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## ARMENIAN LAUREL WREATH TO GEORGE G. BYRON

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Many Armenian poets devoted numerous moving and ardent lines to George Gordon Byron, the English romantic poet, characterizing him as a fighter for freedom, also a great personality who studied the Armenian language, literature and culture, and giving a true portrayal of the outbreaks and reflections of his perturbed soul.

**Smbat Shahaziz** (1840-1890), the Armenian poet, pedagogue and publicist, was one of the first in Armenian poetry, whose literary activity was definitely influenced by Byron's poetry. As far back as 1860, Shahaziz, then a 20-year-old poet, published his first collection *Hours of Freedom* in Moscow, where he sang of his birthplace and distant homeland, his student days and agitated adolescent love, in analogy with Byron's first volume of verse *Hours of Idleness*. Byronism found its expression in Shahaziz's poem *Levon's Grief* written under the direct influence of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and is similar to Byron's poem in structure, narrative style, contents and the sorrowful feeling, consuming the main hero. Smbat Shahaziz also has a eulogy devoted to Byron, in his *Poet's Reflection*. Shahaziz addresses the English poet who erected "a sky-high monument" to himself and whose "unconstrained soul's effusion must be the envy of all poets", while "the glory of England is higher than the Alpine mountains" as she gave Byron, the world poet, to history, and adds<sup>\*</sup>:

*Glory to thy precious lyre,  
That sang praises to Grecian ruins,  
It is like Hellas, marvellous,  
Aye, Byron, say who put in thee  
That magnificent sorrow of despair...<sup>1</sup>*

It was no mere chance or passing infatuation that **Hovhannes Toumanian** (1869-1923), the poet, literary and public figure, turned to Byron's poetry and translated *The Prisoner of Chillon* and several fragments from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, also wrote his verse *To*

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<sup>\*</sup> The translation of all the fragments of the poems is done word for word. All the works brought in the notes are presented in Armenian except N 10.

<sup>1</sup> In the original: Փառք – որ ծնել է քո անգին քնար, /Որ ավերակներ երգեց հույների, - /Ո՛րպես հեղինակ է հրաշափառ: /Ո՛վ Բայրոն, ասա՛, ո՞վ քո մեջ դրեց /Այն վսեմ թախիծն հուսահատության... (Shahaziz S. Works, Yerevan, 1947, p. 55; Shahaziz S., Hovhannisian H., Tsaturian Al., Mirakian V. Works, Yerevan, 1980, p. 32).

Byron, perhaps on the occasion of translating *The Prisoner of Chillon*. This verse was first published together with the translation of the poem earlier mentioned, in Tiflis, in 1896. In general, the years 1894-1898 are considered to be Byronic in Toumanian's creative activities. Toumanian himself mentions this fact in his letter to Leo<sup>2</sup>: "I have unconsciously been under the influences that I have never been aware of... I got acquainted and came to love Byron, Goethe, and Shakespeare. I think they certainly influenced my works, however, the ones not published yet, not even completed and I cannot give an account for them. However, I feel their undeniable influence"<sup>3</sup>. The English poet's freedom-loving spirit coincided with Toumanian's thoughts and feelings of that period and was reflected in a number of works.

As is known, George Gordon Byron, already a poet of great recognition and fame and author of numerous verses and poems, was constantly persecuted in his homeland and outraged for his impudent epigrams and speeches in the Parliament. In profound resentment, he left England on April 25, 1816, with a decision not to ever come back. During the years of this "self-willed exile" (first in Switzerland, later in Italy and Greece), Byron's entire poetry was full of perturbed and rebellious ideas. Such moods are already felt in his poems *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Corsair*; however, they sound more powerful and passionate in the last years of his life, when the romantic poet stood closer to real life and political struggle, finding his vocation and cause therein. Byron not only eye-witnessed the peoples' struggle for freedom, but also participated in it. Masterpieces of freedom-loving poetry, full of yearning for freedom and live feeling of struggle, follow one another. Byron's verses *When a Man Hath no Freedom* (1820), *To Greece* (1824) and *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year* (1824), as well as *Journal in Cephalonia* (1823), are full of unwavering valour and sense of duty. The freedom-loving spirit of the English poet was dear to Toumanian, as in the 1890s, the Armenian massacres had already started in Western Armenia and persecution of cultural workers and national liberation movement participants had begun in the Caucasus. It is natural that in those years Byron's "world grief was congenial to the singer of the

<sup>2</sup> Leo (Arakel Babakhanian, 1860-1932), Armenian historian, publicist, writer, literary critic.

<sup>3</sup> In the original: «Ես անգիտակցաբար ենթարկված եմ եղել ազդեցությունների, որոնց մասին, մինչև օրս հաշիվ չեմ տվել ինձ... ծանոթացել ու սիրել եմ Բայրոն, Գյոթե, Շեքսպիր: Սրանք, կարծում եմ, անսպասման ազդել են իմ գրվածքների վրա, բայց այնպիսի գրվածքների, որ տակավին չեն տպագրված, մինչև անգամ չեն վերջացած, և որոնց մասին հաշիվ չեմ կարող տալ: Սակայն զգում եմ նրանց անմերժելի ազդեցությունը» (Toumanian H. *Collected Works*, vol. IV, Yerevan, 1969, p. 366).

“Armenian sorrow”. Toumanian wrote his verses *The Refugee Song* (1896), *From Psalms of Sorrow* (1898), *I am a Wanderer, Sister* (1902), *In the Armenian Mountains* (1902), and *The Armenian Sorrow* (1903), also his ode *To Byron*, where he glorifies the English poet, the friend of freedom-loving peoples who sacrificed his life for the freedom of Greece:

*With so great a genius, you grand poet,  
Reconciled the chains, restraining freedom,  
With the free man  
And sweetened the sorrow of captivity*<sup>4</sup>.

With no fear to provoke the wrath of the English aristocracy, Byron declared to the entire world that England was a prison and ridiculed the English legislation with the whole power of his ire and bitter irony. This is the reason Toumanian wrote:

*Thus you made prison of your homeland  
And the whole world a spacious prison...*<sup>5</sup>

Not only Toumanian, but also many of the Armenian poets, wrote dithyrambic verses to Byron, the poet and freedom fighter, who was deeply concerned for the fate of tormented and suffering-worn peoples.

The Western-Armenian poet **Rouben Vorberian's** (1874-1932) poem *Flutters*, first published in Cairo, in 1906, as well as Shahaziz's *Levon's Grief*, was written under the influence of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and its entire prologue is devoted to Byron. The poem narrates all the sufferings worn by the Armenian people and gives the ways of saving and liberating our oppressed and miserable homeland. The image of the English poet is outlined in biographical sequence, on the background of the countries he visited, with all the stages of his life and pilgrimage. In the prologue of the poem, the freedom-loving fighter, struggling against tyranny and for the freedom of Greece, resurrects:

*With your last aquiline gaze into the red horizon,  
You murmured: “Let me die, and long live Hellas...”*<sup>6</sup>

R. Vorberian describes the poet's death in Greece and reminds that though almost a century passed from his death, he watches to see:

*That not a single shadow falls on the sky-blue banner,*

<sup>4</sup> *In the original:* Ի՜նչ մեծ հանճարով, ո՛վ հսկա պոետ, /Ազատությունը կաշկանդող շղթան /Հաշտեցրել ես դու ազատ մարդու հետ /Եվ քաղցրացրել ես վիշտը գերության: (**Toumanian H.** *Collected Works*, vol. II, Yerevan, 1969, p. 145).

<sup>5</sup> *In the original:* Ինչպե՛ս դարձրել ես բանտը հայրենիք /Եվ ողջ աշխարհը լայնարձակ մի բանտ... (*Ibid*).

<sup>6</sup> *In the original:* Արծվի նայվածքով վերջին՝ դեպի կարմիր հորիզոն, /Մրմնջեցիր - «Ես մեռնիմ, թող ազատի՜ չեկլադան...»: (**Vorberian R., Sevak R., Tekeyan V., Zarifian M.** *Works*, Yerevan, 1981, p. 41).

*And olden days do not return,  
And not again fall victim, burnt alive in capture,  
Long live, free Greece*<sup>7</sup>.

In the prologue of his poem *Flutters*, R. Vorberian shows Byron's interest towards the Armenians and gives mention of his study of the Armenian language:

*Stranger to Ararat, you came to love our language,  
At times you bent your brow over our letter...*<sup>8</sup>

As is known, in the autumn of 1816, Byron got acquainted and became friends with the Mekhitarists<sup>9</sup> in Venice, came to love their undertaking and aim, the study of the old Armenian language and literature. In the monastery of the island of San Lazzaro, far-off from his homeland, the poet, tired of the European civilization, started to study Armenian, dreaming to penetrate the inmost recesses of the Eastern poetry. Speaking of the Italian period of Byron's activities, his first biographer Thomas Moore (1779-1852), the English romantic poet, mentioned that "he (Byron - A. B.) went out every morning ... to enjoy the society of those learned and hospitable monks (of the island of San Lazzaro - A. B.), and to learn their most difficult language..."<sup>10</sup>.

Besides his Armenian studies in the monastery of San Lazzaro, Byron liked to take walks on the island, admire its picturesque nature and even had his favourite corner - the olive trees, under the canopy of which he sat many times to have a rest, dream and reflect... Eghia Pechikian (*Byronic Olive Trees*), Vahram Torgomian (*From Lord Byron's Olive Tree*), and Aramayis Srapian (*Under the Byronic Olive Trees*) eulogized the "Byronic" olive trees.

**Eghia Pechikian** (1895-1964), an acknowledged figure in Armenian culture, entered the monastery of the Mekhitarists' Congregation at the age of 18. Then he followed the courses of philosophy and theology in Rome and returned to the monastery in 1923 and held various responsible positions there. In 1930-1939 and 1952-1953, he was the editor of

<sup>7</sup> In the original: Որ դրօշակը երկնագոյն չառնէ ըստվեր մ'իւր վրդան, / Որ չի դառնան հին օրեր, ու գերութեան ողջակէզ / Չըլլայ, չիյնա վերըստին, ապրի՛ ազատ Յունաստան (*Ibid*).

<sup>8</sup> In the original: Արարատին անծանօթ այլ սիրեցիր մեր լեզուն / Մեր գիրերուն վրայ մերթ խոնարհեցաւ քու ճակատ.... (*Ibid*, p. 42).

<sup>9</sup> The Mekhitarist Congregation is a Brotherhood of Armenian churchmen founded in Constantinople in 1701 by Mekhitar of Sebastia (1676-1749), an outstanding Armenian scholar, known for his activities in the public and cultural life of the Armenian people. After a ten years stay in Methon (Greece), the Brotherhood finally settled down on the island of St. Lazarus, in the Venetian Laguna.

<sup>10</sup> Moore Th. *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: with notices of his life, Paris, 1831, in 4 vols., vol. III, p. 322.*

“Bazmavep”<sup>11</sup>. Eghia Pechikian is the author of valuable philological studies. Besides, he taught the newcomers to the Mekhitarian monastery the Old Armenian and Modern Armenian languages and Armenian literature for forty years (1923-1963). He left a rich literary heritage<sup>12</sup>, also wrote poetry, the greater part of which was published in his *Lyrical Murmurs*<sup>13</sup>. During the war he helped the Armenian refugees, also the Armenian students who were in need of tender endearment and support. It is absolutely natural that a person like E. Pechikian who undertook and willingly did all kinds of patriotic work to support his people and country, could not have remained indifferent to Byron's personality, creation and heroism. Pechikian's verse *Byronic Olive Trees* was published in “Bazmavep” in 1924. Here, the poet writes about Mekhitar of Sebastia, who founded the famous congregation on the island of San Lazzaro, one century prior to Byron's arrival, and about Byron who greeted the Mekhitarists fathers, whose “silent and majestic air” conveyed the lofty spirit of the East to the English poet:

*A sudden zephyr breathed to his burning heart,  
Serenity pervaded from the Sebastian-made creation  
That nestled here a century ago,  
Having a narrow escape  
From the devastating storm of the East.  
He rushed at once in a grandiose gondola,  
To greet the shores of the isle of happiness,  
And grey-haired fathers' silent and majestic air  
Told him about the lofty spirit of the East*<sup>14</sup>.

In this verse, E. Pechikian created the image of a man who liked to live in an eternal enchantment and listen to the “tender sway of waves” and who was taken with nature's beauty, distant shores, and peoples' battles for freedom and their victory:

*He loved to live in an eternal enchantment,  
To listen to the tender sway of waves;  
Captivated by nature's beauty, he saw  
Distant shores, ferocious battles for freedom,*

<sup>11</sup> *Bazmavep*, Armenological magazine, published by mekhitarists in Venice since 1843 up to now.

<sup>12</sup> See the bibliography of that heritage in “Bazmavep”, 1964, N 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> **Pechikian E.** *Lyrical Murmurs (works)*, S. Lazzaro, Venice, 1925.

<sup>14</sup> In the original: Սիւրք մը յանկարծ շնչեց սրտին հըրատապ. /Սնբաստացոյն ձեռակերտէն էր անդորր, /Ուր դար մ'առաջ բոյն էր դըրած մազապտոյծ /Արեւելքի փոթորիկէն արեւիչ: /Սլացաւ իսկոյն կոնտուլայով խրախտապանձ /Երջանկութեան կղզոյն ափերն ողջունել, /Եւ ալետոր Հարց տնաքը լուռ ու վրսեմ /Պատմեց անոր Արեւելքի ոգին վնի (**Pechikian E.** *Byronic Olive Trees*, *Bazmavep*, 1924, N 10, p. 339).

*The victory of ideas and arms*<sup>15</sup>.

The spirit of freedom flared up Byron's entire essence during the years in Venice (1816-1819). As Pechikian put it, he wished:

*To wipe the Homeric and Sophoclean graves  
With his pure, unsullied blood  
To wreck the strong chains of captivity  
Of the geniuses' and muses' offspring*<sup>16</sup>.

After that, bidding a farewell to San Lazzaro, the poet goes to the battlefield, where Herculean death awaited him:

*He was giving a last farewell to San Lazzaro,  
The vision of the battlefield had charmed him,  
He could find Herculean death only there*<sup>17</sup>.

Before leaving for Greece, Byron visits his Armenian friends for the last time, turns his eyes on the intellectual priests for the last time and exclaims:

*"The peace my soul enjoyed  
In a corner of this isle of marvel,  
May the holy olive tree be a witness and sermon,  
And make a canopy for that plot of land,  
Eternal memory of my delight"*<sup>18</sup>.

More than one and a half century passed, but Byronic olive trees are still there as though singing with their peaceful rustle "the immortal

Lord's songs, reminiscences and reflections"<sup>19</sup> for multinational pilgrims, visiting the Armenian island.

As is mentioned, **Vahram Torgomian** (1858-1942), an Armenian physician, historian and public figure also wrote a verse on "Byronic" olive trees. The verse, entitled *From Byron's Olive Tree*, was written in Paris, in 1927 and published in "Bazmavep" in 1932, and has an autograph, devoting the verse to "R. Vorberian, the poet, a friend and an

<sup>15</sup> *In the original:* Սիրեց ապրիլ յավերժական դիտանքով, /Հեզամնջիկ ալեաց օրորը լրսել. /Յափշտակուած բնութեան գեղով՝ նա տեսաւ /Հեռու ափեր, ազատութեան մարտեր գոռ, /Գաղափարի և գէնքերու յաղթանակ (*Ibid*).

<sup>16</sup> *In the original:* Հոսերական ու սոփոկական շիրիմներն /Իր արիւնով սրբել անքիծ անարատ. /Հանճարներու, Մուսաներու ճնտերուն /Պինդ շղթաները գերութեան խորտակել (*Ibid*, p. 339-340).

<sup>17</sup> *In the original:* Յետին ողջոյն Սուրբ Ղազարու նա կու տար, /Ռազմի դաշտին տեսիլը զինքն էր դիտած, /Դիզագնի մահ՝ հոն լոկ կրնար ձեռք ձգել (*Ibid*, p. 340).

<sup>18</sup> *In the original:* »Խաղաղութեանն այն՝ զոր հոգիս ըմբռնեց /Չնաշխարհիկ այս կղզեկին անկեան մեջ՝ /Վըրկայ, քարոզ թող ըլլայ սուրբ ձիթենին /Ու հովանի ընէ այն քայլ մը հողին /Ըզմայլումիս յաւերժական յիշատակ« (*Ibid*).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

admirer of Lord Byron". Here, V. Torgomian describes the Armenian isle in Venice and Byron's beloved "old and beautiful tree",

*Under which the English poet,  
Lord Byron is said to love  
To sit and to relax for many times  
And dream, when he came to the convent  
To learn our native tongue<sup>20</sup>.*

"Byron's olive tree", "that old tree" stood always firm and thick-leaved, despite its "centenary and more" age, "resisting storms and winds". It seems to become a pilgrimage place for all Armenians, as well as every "guest visiting San Lazzaro"<sup>21</sup>. "Under that green, mysterious tree, favoured by Lord Byron", poet V. Torgomian seemed to enjoy the return of "all school days", filled with happiness; pondering and dreaming, he sat there:

*To learn the magnificent lessons  
From San Lazzaro manuscripts...*

And as though Lord Byron was also there, with him:

*Lord Byron himself  
With volumes in his lap  
Deciphered Armenian all day long,  
Thinking one day to become a strong support  
For the Armenians, humble and mild,  
Whom, indeed, he loved sincerely  
From the bottom of his heart<sup>22</sup>.*

It was difficult for poet V. Torgomian, visiting the isle of San Lazzaro, to part with Byron's beautiful olive tree, but the monastery bells announced closure of "that gallant scene". Coming to himself from his dreams back to reality, he plucks a bunch of olive shoots in memory of that unforgettable day,

*For his friends, those Armenians  
Who admired Byron's great genius<sup>23</sup>.*

With this, the poet states that San Lazzaro is surrounded with plenty of unfading olive trees and believes that,

<sup>20</sup> *In the original:* Որուն ներքև քերդողն Անկիլիկ՝ /Լորտ Պայրընը, կրենն՝ սիրեր, /Նստիլ, հանգչիլ, շա՛տ անգամներ, /Ու նրազել, նրբ վանք կու գար /Մեր մայրենին սորուիլ բարբառ (**Torgomian V.** *From Lord Byron's Olive Tree*, "Bazmavep", 1932, N 8-9, p. 380).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *In the original:* Ուսանելու դասեր վրսեմ /Սուրբ Ղազարի մատենաներեն... /Լորտ Պայրըն իսկ, ու հատորներ /Գիրքը առած, մեր հայ լեզուն /Կը վերծաներ ան օրն ի բուն /Մտածելով՝ նեցուկ մ' ուժգին /Ըլլալ մեկ օր հեզ Հայ Ազգին, /Զոր արդարև անկեղծորեն /Սիրեց ուժգին սրտին խորեն (*Ibid*, p. 381).

<sup>23</sup> *In the original:* ... գայն տանելու՝ /Իմ բարեկամ այն Հայերու /Որ Պայրընի մեծ տաղանդին /Հիացումով յարգանք ունին (*Ibid*).

*The olive tree is a token of wisdom,  
Symbol of abundance.  
Its leaves are always the good tidings of  
Glory, love and peace<sup>24</sup>.*

**Aramayis Srapian** (1910-1969), an Armenian physician, poet and prosaic from the Diaspora, who witnessed the disasters, borne by the Armenian people, besides his *Under Byronic Olive Trees*, devoted two more verses *Byron at San Lazzaro* (1932) and *Again With You* (1959) to the great defender of freedom and justice. Srapian's childhood is quite similar to the fate of many Western-Armenian children, a childhood on the roads of exile and in orphanages. In 1929, A. Srapian graduated from the Mourad-Raphaelian school. He also graduated from Milan University and received the qualification of a physician. A. Srapian was an active organizer of the Armenian cultural movement. On his initiative and leadership, a group of former pupils of the Mourad-Raphaelian school founded the Armenian Cultural Union in Milan, 1945. A. Srapian published two collections of verses (*Encounters with the Muse* and *From Azolo to Venice*) and prose (*Under the Arms* and *With Alpine Soldiers*). In 1971, "Hayastan" publishing-house issued the poet's collection *The Unfinished March*, where his *Under Byronic Olive Tree* appeared, first published in "Bazmavep" in 1938<sup>25</sup>. A. Srapian collaborated with many Armenian periodicals. The first verse *Byron at San Lazzaro* was published in 1932<sup>26</sup>. Byron wandered and dreamed "on the melancholy shores of the islet" of San Lazzaro, he used to sit under "these pensive trees, under the radiant cornice" and study "our splendid and sacred language". But the poet is no more, the voice of his lyre lapsed into silence forever, "there is no more the crimson heart of yours, struggling against the sea, ... and the flame of your mind, more powerful than the flashes in the sky". Not only the scholarly monks of the monastery on the isle of San Lazzaro feel this absence, whose hearts bear profound traces of their seniors' reminiscences about Byron, but even the isle's cypresses, "rushing upwards, dreaming and sweet-smelling", "wistfully heave a sigh of awful pain".

A. Srapian's second, quite expanded verse is entitled *Under the Byronic Olive Trees*. The poet's thoughts and reflections on life, love and art are expressed here. Srapian's third verse devoted to Byron *Again with*

<sup>24</sup> *In the original: ...թն ձիթենին /Նշանակ է իմաստություն, /Նորիքդանիշ ամատություն. /Թե՛ կ'աւետեն միշտ՝ փառք և սէր, /Սաղաղություն, յոր տներն են (Ibid).*

<sup>25</sup> *Bazmavep, 1938, N 4-5, p. 133-138; Srapian A. The Unfinished March, Yerevan, 1971, p. 11-18.*

<sup>26</sup> *Bazmavep, 1932, N 6-7, p. 272.*



*You*, a result of many thoughts and sentiments, was published in “Bazmavep”, in 1959. Every evening, A. Srapian, the poet, used to visit the monument to Byron, with his daughter Araxie; he stood contemplating the monument for a long time:

*When it was eight o'clock in our hotel,  
I always stopped to see your monument,  
My Araxie, surprised, with an upward glance  
Asked me a question - if I knew you<sup>27</sup>.*

The distant, heartfelt acquaintance of the two poets was “very deep and very old”. It started in San Lazzaro, where they seemed to wander together on the island for many times, dream and ponder about life and existence:

*It was not easy to tell her about your life,  
It was not easy to bring your creation to the vain land,  
Though it was proper to say at least  
That our acquaintance was very deep and very old<sup>28</sup>.*

It is quite natural and not casual that the poet concludes with a symbolic image of Byron's personality; the father and the daughter notice one day that,

*The blood, indeed, ran down his fiery forehead,  
And dropping beneath the pedestal,  
Went to mix in the pomegranate furnace  
Of the bright twilight, from the redness of the sky<sup>29</sup>.*

Thus, A. Srapian, the Armenian poet from the Diaspora, devoted three poems to George Gordon Byron, the great defender of freedom, justice and tormented peoples. The poet living in emigration appreciated the works of Byron, also the fact that he studied Armenian on the island of San Lazzaro and dreamed under his beloved olive trees. It is natural that the poet, who had witnessed the disasters experienced by the Armenian people, could not have remained indifferent to this. Maybe this is the reason that he has three poems devoted to Byron.

**Mari Atmadjian** (born in 1913), an Armenian poetess from the Diaspora, likewise has a poem devoted to Byron. Her *Memorial Song* for

<sup>27</sup> *In the original:* Պանդոկին մէջ մեր, երբ ժամը ութն էր, /Կառնէի միշտ կանգ արձանիդ ի տնս. /Արաքսիս, ապշած, նայուածքն հառած վեր, /Հարց կուտար ինձի, կը ճանչնայի՞ր քեզ (**Srapian A.** *Again With You*, “Bazmavep”, 1959, N 9-10, p. 209).

<sup>28</sup> *In the original:* Պատմել կյանքդ անոր, այնքան դիրքին չէր, /Դիրքին չէր թերթողդ երկիր բերել սին. /Սակայն տնդին էր գնթ ըսել որ մեր /Ծանոթութիւնն էր շատ խոր և շատ հին (*Ibid*).

<sup>29</sup> *In the original:* Արիւնն, իսկապէս, կիջներ ճակտէն հոր, /Ու կաթկթելով պատուանդանն ի վար, /Կերթար կը լուծուր հնգին մեջ նոր /Ժուրպէն իջնող վերջալույսին վառ (*Ibid*).

Lord Byron was first published in “Bazmavep”, in 1937, and then, the same year it appeared in her collection of verses *The Golden Fleece*, published in Paris. In the afore-mentioned verse, M. Atmadjian devoted warm and enthusiastic lines of great sincerity to Byron, glorified him and assured everybody that “there is no manuscript breathing greatness” where, “the delightful star” of the great poet “had not arisen”. Besides, the poetess, as if addressing her contemporaries, explains with great love and esteem:

*There is no garden of dream and song,  
Where your smile had not flourished,  
No magnificent fire of beauty or mystery,  
Where the sweet incense of your heart had not burnt,  
No old or new disaster in history,  
Where your judgement, like a dagger,  
Had not flashed and raged...*<sup>30</sup>

Then M. Atmadjian reminds that Byron's memory is kept green in the Armenian monastery of San Lazzaro. And adds that sitting in the garden of the Mekhitarists' Congregation, under the “canopy of the silvery branches of the olive trees”, she dreams and ponders about Byron, the English poet and great friend of the Armenians, filled with the hope to search and find him:

*In the garden of the Mekhitarists'  
Searching for you, I dreamt  
By the silvery branches of olive trees...  
... I leafed with excitement  
The Armenian Mesrop-lettered<sup>31</sup> grammar  
Where you studied the matchless language of Narek<sup>32</sup>  
And I lived the minutes of your life,  
Pondering about you...*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *In the original:* Չկայ ոչ մէկ երագանքի, /Երգի պուրակ՝ /Ուր քու ժպիտդ ծաղկած չըլլար, /Գեղեցկության կամ խորհուրդի /Վըսնմ կըրակ՝ /Ուր քու սրտիդ խունկն հոտնուան /Այրած չըլլա. /Պատմական հին կամ նոր չարիք՝ /Ուր դատաստանդ՝ /Դաշոյնի պես՝ /Փայլատակած, շանթած չըլլա... (Atmadjian M. *Memorial Song for Lord Byron*, in the book *The Golden Fleece*, Paris, 1967, p. 93).

<sup>31</sup> **Mesrop (Mesrop Mashtots, 362-440), the creator of the Armenian alphabet (405-406) and the founder of Armenian school.**

<sup>32</sup> **Narek**, *The Book of Grief*, was written by Grigor Narekatsi (951-1003), the Armenian poet, philosopher and mystic. His work is considered to be one of the most popular works in Armenian literature.

<sup>33</sup> *In the original:* Մխիթարեան պարտեզին մեջ /Քեզ փնտռելով, կ'երագնի՝ /Արծաթափայլ ձիթենիիդ ճիւղերուն քով... /.../Հուզումնալից կը թերթէի /Մեսրոպատառ Հայ Քերականն՝ /Ուր դուն ուսար /Սարեկացվոյ բարբառն սնգուզ /Ու քու շնչած ժամանակիդ /Վայրկեաններուն մեջ կ'ապրեի՝ /Քեզ խորհելով... (Atmadjian M. *Memorial Song for Lord Byron*, in the book *The Golden Fleece*, Paris, 1967, p. 93-94).

The poetess follows also the course of Byron's life full of hardships, uneven yet heroic, freedom - and justice loving, taking to mortality:

*From Albion to Ravenna,  
From Venice to Leman,  
Arcostoli and Corinth,  
Your feverish steps of  
Freedom-loving Apostle and hero  
Led you to the end,  
To cherished sacrifice...  
Also to light  
And enchanting immortality...*<sup>34</sup>

Many poets of Soviet Armenia, among them Hrachia Hovhannisian, Nairi Zarian, Souren Mouradian, Anahit Parsamian, Vahagn Karents and others, applied to Byron's life and creations as well.

**Hrachia Hovhannisian's** (1919-1997) verse "Byron" was published in his collection "The Silence of the Sea", in 1964. It is mentioned here that the English poet is very much alike the heroes of his own creation: leaving the glory of a lord, he ran away from "brutal people... and vain morals" and reached alien places, where the voice of his trumpet was needed. Like the heroes of his own creation, he struggled for justice and freedom everywhere, for as Hr. Hovhannisian rightly notes, both violence and strife for freedom are the same everywhere:

*Strangled by the heart-rending sorrow of your homeland,  
You stood in vengeance in the Hellenic land,  
For violence is the same everywhere,  
The same is striving for freedom anywhere*<sup>35</sup>.

Absolutely logical and understandable is Hr. Hovhannisian's conclusion that today people like Byron and his heroes are needed again:

*Everywhere,  
Where chains speak,  
Where the just spirit is imprisoned*<sup>36</sup>.

In their lines devoted to Byron, other Armenian poets reflected mainly the same freedom-loving ideas peculiar to Byron's poetry. Summarizing

<sup>34</sup> *In the original:* Ալպիոնէն մինչև Ռավէն, / Վենետիկէն մինչև Լեման, / Արկոսթոլի և Կորինթոս, / Ազատատենչ Առաքնալի / Եվ հերոսի քայլերդ տենդոտ՝ / Կը տանէին քեզ մինչև հուսկ / Ձոհաբերու՜մ նուիրական... / Այլ մինչև լո՛յս / Եվ դիպական՝ անմահութիւն... (*Ibid*, p. 95).

<sup>35</sup> *In the original:* Խնդդված հայրենիքիդ վշտից սրտակեղեք, / Դու վրեժի ելար հողում հեղինական, / Քանզի բռնությունը մեկ է ամենուրեք, / Մեկ է ամենուրեք տենչանքն ազատության: (**Hovhannissian Hr.** *Byron in the book The Silence of the Sea, Yerevan, 1964, p. 35*).

<sup>36</sup> *In the original:* Ամենուրեք, որտեղ շղթաներն են խոսում, / Որտեղ արդար ոգին չի ազատվել բանտից (*Ibid*, p. 36).

the ideas in these dithyrambs, we can cite modern Armenian poets who created the image of a man, who as his heroes, “having left the trifle glories of royal plains”<sup>37</sup>, ran away from “brutal people and ... vain morals”. He reached “distant shores to light alien horizons”<sup>38</sup> “became so dear and sacred”<sup>39</sup>; he asked the Armenian learned friar:

*I would like you, old man,  
To teach me your sweet language  
On the island of San Lazzaro.  
Let my banished and disturbed soul,  
Find consolation in Armenian...*<sup>40</sup>

On receiving consent,

*... with the friar*<sup>41</sup>, *the great poet  
Paged carefully our manuscripts,  
He read the soul of many people,  
Very close to his grieving heart*<sup>42</sup>.

Let us note in conclusion that Armenian poets wrote all these verses devoted to Byron on an immediate urge to react to events and are valuable for their infinite sincerity and spontaneity. This is quite natural. The poets praised a man who, sitting under his favourite olive trees, working on his "Don Juan" and "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", or writing down his thoughts and reflections after noisy and tiring days, did not ever forget his vocation as a poet and freedom fighter – for the sake of the great and true art.

<sup>37</sup> **Parsamian A.** *To Byron, in the book Fairy-Tales of the Day*, Yerevan, 1982, p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> **Zarian N.** *To Byron, in the book Waiting For You*, Yerevan, 1968, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> **Sarmen,** *At the Monument to Byron, “Grakan Tert” (“Literary Gazette”)*, Yerevan, 1967, N 42.

<sup>40</sup> *In the original:* -Ուզում եմ, ծերուկ, սուրբ Ղազար կղզում /Ինձ սովորեցնե՛ք ձեր քաղցր լեզուն, /Թող որ տարագիր իմ սիրտն ալեկո՛ծ /Սփռվա՛նք գտնի լեզվի մեջ հայոց... (**Mouradian S.** *George Byron, in the book The Blue Bird*, Yerevan, 1976, p. 140).

<sup>41</sup> *Probably, Harutiun Avgerian (1774-1854), “a learned and pious soul” (according to Byron) and Byron's teacher of Armenian is meant. Owing to Avgerian, these years (1816-1818) spent in Venice became a fruitful period of scholarly collaboration for Byron. They jointly prepared and published the English and Armenian Grammar and the English-Armenian Dictionary. Besides, Byron did several translations from Armenian bibliography, which the Mekhitarist fathers published with separate fragments taken from his letters and other valuable documents in Lord Byron's Armenian Exercises and Poetry (in English and Armenian), San Lazzaro, 1870 and 1907.*

<sup>42</sup> *In the original:* ...վանականի հետ պոետը մեծ /Մեր մատյանները խնամքով թնրթեց, /Կարդաց նա հոգին իմ ժողովրդի, /Տեսավ շատ մոտ է իր վշտոտ սրտին (**Mouradian S.** *George Byron, in the book The Blue Bird*, p. 140).

## ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ԴԱՓՆԵՊՍԱԿ Ջ. Գ. ԲԱՅՐՈՆԻՆ

ԲԵՔԱՐՅԱՆ Ա. Ա.

### Ամփոփում

Շատ հայ բանաստեղծներ են սրտատույչ տողեր ձուներել հայ ժողովրդի անկեղծ բարեկամ Ջ. Բայրոնին՝ բնորոշելով ազատության համար մարտնչող Բայրոն-մարտիկին, ինչպես նաև հայոց լեզուն, հայ գրականությունն ու մշակույթն ուսումնասիրող մեծ անհատին՝ տալով նրա խոովահույզ հոգու, խոհերի և պոթթկումների իրական նկարագիրը: Բայրոնին նվիրված ներբողներով հանդես են եկել Սմբատ Շահազիզն ու Հովհաննես Թումանյանը, Ռուբեն Որբերյանն ու Վահրամ Թորգոմյանը, Եղիա Փեչիկյանն ու Արամայիս Սրապյանը, Մառի Աթմաճյանը, Նաիրի Զարյանն ու Հրաչյա Հովհաննիսյանը, Անահիտ Պարսամյանն ու Սուրեն Մուրադյանը, Վահագն Կարենցը և այլք: Բայրոնին նվիրված բոլոր բանաստեղծություններն էլ համակված են անսահման անկեղծությամբ ու անմիջականությամբ: Դա բնական է, քանզի հայ բանաստեղծների խոսքերն ուղղված են մի մարդու, որը երբեք չէր մոռանում բանաստեղծի և ազատության մարտիկի իր կոչումը՝ հանուն մեծ և ճշմարիտ արվեստի:

## АРМЯНСКИЙ ЛАВРОВЫЙ ВЕНЕЦ ДЖ. Г. БАЙРОНУ

БЕКАРЯН А. А.

### Резюме

Дж. Байрон, борец за свободу, знаток и исследователь армянской литературы и искусства был воспет в произведениях многих армянских поэтов: к его образу обращались С. Шахазиз и Ов. Туманян, Р. Севак и В. Торгомян, Е. Печикян и А. Срапян, Н. Зарян, Гр. Ованисян и др.