



## **THE IMMORTALITY OF THE GENIUS**

**ANA HIT BEKARIAN**

### **ARMENIA IN GEORGE BYRON'S DESTINY**

*(Yerevan Publishing House "Gitutyun"  
2023. 196 p.)*

The book by Anahit Bekaryan, a researcher of Byron studies, reflects undisguised love and careful consideration of each fact related to the life and literary legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century great poet George Byron. Addressed to Russian readers, it crowns the wreath of cultural studies of Armenian researchers about the English poet whose romanticism is as actual and eternal, as all the great accomplishments of the human spirit.

The book is interesting and valuable in terms of the wide scope of materials related to the creative life and pursuits of the poet, as well as its narrative. It includes materials on Byron's cooperation with the members of the Mekhitarist congregation, the poet's Armenian epistles, his research on Armenian studies and how Armenian literary-public thought perceived him. This is essentially a mini encyclopedia, containing ample information on the poet's stage of life closely connected with the Armenian reality – a stage that etched an enduring mark in Byron's thoughts and heart.

Lord Byron's personality, a beacon of inspiration for many generations, shines brightly in the realm of intellectual prowess within the world of literature. Byron's extroverted nature and his deep connection to the fate of humanity directed the course of his historical, literary, and cultural pursuits. His infatuation with the history and culture of other peoples was also conditioned by his quest for new impulses of creativity. Long before his first journey in 1809–1811, the poet was fascinated by the history, culture, and literature of Eastern societies. In the autumn of 1816, on his second journey to Venice, Byron made his first acquaintance with the figures of the Armenian culture that were one of the

### **The Immortality of the Genius**

---

wealthiest spiritual repositories of mankind. Armenian and foreign researchers like H. Avgerian, Ye. Pechikian, Kh. Dashtents, T. Moore, A. Maurois, G. Jefferson, E. O'Brien, A. Vinogradov, and others wrote about the world-famous center of Armenian studies on St. Lazarus Island and Byron's connection with it. Weary of European civilization, Byron gravitated towards the Mekhitarist congregation, immersing himself in the study of the Armenian language under the guidance of H. Avgerian. In H. Avgerian's view, Byron was eager to learn Armenian to be able to translate the works by Armenian historiographers into English, whereas according to the geographer, historian, and philologist G. Inchichian, Byron wanted to understand the world of the Armenian poetry. Byron had quite a prolific cooperation with the Mekhitarists. Together with H. Avgerian, he wrote and published English-Armenian Grammar in 1817. The book was followed by an English-Armenian Grammar published in 1819. Byron took a special interest in history as, in L. Feuchtwanger's vivid wording, he searched not for the ashes but the flames in history that would predestine the future of a nation. He translated excerpts from the "History of Armenia" by Movses Khorenatsi, "Commentaries" by Nerses of Lambron, "Letters to the Corinthians" by St. Paul, fragments of G. Inchichian's poem "The Byzantine Summer House". The translation of these works enabled the English speaking readers to get acquainted with the history and culture of Armenians, who had made an indisputable and invaluable contribution to the development of mankind's civilization.

The book testifies to the fact that Byron's love for Armenia and its culture was not unrequited. Back in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Armenian admirers of his talent couldn't remain indifferent to the poet's personality, his artistic spirit, and the range of his interests. No 19<sup>th</sup>-century figure had a more profound impact on their contemporaries than Byron with his cosmic spirituality and existential need for studying and understanding the world culture. "Byronism" was also reflected in Armenian literature, for Byron's multi-layered thinking and his love of freedom were in harmony with the representatives of the Armenian culture, resonating with Armenian national-liberation aspirations. In this regard, Armenian "Byronism", as A. Bekaryan points out, occupies a special niche in the development of the world "Byronism". It is not a coincidence that Ghevond Alishan, one of the first translators of Byron's works, considered him the best poet of the century. Great Tumanyan was so much infatuated with Byron's poetry that took English classes from Vice-consul Murtad to be able to translate Byron's

poem "The Prisoner of Chillon". Apparently, Byron's "Child Harold's Pilgrimage" served as inspiration for poem "Levon's Sorrow" by Smbat Shahaziz.

Byron's genius was glorified by such Armenian poets as Ruben Vorberian, Vahram Torgomian, Yeghia Pechikian, Mari Atmachian, Nairi Zarian, Hrachya Hovhannisian, Vahagn Karents, etc.

Much like his literary works, Byron's life and destiny were a manifestation of English culture in all its sublime forms, characterized by defiant love, pursuits, controversies, and social pathos. Through meticulous research, Anahit Bekaryan traces the trajectory of his creative and social ties mirrored in his extensive collection of letters, which as a cultural phenomenon reflects the literary-public realities of the era.

Byron's letters and diaries reflect public, political upheavals, formation of aesthetic philosophical, literary views and movements at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Western Europe. These lyrical-philosophical documents include letters, dating back to 1816–1821 and addressed to T. Moore and J. Murray. These letters essentially serve as a heartfelt declaration of love for Armenians and their rich, centuries-old culture

Byron's Armenian epistles first published by the author of this book in 1986 and partly included in this monograph as well, bear witness to Byron's invaluable contribution to the promotion of Armenian culture Western Europe. Byron's letters provided English-speaking readers with insights into the Venetian congregation of the Mekhitarists, a significant center of Armenian studies at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the dedicated efforts of H. Avgerian, A. Guver, S. Teodorian, S. Somalian and others. In addition, as A. Bekaryan notes in the preface of her monograph Byron's letters comprise data on the formation of Armenian Studies in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Southern Europe, England, and France. Notably they shed light on the contributions of renowned orientalist Saint Martin, Doctor of Medicine M. Bello and L.V. de Florival, who later became famous Armenologists. The study of Byron's epistolary heritage reveals the intricate literary connections between Armenia and Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The section discussing materials related to Armenian periodicals dedicated to the life and work of the English poet is of genuine interest. Armenians were first introduced to Byron's biography and literary works through the pages of the journal "Bazmavep" in 1846. Articles exploring Byron's works and depth of his

### **The Immortality of the Genius**

---

intellectual pursuits appeared in a range of publications, including the literary socio-political journal "Tsaghik", the weekly Meghu published in Constantinople, "Mshak" published in Tiflis and the journal "Taraz". Byron once wrote, "Poetry is the experience of the past and the presentiment of the future."

Fueled with dreams and a thirst for immersing himself in other cultures, the great romantic Byron always looked to the future. It is the timelessness of his verses born from the depth of his soul that continues to touch people's hearts and minds.

Since her student years A. Bekaryan has been infatuated with Byron's poetry-poetry that has been illuminating the world with new colors. Her book, an Armenian epic celebrating Byron, rightly stands as a historical-literary tribute to Byron from grateful Armenians.

**GAYANE HARUTYUNYAN**

gayanegeorgievna90@gmail.com