" – Georgian poet writes to his confidant, Maiko Orbeliani" [3, p. 29].

The fact that Byron knew about Georgia is confirmed by his works such as *Don Juan* and *Giaour*. "The fact that he was determined to travel to the Caucasus in 1813 reveals Byron's certain interest towards Georgia [3, p. 6]. In this regard I. Merabishvili's letter *Byron and Georgia* is also very significant for our purposes [5, p. 20-53].

In 1815-1816 Byron writes the *Napoleonic Poems*. In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* he repeatedly speaks of Napoleon. His poem *Napoleon's Farewell* has a form of monologue. In general, the image of Napoleon is typical for the world literature. Heinrich Heine considered Napoleon as a symbol of struggle for freedom and dedicated *Two Grenadiers* to Napoleon. In 1838 N. Baratashvili also dedicates a poem to *Napoleon* which is composed as a lyrical monologue and expressing Napoleon's impressive and powerful character.

In this poem Napoleon summarizes his actions and asks himself, what his absolute power" has give to him. And when he observes the victims of this glory, he understands that his desire has come true, he has become famous. Having crowned himself with glory, he acknowledges that he has created his own fate and arrayed it with halo of glory. However, like all great men, he also has doubts, "his fate might get bored with him" and might choose someone else, prefer someone else to him. Napoleon doesn't believe in hypocrisy of the fate and acknowledges that he will not stand rivalry, no matter how strong and "scientific" is the other king. Even the grave may seem to him narrow if there is anybody in the world equal to him. N. Baratashvili shows that the personality of Napoleon is not yet well identified. The poet compares Napoleon's "fiery soul" and "great heart to 'extinguished fire and rough sea'."

"Many days will pass, so that we cannot much know of them!
The death will perfectly represents them:
Extinguished fire and rough sea will represent
His miraculous fiery soul and great heart".

The poem is psychological and describes the internal, spiritual world of Napoleon.

The feelings of this great military leader, sense of his own power are fully represented in it. In the six-stanza

poem Baratashvili managed to depict an impressive image of Napoleon.

Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte is especially noteworthy from Byron's *Napoleonic Poems*. Byron wrote the Ode when he heard about Napoleon's abdication from the throne. In the letter as of 9th of April 1814, dedicated to Thomas Moore we read: "I will not write poems – to be precise, do not expect them from me". Napoleon's abdication made Byron break his word. On the next day the rhymes poured from him. On the 10th of April Byron wrote in his diary: "To-day I have boxed one hour – written an Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte – copied it – eaten six biscuits – drunk four bottles of soda water".

Thus Byron created *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, a judgment written with cold mind and passionate sense of a poetic genius to the person whom Byron considered as his idol. On the 16th of April *Ode* was published anonymously" [5, p. 252].

Ode is preceded by a quotation from Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It should be noted that Byron applies to Edward Gibbon as a historian. We should recall that Byron added the word *Georgia* to the English historian, Gibbon's words in the comments of *Don Juan*: "It is in the adjacent climates of Georgia, Mingrelia, and Circassia, that nature has placed, at least to our eyes, the model of beauty, in the shape of limbs, the colour of the skin, the symmetry of the features, and the expression of the countenance: the men are formed for action, the women for love" [3, p. 6].

Let us go back to the *Ode*, which consists of nineteen chapters. In the beginning Byron applies to Napoleon 'Yesterday a King', whom nobody obeys and fights for life in vain. In the *Ode*, the poet's anger regarding his decision is obvious. In addition, he reminds Napoleon about the decision by which he had sacrificed all loyal people, freedom was put in question and tyranny won again.

Byron tries to explain the phenomenon of Napoleon on the basis of the examples from the world history. The poet's attitude to Napoleon and to the reality is perfectly described in the X chapter of the *Ode*:

And Earth hath spilt her blood for him,
Who thus can hoard his own!
And Monarchs bowed the trembling limb,
And thanked him for a throne!
Fair Freedom! we may hold thee dear,
When thus thy mightiest foes their fear
In humblest guise have shown.
Oh! ne'er may tyrant leave behind
A brighter name to lure mankind!" [5, p. 137]

Ode to Napoleon is full of deep regret and sorrow of the poet.

We may say that in the poem *Napoleon*, N. Baratashvili describes Napoleon's personality and his inner world with more splendor than Byron in his *Ode*.

From *Jewish Melodies* by Byron the poem *On Napoleon's escape from Elba* is particularly noteworthy.

"Once fairly set out on his party of pleasure,
Taking towns at his liking, and crowns at his leisure,
From Elba to Lyons and Paris he goes,
Making balls for the ladies, and bows to his foes."

[5, p. 165]

In this poem Byron draws attention to the personal character of Napoleon. However, *Ode to Napoleon* and *On Napoleon's escape from Elba* make it obvious that the poet thinks that the overthrow of monarchy was Napoleon's greatest contribution.

In this small poem by Byron we read that Napoleon "arranged a ball for a beautiful woman on the way". In the essay *Napoleon of Novel of Goethe's life* K. Gamsakhurdia writes: "You should try not to get used to a beautiful woman, says the poet to Eckermann, for they easily entrap us to the boundlessness of ..., Napoleon, when he was still on Elba was sent numerous bills from Parisian cosmetic traders [7, p. 241]. In this book the chapter *Lord Byron also attracts the reader's attention*. In this instance Gamsakhurdia mainly relies on *Goethe's Conversation with Eckermann* when characterizing Byron.

It is interesting to see how Goethe describes Napoleon: "Napoleon was the man! Always enlightened, always clear and decided; his life was the stride of a demigod, from battle to battle, and from victory to victory. It might well be said of him, that he was found in a state of continual enlightenment. On this account, his destiny was more brilliant than any the world had seen before him, or perhaps will ever see after him!" [1, p. 40].

Goethe addresses Eckermann: "Every extraordinary man has a certain mission which he is called upon to accomplish. If he has fulfilled it, he is no longer needed upon earth in the same form, and Providence uses him for something else. But as everything here below happens in a natural way, the demons keep tripping him up till he falls at last. Thus it was with Napoleon and many others. Mozart died in his six- and-thirtieth year. Raphael at the same age. Byron only a little older. But all these had perfectly fulfilled their missions" [7, p. 243].

On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year is the last poem Byron wrote in Greece, in Missolonghi on the 22nd of January 1824. Dutch Gamba writes: "This morning Lord Byron came from his bedroom into the apartment where Colonel Stanhope and some friends were assembled, and said, with a smile, "You were complaining, the other day, that I never write any poetry now: - this is my birth-

day, and I have just finished something, which, I think, is better than what I usually write.”

Although N. Baratashvili also died very young, he also fulfilled all his duties towards the generations to come. Presumably, N. Baratashvili was well-aware of the personality of Napoleon through oral stories. It should be noted that in 1805-1807 Pyotr Bagration fought against Napoleon. In 1813-1814 Alexander Chavchavadze participated in a battle against French soldiers together with Barclay De Tolly. When entering Paris Chavchavadze was Barclay De Tolly's aide-de-camp.

Napoleon's face in the world literature has become the image-idea, which, in the European consciousness, is related to all of related to the new and the progressive. N. Baratashvili poem's Napoleon joins the West-European literary tradition and makes the poems of Napoleonic cycle even more impressive.

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