

A Study on Georgian Translations of Byron's "Napoleonic Poems"

ბაირონის „ნაპოლეონის ლექსების“ ქართული თარგმანების შესწავლა

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Abstract This article reviews a collection of poems by the English romantic poet, George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), who dedicated his remarkable poems to the famous European Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). These magnificent Napoleonic poems were translated by prominent Georgian poets: Grigol Abashidze ("Ode (From the French)"), Ioseb Bakradze ("Prometheus"), and outstanding scholar, translator Innes Merabishvili ("Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte"). The word "ode" in terms of the genre specificity matches the verse depicting the praise of a prominent figure. Abashidze translated only some stanzas of the poem. However, the literary society does not know from which language he performed his translation. By combining the thoughts of scholars, it is well-known how popular Napoleon was as a prominent world political figure. The poems dedicated to him retained popularity in Georgian cultural space. The analysis of Baratashvili's poem "Napoleon" revealed that certain parts of the poem were written at different times and then it was composed as a whole piece. It is noteworthy that "The Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" was first translated into Georgian in the 20th century by scholar and translator, Innes Merabishvili, who used her innovative translation method ("A Linguistic Image") to translate this great poem. As a professional translator, she was able to express the entire concept and give an excellent sample of translation to the public through her translation of the source text.

Keywords: Abashidze, Bakradze, Baratashvili, Byron, Merabishvili, Napoleon, Translation

Introduction

The great poems of influential British Romantic poet, George Gordon Lord Byron (1788-1824), appeared in Georgian cultural space and won popularity during his lifetime. A brilliant Georgian scholar and translator, Innes Merabishvili, has engaged in an in-depth study of Byron's poetic works. She has accurately translated his poems since the 20th century focusing on one of Byron's best-known poems "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte."

Byron dedicated a collection of magnificent poems to Napoleon Bonaparte, the great French Emperor of the 19th century (1769-1821), "Napoleonic Poems." The poet's attitude and his reflections in poetry reveal the process of

transformation in parallel with Napoleon's success-defeat. They illustrated clearly the intention of a romantic poet striving for high human ideals. This has been studied by many Byron scholars but the retrospective of this in relation to "Prometheus" in the Georgian culture was well demonstrated by Innes Merabishvili, who also first translated the poem "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte." The study of poetic masterpieces presented in the translation, such as separate parts of the collection in "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte" (translators Grigol Abashidze, Ioseb Bakradze, Innes Merabishvili), enables us to study Byron's attitude towards Napoleon.

Nikoloz Baratashvili (1817-1845), a foremost Georgian Romantic poet, composed a poem named “Napoleon” in honor of the great French Emperor. Based on the innovative method “A Linguistic Image,” it presents translation as the poetics of desire as well as an understanding of its subtext.

Method

The author uses the comparative-typological method for this article.

Discussion

In 1965, two translations of Byron’s poetic works by Georgian poet Grigol Abashidze (1914-1994) were published in a Soviet Georgian newspaper, “Literary Georgia” (“Literaturuli Saqartvelo”. No.6). We focus on the second poem “Ode (From the French).” We believe that this poem is not a translation of “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte”, but a translation of Byron’s second poem “Ode (From the French)” [‘We do not curse thee, Waterloo’], which consists of 5 stanzas. However, Abashidze translated this poem into 4 stanzas uniting the fourth and fifth stanzas. Here are stanzas 4 and 5 of the source text and Abashidze’s Georgian translation:

Byron’s Ode (From the French)

IV.

*O’er glories gone the invaders march,
Weeps Triumph o’er each levell’d arch—
But let Freedom rejoice,
With her heart in her voice
But, her hand on her sword,
Doubly shall she be adored
France hath twice too well been taught
The ‘moral lesson’ dearly bought
Her safety sits not on a throne,*

*With Capet or Napoleon!
But in equal rights and laws,
Hearts and hands in one great cause—
Freedom, such as God hath given
Unto all beneath his heaven,
With their breath, and from their birth,
Though guilt would sweep it from the earth;
With a fierce and lavish hand
Scattering nations’ wealth like sand;
Pouring nations’ blood like water,
In imperial seas of slaughter!*

V.

*But the heart and the mind,
And the voice of mankind,
Shall arise in communion—
And who shall resist that proud union?
The time is past when swords subdued
Man may die, the soul’s renew’d:
Even in this low world of care
Freedom ne’er shall want an heir;
Millions breathe but to inherit
Her forever bounding spirit—
When once more her hosts assemble,
Tyrants shall believe and tremble
Smile they at this idle threat?
Crimson tears will follow yet.*

Abashidze’s Translation (1965)

IV

მტერს ზეიმი აქვს, საფრანგეთს-გლოჯა.

და მის მოთქმაში, ვით ნისლში სხივი,
თავისუფლების
იმედი ღვივის.
ხმაღს თვით აიღებს თავისუფლებას
და თალხით აღარ დაიღრუბლება.
საფრანგეთისთვის ხსნა სადმე თუა,
ეს არის, ფრანგმა ისწავლა ჭკუა!
ძვირად დაუჯდა მას გაკვეთილი,
გმინავს დაჭრილი და დაფლეთილი.
ერთგვარად გლუჯდნენ მას გამეტებით
ნაპოლეონი და კაპეტები,
სამართალს უნდა დაეყრდნოს იგი,
რომ დაამყაროს წესი და რიგი.
თავისუფლების მოთხოვნილება
თვით ღვთისგანა აქვს ყველა ქმნილებას.
თუმც ბოროტება მას ებრძვის მუდამ
და ყველგან მისი მოსპობა უნდა.
სურს გადაჰხუროს ცოდვილი ხელით
სამყაროს ნგრევის ღრუბელი ბნელი;
რომ ხალხთა სისხლის ვრცელ ზღვას
მძვინვარეს
ემატოს კვლავაც სისხლის მდინარე.
მაგრამ კაცთმოდგემის გულს და გონებას
ქვეყნად რა ძალა გაუტოლდება?!
თუ ორივე ერთი ფიქრით აღდგება,
რა ძალა დასძლევს მას, რა განგება?!
ხმლის დრო წავიდა, ამ დღემდე მისულს,
კაცს მოჰკლავ, მაგრამ ვერ მოჰკლავ მის
სულს.

რომ არ ჰყოლია,
ახლა იმდენი,
თავისუფლებას ჰყავს მემკვიდრენი.
თვით დაამკვიდრებს ხალხი სამართალს,
თავისუფლების დრომას აღმართავს
და გაბრწყინდება ვით სასწაული.
მაშინ მტარვალებს ძრწოლა დაუვლით.
ძირს დაინთხევა მტარვალთა შხამი,
მათი განკითხვის დადგება ჟამი.”

The above translation is completely free and it is unknown from which language Abashidze translated it.

We will now focus on two Georgian scholars, Makvala Kuchukhidze and Eka Vardoshvili, on their ideas about the reminiscence of the poem dedicated to Napoleon by the Georgian Romantic poet Nikoloz Baratashvili who composed a poem named “Napoleon” in 1838. Kuchukhidze noted that both Byron and Baratashvili portrayed Napoleon and his character as a genius. Vardoshvili thinks that Baratashvili knew about Napoleon’s military successes and defeats from Peter Mamatsashvili and Aleksander Chavchavadze, who both took part in the battles against Napoleon. Thus the poem entitled “Napoleon” was composed of a genuine understanding based on the received information. A comparison of Baratashvili’s poem with Byron’s poem “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte” made it clear that Baratashvili knew the source text well even through a French translation. We see similar ideas stated by the poets from the poems dedicated to Napoleon’s personality. In Byron’s poem, there is an attempt at conversation with the French leader. However, in Baratashvili’s poem, it is a monologue about Napoleon. The concept is the same. For Byron, Napoleon was not considered the only ruler of genius and in his poem he cited similar examples from the history of Greece, Rome, and Spain. In contrast, in Baratashvili’s poem,

Napoleon is presented as a prominent figure who believed that no one else like him was ever born.

(Merabishvili, 2005)

A quite different translation was made by the prominent Russian poet and translator Valery Bryusov about the 19th stanza in Byron's poem. The last stanza of Baratashvili's poem has a contrary idea. According to Merabishvili, the last line of the work is an allusion to Napoleon, which could be misinterpreted by Bryusov in his translation (Merabishvili, 2005). Translator Merabishvili attaches great importance to the particular emphasis on the subtext. She notes that the subtext in Bryusov's translation, which is given in the 16th stanza, is only vaguely realized since the translation of the source does not coincide with the original 16th stanza. However, the concept of the entire work is found in stanza 19 (Merabishvili, 2005).

In the sixth collection of Baratashvili's manuscript "Napoleon," dated 1838, the author believes that the first 5 stanzas were written earlier, while the last stanza is an expression of the poet's idea after Napoleon's death. Here is the last stanza from the source text with the corresponding translation by Merabishvili:

*“ ბევრი დღე ვავა, რომ ჯერ ბევრი ვერ ვცნათ
ჩვენ მისი!*

*თვითონ სიკვდილიც მას
უებროდ აღმოგვიჩინებს:*

*დამურალი ცეცხლი და ზღვის ღელვა
წარმოგვიდგინებს*

*მის ცეცხლსა სულსა და ზღვა გულსა
განსაკვირველებს!”*

(Baratashvili, "Napoleon")

*Where may the wearied eye repose
When gazing on the Great;
Where neither guilty glory glows,
Nor despicable state?*

After reading the French translation of "Ode to Napoleon," it can be reasonably assumed that Baratashvili was able to understand the concept of Byron's verse through the usage of the intermediate language, French.

Georgian scholar Innes Merabishvili, who first translated Byron's poem "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," refers to Tabidze Galaktion among the translators; he translated two stanzas of Bryusov's Russian translation named "Ode" (To Napoleon Bonaparte). This is confirmed by the perfect translation of the above-mentioned English source text of the 19th stanza translated by Merabishvili, which further confirms our hypothesis.

As Vardoshvili notes, with the poem named "Napoleon," Baratashvili continued the Western European literary tradition and thus further perfected the artistic perception of the Napoleonic cycle of Byron's poems for Georgian readers (Vardoshvili, 2018).

The Napoleonic theme was echoed in Byron's poem "On Napoleon's Escape from Elba." As Merabishvili writes, Byron dedicated the poem in 1815, when Napoleon sailed to Lyon and then to Paris. Merabishvili also translated this four-line poem, which subtly highlighted the position of the former monarch. Here is the source text and Merabishvili's translation:

Byron's "On Napoleon's Escape from Elba"

*Once fairly set out 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.*

*“ნაპოლეონის გაქცევა კუნძულ ელზადან”
“ერთხელაც მოხდა, გზას გაუდგა ელზადან
პარიზს,
თუ მოიცლიდა დაამხოდა მონარქებს
გავლით,
გზად ის მშვენიერ ქალბატონებს მეჯლისს
უხდიდა,
მტერს შეხვდებოდა, არც ცბეობდა, და თავს
უხრიდა.*

In her monograph entitled “Translation as a Dialogue of Cultures” Merabishvili gives us her study on Napoleon, in particular, on Byron’s “Prometheus” and “Napoleon”. Based on the biography and creativity of George Gordon Byron, she pays assiduous attention to Byron’s interest while studying at Harrow School, and refers to “Prometheus” and “Medea.” Merabishvili cited an excerpt from a letter to the publisher, John Murray, in which Byron expressed his admiration for the ancient tragedian Aeschylus, the author of “Prometheus” and “Medea” with the following words: “If Prometheus’ participation in me does not always come to me with creative plans, it is so ingrained in me that today it is not difficult to understand how great its influence is on everything that I have ever written” (Merabishvili, 2005).

It is apparent that Byron was trying to link the myth of “Prometheus” with Georgia. Georgian writer Akaki Tsereteli, called “Tergdaleuli”, believed that the legendary Prometheus in Greek mythology and the hero of Georgian mythology Amirani are one and the same. Accordingly, Tsereteli, in his historical poem “Tornike Eristavi” (1884), which was dedicated to the Georgian Amirani, equated his fate with the destiny of Georgia in chapter 4 of the poem in the song of the Georgian horsemen. Byron was popular in Georgian literary society. The 19th century Georgian translator, Ioseb Bakradze translated the fragments from Byron’s “Prometheus” which has the title: “Prometheus” (“Amirani”) (Bakradze, 1903). The translator did not specify from which part of the

poem it was translated, but the author conveyed the content of the entire poem. However, the beginning and the end of the Georgian translation seem almost equivalent to the source text from Byron. Here is the fragment from the source text as well as Bakradze’s translation:

Byron’s “Prometheus”

*Titan! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise.
What was thy pity’s recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,*

Bakradze’s translation (1903)

*“პრომეთეოსი” (“ამირანი”)
ბაირონის
„ღმერთებზე ვითა გულგრილად, ცივად
შენ, ბუმბერაზო, არ უყურებდი
კაცობრიობის ტანჯვას ბედშავად,
ის კვნესაზედ ყურს არ იყრუებდი,
შენ ჩვენ გიყვარდი; რა გერგო ჯილდოთ?
მხოლოდ ტანჯვა და ბრძოლა მუდმივი,
ბრძოლა იდუმლად და უნუგემოდ-
ბორკილები და კლდე და არჩივი...”*

Here is another fragment from the source text with the corresponding Bakradze’s translation:

“To which his Spirit may oppose

*Itself—and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
It's own concenter'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.”*

(Byron, 1816)

“მასაც აქვს სურვილი და შეგნება
უმალღესისა თვისის უფლების-
გრძნობა, რომელიც ტანჯვით შორისი
უჯილდოვოდა არა დაშთების-
ეს ჯილდო არის შეება სულისა;
იგი დღითი-დღე უფრო მაგრდება,
სურს მოეწიოს თვის გულის წადილს,
ყოყინით ბრძოლას შეეგებება
და გამარჯვებად გადაჰქმნის სიკვდილს.”

(Bakradze, 1903)

Georgian translator Bakradze framed the concept of another subtext in the translation from a foreign language when the translator directly conveyed the content with his interpretation of the source text. However, with the poem “Prometheus” Byron once again expressed his pathos to the hero of the ancient era, which was closely linked with the Georgian mythical character “Amirani” and aroused profound emotions for the Georgian translator.

Conclusion

The presented study gives us enough grounds to conclude that Innes Merabishvili, a scholar and excellent translator, gave us the first

artistic and literal Georgian translation of George Gordon Byron’s poem named “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte” through her innovative linguistic method “A Linguistic Image.”

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