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**TÍTULO:** La historia de la traducción rusa de la recepción del misterio "Caín" por George Gordon Byron.

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**RESUMEN:** El artículo científico refleja la historia de la traducción rusa del misterio "Caín" de George Gordon Byron. En el proceso de estudio del problema científico, se utilizaron los enfoques cultural-histórico, comparativo-histórico, comparativo e histórico-tipológico, así como los métodos de análisis integrado. Siendo, muy probablemente, la primera interpretación poética del misterio de Byron en Rusia, esta traducción (independientemente de una cierta libertad, que estaba en línea con la actitud mental de ese período histórico) reveló magistralmente las características artísticas del original inglés, reproducidas bastante completamente la intención del gran poeta inglés.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** Cain Mystery, poetics, tradition, literary translation, Russian-English literary links.

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**ABSTRACT:** The scientific article reflects the story of the Russian translation of the "Cain" mystery of George Gordon Byron. In the process of studying the scientific problem, the cultural-historical, comparative-historical, comparative and historical-typological approaches were used, as well as the methods of integrated analysis. Being, very probably, the first poetic interpretation of Byron's mystery in Russia, this translation (independently of a certain freedom, which was in line with the mental attitude of that historical period) masterfully revealed the artistic characteristics of the English original, reproduced quite thoroughly the intention of the great English poet.

**KEY WORDS:** Cain Mystery, poetics, tradition, literary translation, Russian-English literary ties.

## **INTRODUCTION.**

Byron's (1788-1824) famous mystery "Cain" was created in Ravenna, where Dante (1265–1321) was buried, in the 500th year since the death of the author of the "Divine Comedy", and it was published in England [1] in the same year. Two years later it was translated in France.

There are 12 of its translations into Russian, which are known and have been analyzed to different extents (though not all of them have been printed, at least, fragmentarily) [ref., in particular, to: Azbelev, 1907, p. 48–73; 4, p. 277–281; 5, p. 428–450; 6, p. 219]; N.D. Neelov (1836) [ref. about the author: Golubeva, 1800, p. 266–267], V.D. Kostomarov (1861) [Kostomarov, 1861, p. 1–10; ref. about the author: Savchenko, 1999, p. 102–103], N.A. Serno-Solovievich (1864) [ref. fragments: Volodarskaya, 1981, p. 432–440], D.D. Minaev (1867) [Minaev, 1867, p. 201–212; Minaev, 1868, p. 246–256; 12, p. 273–304], E.E. Baryshev (1879?), P.A. Kalenov (1883) [Cain, 1883; ref. about the

author: 16, p. 444–445], E.F. Zarin (after his death) [Byron, 1894; ref. about the author: 18, p. 324–325].

An early translation by N.D. Neelov, which remains unpublished, is stored in the State Archive of the Smolensk Region; the translation is made in rhythmicized prose from English though the translator did not have fluency in it (French translations were not accessible to the translator as they were prohibited by censorship) [Nikolskaya, 1976]4, p. 279–280]. Another translation, which remained entirely unpublished, belongs to revolutionary and publicist N.A. Serno-Solovievich, who worked on it in detention conditions of the Alexeevskiy ravelin in the Peter and Paul Fortress; translation has been preserved in the State Archives of the Russian Federation.

Of all the Russian interpretations of “Cain” made in the XIX century, the most widely spread was the translation by D.D. Minaev, who is more known as a parodist poet, but made a significant contribution to the development of Russian poetic translation: he translated Byron’s “Don Juan” and “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”, Dante’s “Divine Comedy”, Heine’s “Germany. A Winter’s Tale.”, “Dzyady” by Mickiewicz, poems and plays by Hugo, works by Molière, Barbier, Musset, Shelley, Havlíček Borovský and many others.

Having proficiency only in French, Minaev had to resort to word-to-word translations, and he was not always capable of conveying the originality of the thoughts and style of the translated poet. Nevertheless, in this field too Minaev’s merits are undoubted as he was the first to familiarize wide circles of the Russian reading society with a number of outstanding works of European literature [Vieira Alves, 2018; Liang, 2018; Novikova et al, 2018; Barjasteh et al, 2016; Iravani et al, 2015; Oliveira et al, 2018].

D.D. Minaev was jealous in receiving the appearance of new translations of the “Cain” made by his contemporaries, though they were unable to make any competition to his translation. For instance, in his epigram to Mr. Baryshev (translator of Byron’s “Cain”), published in “The Petersburg

Newspaper” of 16 November 1880, he wrote, “Baryshev! You got revenge: / Cain was not remorseful / having killed his brother Abel, / And you have finished off Cain”. The list of those who were interpreting “Cain” at the turn of the two centuries includes such accidental translators as E.S. Kudasheva (1868–?), who is practically unknown to readers as well as to professional researchers; in her literary activity she referred to the works by J. Milton (1910), E. Thompson Seton (1910), A. Tennyson, R. Kipling [ref. to, in particular, her translation of A. Tennyson's “Idylls of the King”]. E.F. Zarin, who was brilliant in English but used clear-cut translation guides (ref. to his paper “Byron in his “Childe Harold” and “Childe Harold” in Russian Translation” (1864): “We... most of all need the spirit of translation and the translation of spirit” [29, p. 313]), managed to produce a decent translation, which however remained almost unnoticed due to the soon appearance of the translation by I.A. Bunin, which was first published in 1905 and subsequently (in 1907) improved (revised and updated) by the author. It is the translation by I.A. Bunin, despite the appearance of later translations by G.G. Shpet and G.A. Shengeli, that continues to this day to remain the most replicated Russian interpretation of Byron's “Cain”.

## **DEVELOPMENT.**

### **Literature review.**

The problem of the Russian translational reception of G.G. Byron’s mystery “Cain” is addressed in the research papers by N.P. Azbelev “Byron’s “Cain” in Russian Translations” (1907) [Azbelev, 1907, p. 48–73], L.I. Nikolskaya “The First Russian Translation of G.G. Byron’s drama “Cain” (1976) [Nikolskaya, 1976, p. 277–281], L.I. Volodarskaya “He Lived for England and the World (Byron’s “Cain” in Russian Translations)” (1981) [Volodarskaya, 1981, p. 428–450]. The research by N.P. Azbelev, which was caused by the publication of I.A. Bunin’s translation, undertook a detailed comparative analysis of all the existing interpretations of the mystery and concluded that “Bunin’s translation is not only many times better than all the previous ones, but it translates into the

Russian language those high poetic values of the one of the strongest Byron's works, in which a non-English speaking reader before that could only "trust" based on the relevant reviews of the poet's critics." [Azbelev, 1907, p. 73].

L.I. Nikolskaya was the first to announce the earliest Russian translation of Byron's "Cain" made in 1836 by N.D. Neelov, having noticed that this translation was "one more evidence that the great English poet was a real "ruler of people's minds" for his contemporaries" [Nikolskaya, 1976, p. 281]; and "though the translation is uneven artistically, in general, it conveys the content and stylistic originality of the original quite fully" [Nikolskaya, 1976, p. 280]. L.I. Volodarskaya in her paper publishes for the first time fragments from the unknown translation of "Cain" made in 1864 by N.A. Serno-Solovievich, who treated his translation as "one of the means of the political war, declared against tyranny and reaction by the revolutionary movement of the 1860-ies in the name of the ideals of freedom and justice" [Volodarskaya, 1981, p. 441].

Noting the "ideological and emotional like-mindedness" between the translation and the original, L.I. Volodarskaya sees its major deficiencies, i.e. unjustified use of prosaisms, archaic expressions, interruptions, violating the intonational-rhythmic construction of many monologues. Inscripting the translation by N.A. Serno-Solovievich into the context of the Russian reception of Byron's "Cain", L.I. Volodarskaya highly praised I.A. Bunin's translation and was much more critical in consideration about the later interpretations of the mystery by G.G. Shpet and G.A. Shengeli. G.G. Shpet's translation was characterized by her as a "bulky construction, which was conscientiously packed in a iambic pentameter": "The translator lacked poetic flair, and the miracle of poetic revival has not happened"; G.A. Shengeli, whose translation, according to L.I. Volodarskaya, looked more advantageous in comparison with G.G. Shpet's translation, "is also cramped in the iambic pentameter", "in many cases it so happens that his phrase is either broken or unfinished, the naturalness of the Russian speech (even not poetic) is being violated" [Volodarskaya, 1981, p. 450].

## **Methodology.**

The material for the research was the previously unpublished translation of G.G. Byron's mystery "Cain", which was done, according to archivists, in 1850-ies and preserved in the Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (fund 62, inventory list 1, depository item 15).

In the process of studying the scientific problem, cultural-historical, comparative-historical, comparative and historical-typological approaches were used, as well as methods of integrated analysis.

The methodology of the work is based on fundamental works in the field of historical poetics, comparativistics, the history of Russian translated fine literature, theory and history of poetic translation, created by outstanding researchers of the past, i.e. Alexander N. Veselovskiy, Alexey N. Veselovskiy, V.M. Zhirmunskiy, M.P. Alexeyev, Y.D. Levin, A.V. Fedorov and others. The research also took into account the findings made by A.A. Yelistratova, N.Y. Diakonova, L.L. Nelyubin, G.T. Khukhuni, A.N. Girivenko and the works of the researchers, which were directly devoted to the Russian translations of "Cain" (N.P. Azbelev, L.I. Nikolskaya, L.I. Volodarskaya).

## **Results and discussion.**

Apart from the above-mentioned translations of Byron's "Cain", there is one more – belonging to V.G. Benediktov (1807–1873), which was for the first time mentioned by the publisher of his heritage B.V. Melgunov, but he decided neither to prepare this text for publishing, nor to reproduce other quite extensive translations (mainly ballads and poems by Mickiewicz) as part of the already extensive by itself the second edition of the Big Editorial Series "A Poet's Library".

The depository item in the Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of Russia, containing the unpublished text, is titled in the following way: "Cain. Mystery by G.G. Byron in translation by V.G. Benediktov. Signed original [1850-ies]". Judging by the notes in the circulation list of the above-

mentioned manuscript, E.G. Etkind had read it before B.V. Melgunov, but in the works of the former, in particular, in the famous two volumer “The Masters of the Russian Poetic Translation”, where V.G. Benediktov is also represented, the translation of “Cain” was not mentioned.

If this translation had been really done not later than in 1850-ies, then Benediktov was the author of the first poetic adaptation of “Cain” into the Russian language. The reason why it stayed in the poet’s “store-room” was Byron’s apocryphal or even metaphysical interpretation of the biblical story about the creation of the world and man, the struggle between good and evil ... In conditions of Russia, more constrained in ideological, including religious, freedom, compared to the West, the publication of individual fragments from this work was done, as can be seen above, only in 1860-ies, and of full editions – since 1875, i.e. after Benediktov’s death.

On June 22, 1823, due to the publication of Byron’s works in France, which was accessible to Russian readers in the context of French-Russian bilingualism, the mystery was banned for distribution in Russia: “He who censored this poem finds that it is impossible to find a poem more ungodly than this in any pagan writings, that the writer is rebelling incessantly against the God and his power in the most audacious and disgusting way”. This ban was not lifted either in 1829 when the censorship policy was revised.

The romantic, partly demonized, aesthetic temperament of Byron's works was generally perceived as a threat to morality and religion, though it influenced Russian literature greatly, and the outcomes of this influence have not yet been covered in full details. In this context we will give an example from a work, inspired by considerations, similar to Byron’s interpretation of the universe, which were born later on the basis of domestic “postmodernism”: “The God created a beard. The devil came with a razor. / The God created an eye. The enemy created a TV set. / The God gave love. The shaitan opened a sex shop. / The God – the Promised Land. The devil – visa. / The God gave a road. The devil – an autostop. / The God revealed spirit. And the demon invented a letter. / The God – the eye

again. And that one – a telescope. / The God – sweet dreams. The devil – an early wake-up. / The God created legs. The devil – a Mercedes. / The God created water – the enemy stole the flame. / The God – wings to the angels. And Boeing to the people – by the demon. / The God gave a tsar. And the devil to him – a Parliament. / The God gave grapes. The devil – aperitif. / The God gave throat. The evil one – a loudspeaker. / The God – the paradise of conception. The demon – a condom. / The God gave a wife. The shaitan – a harem with one hundred beds of passion. / The God gave sounds. The evil spirit – the coins ring. / The God – a hundred languages. The devil brought in dictionaries. / The God – a revelation. The devil – Internet. / The God is all – Goodness. / – And the devil? / – Judge yourself!” (A.I. Volovik).

Accordingly, the staging of the work, more binding in the sense of religious tolerance and the neutrality of spiritual censorship, became possible in Russia only in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1907, when there were already several full-fledged Russian translations of the work in place, it was an attempt to include this mysterious drama in the repertoire of the Moscow Art Theatre following the inclusion of Byron’s “Manfred”. In this connection V.I. Nemirovich-Damchenko wrote to K.S. Stanislavskiy on 19 June 1907: “We will start the season with “Cain”. It seems to me that as soon as the principle of the staging has been found and has been lived through by you, the job will be reduced to acting only, and there are 5-6 actors here all in all. If we manage to make Leonidov [L.M. Leonidov] look really tragic and to arouse a fiery and throwing thunderbolts Lucifer in Kachalov [V.I. Kachalov], the effect will be amazing”. There were around 160 rehearsals recorded in the archives of the theater (in their work, the stage managers, most likely, used the translation of “Cain” made by I.A. Bunin. But soon it became known that the public staging of this Byron’s play was prohibited by the Synod.

In 1919–1920, practically in conditions of state atheism K.S. Stanislavskiy made a second attempt to stage the play, on which he speaks profusely in a separate chapter of his memoirs:



“The roles in Byron’s mystery we distributed partly between elderly actors, who were in Moscow, and partly between the youth and even the employees of the theatre. The staging itself and the theatrical scenery were to be done in an economical way due to the lack of finance.

If I had chosen a picturesque principle of staging, it would have required an invitation of a big-time artist as only a real master would have been able to express in colours on the stage a pre-paradise area, hell and the heavens, which were required by the play. It so happened that we couldn’t afford that financially, and I have chosen another principle – architectural. The economy was very simple as for such a plot it would have been required only to have a theatrical scenery of a cathedral interior adjusted to all the acts and scenes. And let the monks present a religious mystery to us. <...>

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil with fruits hanging on it and a serpent tempting around the trunk, which were painted in a naive and motley fashion resembling the church paintings and sculpture of the Middle Ages, two stones on both sides of the Tree, two altars - that's the entire scenery for the first and final acts of the ritual and religious naive staging of the mystery.

The costumes of the actors were just monks’ robes with some added small bits as if to hint that those were costumes.

Unfortunately, this plan of staging, which was elaborated by me, turned out to be too expensive for us as the architectural configurations of the scenery, as well as a big number of employees, required a lot of money. We had to reduce cost even a bit more and turn to sculptural principles of staging...

Instead of director’s mise-en-scenes and lay-out plans there were plastic groups, expressive poses, facial gestures of the actors on the background, which was quite in line with the general feelings.

<...>

Some roles, as, for instance, of Cain himself, played by L.M. Leonidov, made quite an impression.

<...>

Unfortunately, due to the material reasons, the staging was to be issued for the public earlier than expected, and it was to be played in a raw, unfinished, condition. Such a performance is like a miscarriage or a premature baby. Completeness of work is one of the main conditions of artistry in the theater.

And here, we are not lucky. At the dress rehearsal, when the overcrowded auditorium and agitated actors behind the scenes were waiting for the curtain to rise, some of the theater's electrical staff went on strike. I had to look for replacement for them and delay the start of the performance. This cooled down both the actors and the spectators. But this failure was not the last one on that day. At the very beginning of the first act, the actor who played Cain had a pity misfortune with the costume. The actor was so much embarrassed that he could not really play. He only recites the lines mechanically. His raw and unfinished performance had no success”.

Thus, the stage functionality of Byron's drama did not help in popularizing the work, but rather mystically prevented this, as it happened later with the attempts to create some cinematic versions of the novel by M.A. Bulgakov “Master and Margarita”. Both forces interfered in here, i.e. the powers of the light (footlights) and darkness...

## **CONCLUSIONS.**

The principal issue here is on which language source could V.G. Benediktov rely for the purposes of his translation? We believe that it was mainly the lexically archaicized version (perhaps, its prosaic interlinear translation; compare in this context Benediktov's translation of the name of Abel's wife Zillah as Zilla, while in a number of other translations before and after him there are Silla, Sella, Zayla and even Tsilla), with the involvement of French translations for the sake of objectivity. This issue requires a special attention.

In particular, L.Y. Ginsburg writes that Benediktov “has filled the gap in his initial scarce education, in particular, he mastered several European languages”, and this judgment is based finally on the

spectrum of the poet's translation interests rather than the real information on his abilities in languages. It is most likely that the translation was made from the English language as N.P. Azbelev in his informative research paper does not mention the French sources at all and refers, in particular, to the English-language edition of Byron's works in France itself: "The Complete Works of Lord Byron" (Paris, 1837). In any case, one thing is clear: Benediktov could not take into account the Russian precedents of translation, since they were not published in full during his lifetime.

The variety of Benediktov's translational interests included French, Slavic, German, English, Hungarian poetry, but most of all he was interested in the works by Mickiewicz. He was the first to translate two thirds of the poetic heritage of the Russian-Polish classicist.

Of the English poets, Benediktov translated, in particular, 12 Shakespeare's sonnets and Byron's poem "Lines inscribed upon a cup formed from a skull" (1808) (*Motherland's Son*. 1849. No. 6. p. 1–2). All this means that it will be interesting and important to turn to "Cain".

The necessity to publish Benediktov's translation of Byron's mystery has become imminent long ago not only as an outcome of permanent interest to the works of the English romanticist, but also due to Benediktov's immanently original and inherent talent as a translator. The introduction into the scientific circulation of this translation, which is one of the earliest and probably the first proper poetic (!), will help to expand the knowledge in the context of literature and literary studies about its author, to compare the original and already known Russian translation versions (poetic and prosaic) with the artistic interpretation of Byron's masterpiece by one of the most distinctive Russian poets of the XIX century.

Judging by our preliminary impressions, Benediktov's translation cannot yet be considered literal, which can be quite natural if to follow V.A. Zhukovskiy's witty maxim: "The translator in prose is a slave; the translator in verses is a rival" ("On Fable and Krylov's Fables", 1809). Nevertheless, the interpretation of Byron's mystery by the poet provides a strong aesthetic impression.

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