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Byron's Use of Language in Description of East/West and its Albanian Reception

Once disconnected from his own world which alienated him for unconventional behaviour, Byron opened himself to new practices. The new cultural ecosystem brought him fame and acceptance. Byron was sincere in the description of the regions he visited. His non-calculated approach to mysterious areas offered him exposure to unexpected beauties. With this, he depicted his emotions with sincere rhetoric. His consciousness accepted the variety, he owned cultural awareness, and believed in the power of interactive influences of places and people. His use of poetic and descriptive language with the proper amount of wordiness fit the purpose of the perfect depiction of the scenery. Furthermore, the use of archaic language, which is the particularity for the first two cantos, and gradually desolated in the third and fourth cantos added the sense of antiquity and duration of the depicted society and scenery. He vividly denoted his broad-mindedness by using major European cultures such as Portuguese and Spanish, as well as minor areas such as Albania, as his subject of interest, which

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seldomly drew the attention of Western men of letters due to its geographical position and political belonging to Eastern world.

Being aware of both the Balkans and Albania's position in terms of geography and socio-political relevance, we attempted to reveal Byron's use of language as a guiding device in the portrayal of this nation, situating it into comparison with other cultures, he visited by using verses and letters he wrote during this journey, believing that the language and depiction he applied has raised the visual dynamics in readers' eyes. Besides the concise language in *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron likewise used clear prolixity as effective language on Albanians in his letters. Moreover, I strived to gather evidence which proved Albanians' stance towards Byron through the eyes of the advocates and eminent Albanian names and find Byron's inclusion in contemporary Albanian life, through reasoning their mood by giving a detailed description of his penning and verballity, which often used Ottoman vocabulary for the reinforcing effect of the experience. His direct engagement and mystic diction helped readers in visualization.

Literature review

In the quest of the authenticity of Byron's depiction of the Albanians and the Eastern world he considered it is the part of, I referred to works with various and opposing stances, starting from those which supported his genuineness, truthful language, and vivid description, as "realistic in the fullest sense" (Rutherford, 1961, as cited in Marandi, 2006, p. 317), or having "eye for detail, his meticulous accuracy, and his positive appreciation of the Orient" (Kidwai, 1993/2015, p. 55), "extended description [...] by which Byron seems to train his readers' eyes bit by bit, progressively revealing the city and deepening understanding of it by means of sight", or "encourage his readers to look beneath the obvious" (Bernhard Jackson, 2006, p. 56); to the sources which opposed and criticized Byron as downfallen in his descriptive language, referring to such as Nigel Leask (2004a) who in his thought-provoking book *British Romantic Writers and the East*, "focused upon anxieties and instabilities rather than positivities and totalities in the Romantic discourse of the Orient", where in deeper analysis he defined Byron as one who "perpetuates the prejudice of East/West binary opposition" (Leask, 2004a, p. 2).

To deepen our research, I referred to writings concerning orientalism and narrative used in its depiction since Albania was considered as representative of the same, as well as Europeanism as a contrasting element of the East. I, likewise, referred to literature which considered Byron a pioneer in writings on Albania and as one who brought fame and tourists to it as a thus far unknown country. Furthermore, I heeded Albanian writers who mention Byron in exalting terms, starting from Sami Frasheri to Faik Konica, whom both appreciate Byron's descriptive language in the depiction of Albanian folklore. In this term, I consider this research as a complementary part to comparative research in Byron's approach towards the East and the West, with the emphasis on his Albania approach and visualization to the point of profiling of their nation.

Research questions

This research paper aims to reveal these points:

- Effects of the use of abrasive and derogatory language in the description of the West, respectively, Spain and Portugal.
- Application of descriptive language in the depiction of Albania.
- Usage of comparative language with the aim to create affiliation and homophily with Byron's own people.
- Application of constructive verbosity.
- Incorporation of oriental vocabulary for more realistic description.
- Albanian appreciation of Byron's use of language in their description.

Method

Intending to uncover Byron's approach to Albania predominantly in his Canto II of *The Childe Harold Pilgrimage*, I applied descriptive methodology and a hermeneutic approach. Further, to reinforce our proof of his good intentions and complimenting expressions, I referred to a comparative method where I equated Byron's portrayals of European nations in his work and letters contrasting the profiling used thus far. Hence, I went through

subtitles which gradually follow the development of Byron's journey and experience to prove the realistic portrayal he aimed to achieve through the applied language.

Results

Crossing from the West to the East and language choice in Western portrayal

Byron's Grand Tour started in July 1809 by departing from England with his friend Hobhouse towards Lisbon, which is portrayed in the narrative poem *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The work itself constituted of four Cantos which include a description of the places he visited, without sharp division between the countries nor the shifts in depiction style. The poem is rich in style and narration. Childe Harold, our guide, and a traveller himself is in constant action and flows through time and place. The "pilgrimage" in the title gave the insinuation of a divine journey or a quest of spirituality, which within its verses did not include much religiously inspiring parts except the mere description of religious shrines, beside the customs of the nations he visited. The depiction of this two-year-long journey (1809–1811) was published between 1812–1818.

His language and description gained many hails as sheltering steadfast and proving expertise, such as,

[...] it takes the form of a direct engagement with the visual. At first glance, the poem seems [...] an understanding that characterized late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture. Upon closer inspection, however, the cantos emphatically subvert what they seem to uphold [...] the poem offers to the conventional idea of knowledge as stable and reliable [...] marks the start of Byron's investigations into the nature of knowing. (Bernhard Jackson, 2006, p. 9)

The first canto started with the descriptive language about Portugal and later Spain with the vividness of "the dark mountains" and "deep rivers". In this section, besides the aesthetic value of nature, he accentuated the political issues of these two countries through the portrayal of their border with the understating expression as a mere "streamlet". The "silver streamlet" (CHP, Canto I, stanza XXXIII, 1899) physically did not give the impression of a dividing instrument as much as its bared an impact on locals' stance, which

figuratively saw it as a giant wall that separated them into two completely different nations.

Byron was criticized for the harsh and biased language in his description of Portugal, the fact which created a resistant stance of the Portuguese towards him.

Byron's style and aggressiveness, all his reference to the Portuguese people [...] are surprisingly harsh, unmitigated, and even stressed by explicit contrast with the landscape. There is, in fact, an interplay of the two themes: wonderful Nature, and the despised Portuguese-throughout XV to XVIII. (de Moser, 1981, p. 133)

“Oh, Christ! It is a goodly sight to see/What Heaven hath done for this delicious land!... / But man would mar them with an impious hand” (CHP, I, XV). Without any elisions and with the language of criticism, he herewith expressed his rage towards the Portuguese lack of gratitude to the British as their supporters and ally where it displayed the lit of Byron's patriotic sensibility. Further, by employing abrasive language, he wrote on the contrasting quality of nature and nation which validates the above-mentioned quote, “What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold! [...] A nation swoln with ignorance and pride, / Who lick yet loathe the hand [British] that waves the sword / To save them from the wrath of Gaul's unsparing lord” (CHP, I, XVI, 1899).

Due to the derogatory language and the mood towards Byron in Portugal, while he gained some minor inclusion in recent years in Portuguese literature, he was “persona non grata” as a reference point regarding Portuguese culture and history. Byron “caused a profound sense of national insult” (Cardwell, 2004, as cited in Krasniqi & Muhaxheri, 2020, p. 1158) for the Portuguese.

In the second part of Canto I, Byron wrote of Spain in a rather dichotomic manner. While he praised the historical significance of Spain, “Oh, lovely Spain! renowned, romantic land!”, he simultaneously criticized their brutal culture and custom of bullfighting, sympathizing with the “foiled, bleeding, breathless” bull (CHP, Canto I, stanza LXXVIII). Byron similarly hailed Spain in his *Age of Bronze* (1823), “the down revives: renowned, romantic Spain / Holds back the invader from her soil again” (Byron, 1835, line 318–319), which reaffirms Spanish historic magnitude.

Known for incorporating every field of life in his writings, Byron in another instance wrote of Spanish ladies using the language of praise, “[...] I must confess, the women of Cadiz are as far superior to the English women in beauty as the Spaniards are inferior to the English in every quality” (Marchand, 1982, p. 215).

Although he was not as critical of the Spanish as he was of the Portuguese, Byron did not take exalting words towards Spain. His incompatible narration of these societies and cultures caused opposition among critics in defining his position as a realistic narrator versus biased Englishmen. His swaying in narration even caused confusion in key figures of Spain, such as José Joaquín de Mora (1783–1864), who initially criticized Byron, but afterward followed his style.

The unpredictability of Byron's character was also noticed in his description of a Greek youth whom he regretted to see as being different from their bold predecessors. Although very much supportive of Greece and its cause to the extent of giving his life in their fight against Ottomans, Byron with realistic wording gave credit to Turks and Albanians for their courage over the Greeks, hence, he wrote: "(Greeks maintained) all the Turkish vices without their courage" (Drucker, 2012, p. 149). Similarly in his other work *The Giaour*, Byron continues the blame as, "Twere long to tell, and sad to trace, / each step from Splendour to Disgrace" (Byron, 1814, lines 137–138).

“Byron's land” of Albania, and application of the descriptive language

Byron opened Canto II of *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* with the Balkan country of Greece, and its lost, ancient glory of men and topography. It is the opposing trait to what he produced in his description of Albania in the subsequent lines of the same. His experience from this unknown land was not treated only in this poem, but in many of his letters to his mother and friends with the application of the similar language and narrative, moreover, generated some memories which he further used in *The Turkish Tales*, making the journey productive.

During his stay in Albania, Byron occasionally used comparative language in portraying British and Albanian ways. Though I mentioned that his tour not consisting of only Albania, it is this country that he considered himself and his companion Hobhouse as “travellers breaking new ground” as “Albania was less familiar to Europeans than the backwoods of America, elevating their status” (Leask, 2004b, p. 110). He much praised himself for the uniqueness of his themes as he transmitted the beauty of savage, nonetheless new land, which was seldom subject to famous writings thus far in comparison to writings about Greece. Byron mentioned his hope for better days in history

books for this land, in his letter to friend Henry Drury, dated 3 May 1810, “places without a name, and rivers not laid down in maps, may one day when more known be justly esteemed superior subjects for the pencil and the pen” (Bhattacharji, 2010, p. 41). In his desire to be a pioneer in promoting this place to the world, he started to pen its beauty as a part of his unique recollections of the East in comparison to other previous writers: “It is my story and my East (and here I am venturing with no one to contend against – from having seen what my contemporaries must copy from the drawings of others only)” (Marchand, 1982, p. 168). Tracing the step-by-step portrayal, he expressed his departure to these lands by writing “I [...] embark tomorrow for Patras from whence I proceed to Yanina where Ali Pacha holds his court, so I shall soon be amongst the Mussulmen” (Marchand, 1982, p. 224).

The unexpected fruitfulness coming from this land made Byron write 360 verses, where he applied adjectives for the detailed portrayal of nature, the people, and the customs; ultimately, by touching their culture and folklore, he drew for the reader the DNA of this nation. What he witnessed showed him the discrimination done to both this place and the people. He supposed it was now the time to topple all the prejudice and reveal the true colour of this forgotten place with the descriptive language which portrayed ingenuity.

Justifying our interest, our focal point is the second part of Canto II, where in Stanza 38, Byron started the Albania part, which was often considered untimely and hasty as, after this stanza, he again turned to wars of Actium, Lepanto, Trafalgar, Lesbos, and Ithaca. He interrupted his Greek part with the lines “Land of Albania! where Iskander rose, / Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise” (CHP, II, XXXVIII) through which I recognize Byron’s knowledge of Albanian history and their hero Gjergj Kastriot Skenderbeg (1405–1468), who was considered as an element of unification of Albanian people. As I read the graphic verses and picturesque language, I feel through Byron’s eyes our gradual approach into the land due to the descriptive feature of the chosen words. The opening lines gave a glimpse of nature which is rather refreshing for him compared to the Greek dissatisfaction he faced. Although considering Albania as part of the East, in this same stanza he showed his despondency on the “descended cross and arose minarets” (CHP, II, XXXVIII).

In Stanza 43, verse 353, Byron dedicated himself only to the subject of Albania. Using the language of lament “bade to Christian tongues a long adieu” (CHP, II, XLIII, 380), he prepared himself for distancing from his religion and language, the fact which bounded him with the feeling of loneliness.

This state did not prevent him from proceeding deeper into this country. His stubbornness and determination made him go to this “shore unknown” which “many dread to view” (CHP, II, XLIII) due to the notorious fame of the entire region. Along the way, he acknowledged the lack of lavishness of the scene, nevertheless, it was the intensity which enticed him: “The scene was savage, but the scene was new”, and it is this datum which made his “travel sweet” (CHP, II, XLIV). With the occasional reminders that not many dared to visit this place, he revealed his egotistic ways and plan of making this place his own poetic discovery, since “with the exception of Major Leake (English traveller and official resident of Albania) then officially resident at Yanina, no other Englishmen have ever advanced beyond the capital into the interior” (Byron, 1818/2013, p. 73). He admitted that this scenery was rarely subject of “historic tales” (CHP, II, 362), and insufficiently celebrated in comparison to the language used to magnify Attica which fell behind in scenic splendour, hence he used glorifying narrative uninterruptedly until stanza 55. Byron believed that “no pencil or pen can ever do justice to the scenery” (Byron, 1818, p. 138b), emphasizing the lack of words to depict the magnificent state of the landscape where he maintained with an upper level, the mood he used during the description of Spain and Portugal, but even more elevated than Greece.

In stanza 56, verse 492, Byron employed a figure of speech of simile in depicting a religious component in the town of Tepalen, with the “glittering minarets, like meteors in the sky” (CHP, II, LV). This portrayal gave me an impression of his arrival to the town in the evening as he witnessed the glowing lights of minarets, which are stronger in the evening, respectively at night. In a few following lines, he shared with the reader his knowledge of the religion of Islam and the customs he observed. Devoted Muslims go for night prayer called Tarawih prayer, the ritual performed during Ramadan. We consider Byron’s visiting period as a fortunate one, enabling him to see the spirituality felt in the air, with the “Muezzin’s call” of “God is great”, and the blood-tingling voice which “shake the minaret” in the course of this holy month for Muslims, which likewise added charm to his descriptive language.

Besides the Muslims whom he saw in and out of the mosque, around the streets, inns, and stores, Byron noticed surprisingly diverse groups of people. The commingling descriptions of the multicultural groups offered a picture-perfect depiction of the socio-political situation of Albania. Here he observed, “The Turk—the Greek—the Albanian—and the Moor” (CHP, Canto II, LVII, 510), Nubian, Macedon, Delhi, Tartar, none disturbing the harmony and

colourfulness that the place offers, but rather, all of them gaining from the multiplicity they put forward in business and pleasure. At this point, Byron was astonished by the Oriental inclusion of multi-ethnicity, the fact which did not comply with the general opinion of the Occident, which now proved to him their improper coign of vantage or at least flawed language in interpretation of their observation. The coherence of cultures and nations where everyone still respected each other's space was reflected in the choral use of language to portray this diverse society.

Proving his cosmical sense of observation and expression, Byron similarly wrote on gender dynamics, depicting women's status and the restrictiveness they suffered. By using verses such as "Here woman's voice is never heard" (CHP, II, LXI, 541), Byron uses expressions of desublimation of the female gender. He is surprised at guarded and veiled moving customs as much as at women's satisfaction with what life offered them. With the blaming language, he accumulates the accountability onto women for not knowing any better to fight for their lives and rights. Byron saw that these women are befitting silently their role of a concerned mother and obedient wife, never objecting to the additional labour they were prescribed by their warrior husbands. Not content with the women's position and their lack of voice in the social structure, Byron used critiquing expression for the gender crescendos, and the derogatory role of Albanian mothers and wives.

While he wrote on his dissatisfaction with men's inequitable attitude towards women, he used the language of praise for the ferocious nature of Albanian men, on the head with Ali Pasha whom he felt a great attraction for, as far as to go and meet this "Albanian's chief" (II.67. 417). Applying concrete, effective language, Byron communicated that the qualities that Ali Pasha preserved were reflected in his nation as well. To further maintain this effect, he wrote on ethical issues of this nation as Albanian men are fierce, steadfast in war, and loyal when friends, while deadly when enraged. Albanian loyalty is hereby mentioned with our supposition of Byron's awareness of Albanian respect of "besa" which is "a solemn pledge for a support [...] collective agreement with a given oath" (Doja, 2013, p. 36), which developed its reputation as "Albanian besa" that they would follow and respect with "unshaken rushing" (II.65) even if it would lead them to death there was no "foe that ever saw their back?" (II.65). Childe Harold's witnessing of their power and splendour brought him anguish due to their outlined character of brutes. Nevertheless, he accepted the fact of this nation's meek and warm character, since even his

own fellow countrymen did not respect and host him as Albanians did, which he proved with lines: "These did shelter him beneath their roof, / When less barbarians would have cheered him less, / And fellow-countrymen have stood aloof (CHP, II, LXVI, 66).

Using constructive verbosity and conveying an encouraging message, Byron focused on hospitality as an identifying component of Albanian culture, where he gave part in his verses to Ali Pasha of Tepelena who welcomed him in the highest orders, appointed a special guide for Byron, and hosted him in his court, the "Serai". Besides *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* verses, Byron wrote of his impression of his stay in the Ali Pasha's court in his letters and notes to this masterpiece.

As far as my own slight experience carried me, I have no complaint to make; but am indebted for many civilities (I might almost say for friendship), and much hospitality, to Ali Pacha, his son Vely Pacha of the Morea, and several others of high rank in the provinces. (Byron, 1899/2019, p. 1187)

To elevate his own significance as a person of breed, and equally to promote the reputable Ali Pasha in his letter to his mother dated November 12, 1809, he further wrote, "He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son [...] he treated me like a child, sending me almonds and sugared sherbet, fruit, and sweetmeats" (Byron, 1899/2019, p. 1188).

Byron in his "Additional Notes on Canto II" penned on the hyperbolic reaction of Europeans regarding the visits to Turkey (by a word which he did not mean only Turkey geographically, but all the areas ruled by Ottomans), hence with a direct comment, he revealed the stability of the region. "The Mussulmans have been beaten into a kind of sullen civility very comfortable to voyagers" (Byron, 1899/2019, p. 1153). At certain points, Byron merged the identity of Albanians to those of Ottomans, and with the language of praise wrote in his notes on their equality to Spaniards and superiority to Portuguese, reassuring the Europeans that these people who were subject to prejudice and "othered" by Europeans "self" "with all their defects are not a people to be despised"; although he did not bother to count their favourable features, he told the world with the constructive expressions what damaging claims projected to them did not stand in reality, telling what they "were not",

They are not treacherous, they are not cowardly, they do not burn heretics, they are not assassins, nor has an enemy advanced to their capital. They are faithful to their sultan till he becomes unfit to govern, and devout to their God without an inquisition (Byron, 1899/2019, p. 1155),

insinuating the fact that many praised nations “are” and maintain these adverse traits, yet these westerns are not “othered”, nor estranged by their allied Europeans.

Moreover, with reassuring language, Byron enlightened the reader even further on their paradoxical and steadfast mindset versus reality, regarding the quality of children’s education, where he described his revelation on Ali Pasha’s grandson, ten-year old Mahmout’s profound schooling, and his surprise when asked by Mahmout which House of Parliament he belonged to. He once again turned to the comparison of this Muslim, Albanian boy to his English peers, writing that English boys would not be aware of the distinction between Ottoman “College of Dervishes”; giving even no chance that Spanish boys would have ever heard of such differentiation. With this remark, Byron showed how prudent their education was and not restricted to the teachings of the Koran, which would be assumed by his peers.

Inclusion of many areas of life, starting from their lifestyle to culture and socio-political conditions, at times, being critical but mostly revealing, added more realistic information to the sullen European mindset of the East. By distancing from the stereotypical profile offered thus far to Occident readers, Byron went both ways with glorifying expressions of the Albanian region, and displaying his own knowledge of this mystical place and its ways.

Oriental language incorporation for more realistic description

For the description of the historical and social ecosystem of a country, Byron employed vivid language which enabled sense-awakening. As Albania is merged within the Ottoman name, and although it was given considerable and solid space for expressing its individuality, the trace of its geographic belonging and political developments could not be overlooked. Hence, among other points, at Byron’s entrance to Albania is seen the description which reveals the religious circumstances of the place where he notices the fact that, although the place still hosts churches, the priests cannot maintain the indulgence they had through other parts of Europe. The Christians were now shadowed by “the circumcised” (CHP, II, XLIV) Muslims. In this particular verse, I feel the absence of the word “sunnet” or “sunna” based on his occasional incorporation of Oriental words and his attempt to prove his knowledge of Oriental vocabulary. Likewise, in proceeding verses, I feel absenteeism of the word “azan/ezan”, which would complement his imagery description that touched

the sense of hearing “the nightly solemn sound” (CHP, LIX, 529). As well as the absence of the word “valle”/“hora”/“horon”, where he used vivid language to describe a traditional dance, “And bound hand in hand, man linked to man... long danced the kirtled clan”.

Nevertheless, Byron was keen on the languages of the East, which he incorporated in his poems, although Kidwai (1993/2015, p. 80) questions his proficiency in Oriental language based on Byron’s “I sometimes wish that – I had studied languages with more attention – those which I know... the Armenian and Arabic alphabets – a few Turkish and Albanian phrases, oaths, or requests”, from his journals and letters. The language he used decorated his poems, adding to the vivid creation of the oriental imagery. Being aware of the power of this mixture, Byron, as well as *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, likewise used the Oriental diction and names in his well-known work *The Turkish Tales*. In support of the proof, I find it fitting to add this table of the Oriental words he used in *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and their definitions in which he once used explanatory notes in order to simplify the comprehension for the English readers.

Chart 1: Chart of the Oriental and local words used in *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (Definitions are taken from *Collins English dictionary*, n.d.; *Definitions.net*, n.d.; Turkish Language Association, n.d.)

Word	Definition	Verses of the words used in Canto II of CHP
Mahomet	The Prophet of Islam religion	religions take their turn: ‘Twas Jove’s – ‘tis Mahomet’s (20)
Minarets	A tall, thin tower of a mosque	Childe Harold saw, like meteors in the sky, The glittering minarets of Tepalen (492–498)
Haram (Harem)	The separate part of a Muslim household reserved for wives, concubines, and female servants	He pass’d the sacred Haram’s silent tower, (496)
Muezzin	The person appointed at a mosque to lead, and recite, the call to prayer	The Muezzin’s call doth shake the minaret, (530)
Ramazani	the ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset.	Just at this season Ramazani’s fast (532)
Hafiz	A title for a person who knows the Koran by heart	Love conquers age – so Hafiz hath averr’d, (561)

Word	Definition	Verses of the words used in Canto II of CHP
Suliot	A people in and around the valley of Acheron, the southern corner of the pashalic of Janina (Epirus), in Turkey in Europe, are a mixed race, being partly of Hellenic and partly of Albanian origin.	the Suliot stretch'd the welcome hand (604–605)
Tambourgi	Drummer	Tambourg! Tambourgi! thy 'larum afar Gives hope to the valiant (649–650)
Chimari	Region in Albania	Shall the sons of Chimari, who never forgive The fault of a friend, bid an enemy live? (658–659)
Pashaw	A higher rank in the Ottoman Empire political and military system	Since the days of our prophet the Crescent ne'er saw A chief ever glorious like Ali Pashaw. (683–684)
Muchtar	A chief official in a town or village in Turkey or the Ottoman Empire	Dark Muchtar his son to the Danube is sped (685)
Giaour	Infidel, non-muslim	Let the yellow-hair'd Giaours view his horse-tail with dread (686) The city won for Allah from the Giaour,/ The Giaour from Othman's race again may wrest; (729–730)
Delhis	Most courageous soldiers	When his Delhis come dashing in blood o'er the banks, (687)
Selictar	The sword-bearer of a chieftain	Selictar unsheathe then our chief's scimitar: (689)
Allah	God	The city won for Allah from the Giaour. (729)
Othman	The Ottoman Empire was an empire that controlled much of South-eastern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa between the 14th and early 20th centuries.	The Giaour from Othman's race again may wrest (731)
Serai(Saray)	Palace	And the Serai's impenetrable tower Receive the fiery Frank, (732)
Stamboul	Seaport in NW Turkey, on both sides of the Bosphorus; former name Constantinople, ancient name Byzantium	Oh Stamboul! once the empress of their reign (748)

The Albanian appreciation of Byron's imageries

The western visitors of the East, which were not many, mainly held the idea and the right of judging the mindset of this remote area hence wrote as supposed experts. Nevertheless, it is Byron who portrayed it with vibrant language as he considered the East the landscape which he can use in his canvas of verses. Critics like Blackstone write that Byron portrayed "the austere ferocity of Islam" in his work (Blackstone, 1974, p. 88, as cited in Marandi & Pirnajmuddin, 2013, p. 21). Moreover, Marandi writes on the "Other-ness" of the Albanian people and their uniting with the Turkish. As, "In Byron's view being Albanian or Turkish is almost the same thing, as they both represent a single and monolithic entity [...]. They are constantly inter-exchanged, and the reader sees little distinction between the two in the work" (Marandi & Pirnajmuddin, 2013, p. 22).

Opposing this perspective is the attitude of Albanians towards Byron. Albanians are proud to be treated by Byron's pen, and believe that his visit introduced them, idiosyncratically, to Europe in the proper manner, just like in the lines "no nation is so detested and dreaded by their neighbours as the Albanese: the Greeks hardly regard them as Christians, or the Turks as Moslems: and in fact, they are a mixture of both, and sometimes neither" (Byron, 1818, p. 139). Indeed, the Albanians' bravery and loyalty are some of the elements that constitute their genetic construction. Their honor is what they live for and even die for, and this is where Byron used emphatic language about this overlooked nation.

Although in his letters Byron stated that his friend Hobhouse would be more detailed in the denotive description of the cities they crossed through Albania, he could not resist writing even in his letters, besides penning *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, about his impression of Albanians' resemblance of the Highlanders, through which he created homophily, "The Arnauts, or Albanese, struck me forcibly by their resemblance to the Highlanders of Scotland, in dress, figure, and manner of living. Their mountains seemed Caledonian with a kinder climate" (Marchand, 1982, p. 30). Additionally, "their long hair reminds you of Spartans, and their courage in desultory warfare is unquestionable" (Marchand, 1982, p. 32); and language which was "Celtic in its sound" is an element which intensifies his affinity further to this "familiar" culture and race.

Besides the cognitive confusion on Albanian "wild" nature or gentle heart, Byron using imagery language touched the sense of sight with the issue of their costumes, which consist of the white kilt, and red shawl, as well as, "The wild

Albanian kirtled to his knee, /With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun,/ And gold-embroidered garments, fair to see” (CHP, II, LVIII); as well as in his letters, “The Albanians in their dresses the most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long, white kilt, gold-worked cloak, crimson velvet gold-laced jacket, and waistcoat, silver-mounted pistols, and daggers” (Marchand, 1982, p. 35). Indeed, in Albania in that particular period, men had clothing both in the form of a skirt, as well as pants (Picture 1).



Picture 1. XIX cent. Albanian male costumes (Al-Folk, n.d.)

Furthermore, he depicted their physical exterior both in his letters and *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, whereby using subtle language, in the following editions which include Notes (CHP, II, Note A) on the poem, it is mentioned how Byron reveals their “theatrical walking”, which he connected to “the effects of the capote, or cloak, depending from one shoulder” (Byron, 1835, p. 97). Furthermore, in detailing their physiognomy, he wrote: “Their gestures nimble, dark eyes flashing free /The long wild locks that to their girdles streamed” (CHP, II, LXXII).

Byron is believed to use constructive, positive language about Albanians, whom besides comparing to Highlanders in typology, even elevated over his much-loved Greeks, of whom he wrote are “scattered children” (CHP, II, LXXIII). Similarly, Kuzmic positively interprets Byron's interpretation in verses as “Albania's youthfulness, however, comes as a refreshment and counterpoint to the very aged Greece [...]. As one who belongs to this aged cultural lineage, Harold comes to embody experience and disillusion, while he witnesses display of innocence and mirth” (Kuzmic, 2007, p. 59).

The fact that Byron did not maintain the pejorative language used in the description of orientalism when talking about this area, as according to Said's (1978) claim of othering Orientals, and despite occasional blending, still putting Albanians on a different pedestal as a place in which could be considered self-sufficient, made this Balkan nation feel grateful to Byron for his visit, overview, and constructive language. Being in this mindset, Byron preserved his fame among Albanians even today. As per Derek Hall who writes on Albania and the Albanians, "[in Albania] schoolchildren can quote more Byron – who extolled the land and its people – than many British counterparts ever could" (Hyssen, 2003, p. 14).

Reflecting appreciation of the Albanian people, even Albanian 40-year-long communist leader, Enver Hoxha, who had a skeptical attitude towards the West, praised Byron and his depiction of Albania by writing, "I like Byron, not because I am a romantic, but because he sincerely loved my people" (Karagjozi, 2002, p. 3). This approach was held by every Albanian, and it is still maintained.

Albanian critics consider Byron their ally, and his language of their interpretation as a tool which brought them glory: "For Byron, Albania was a country of rare, natural beauty; Albanians handsome people, brave, proud, in white dresses; while Ali Pasha of Tepelena, a fierce but not cruel captain, vizier but independent, the third historical figure after Alexander the Great and Skanderbeg" (Frashëri, 2009, p. 25). After the publication of Byron's works, the number of travellers, with or without certain missions, as well as the authors who wrote about Albania and Albanians, increased a lot, especially that of English travellers (Karagjozi, 2002, p. 23). Very common is the appreciation to Byron who, by distinguishing the Albanian nation, using ornate expressions, gave it the identity description it deserved in literature, hence, they write, "Byron's work and in particular *Childe Harold* came to the Albanians [...] in the years of their national awakening. Byron is one of the earliest English travellers to visit Albania. [...] further people praise Byron for the esthetic language and influence of his poetry among Albanian writers including De Rada" (Kastrati, 1979, p. 25). Similarly, Faik Konica, an eminent name of Albanian matter and culture in the early twentieth century hails Byron's promotion of Albanian "ethnography, costumography, and folklore" as one of the European elites (Koci, 2018, p. 2). Konica even writes about Byron's singing of two Albanian polyphonic songs to his friends in their journey to Germany. Although with many mistakes, vague language, and even necessary to be transcribed by Konica himself, it was considered an honour to have these songs listened to in the European social circle. "There is not a stronger and more beautiful passport of identity than these polyphonic songs that

prove both the antiquity and the ethnicity of these areas” (Koci, 2018, p. 2). Correspondingly, the song “Tambourgi! Tamburgji!” which was included by the end of Canto II, in 11 four-line stanzas, celebrated Ali Pasha, his men, and the region. These songs contributed to Byron’s name among Albanians even further, as a perfect spreader of their folklore and culture, and much needed shadowed identity. “He painted the unknown Albanian world as a poet and as a curious person, not as a critical observer” (Frashëri, 2009, p. 35).

Byron’s appearance maintains its frequency in contemporary Albania and Albanians’ life. The questions on Byron’s influence on Albania’s reputation are often included in the Matura exam (high-school completion exam), which validates the fact that Hall writes on Byron’s inclusion in curricula. There are streets named Lord Byron, in Tirana, capital of Albania, and Pristina, capital of Kosovo. The town where Byron visited Ali Pasha, the town of Tepelena, gave the greatest honour to Lord Byron by naming its main square after Lord Byron.

These contemporary marks, which are integrated into Albanian lives for years, even centuries, are the best indicator that Albanians warmly welcomed Byron, and positively interpret his vivid language used in the portrayal of their nation and values, and believing that this display to Europe changed the dynamics and approach towards their nation regardless of their geographic position.

Conclusions

Paradoxically, the confessional style and vivid descriptive language with all visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile imagery of the energy he received made Byron the subject of opposing criticism, which stands due to his perplexing writings in the name of realistic depiction. His puzzlement rests in his struggle to strip himself from the Eurocentric mentality which he criticized for contemptuous stance.

Byron’s depiction of Albania and its diversity overshadowed his European belonging. His experiences had more rational reactions than his contemporaries or preceding writers, and his authenticity proves his pluralistic view where, as a result of the informative language he engaged, he simultaneously reveals of himself, his admirations and loathes, as much as the region which returned to him with admiration of Albanian people.

Hence, while the use of derogatory language in the description of Portugal and occasionally Spain made him undesirable in these countries, with the engagement of the descriptive language in the Albanian depiction, Byron overturns the criticism which sets him as Orientally blind and not open to new, respectively eastern cultures, and reflecting European stereotype. Moreover, his application of comparative language between Albanians and Highlanders created homophily, a sense of connection, and equality. On the other side, the inclusion of oriental vocabulary in the verses enriched his language and made his description more realistic, vivid, almost tangible, and affiliated to the Eastern world.

One evident thing is his appetite for new settings, and furthermore, his aspiration to go beyond Eurocentrism and declare himself an advocate of this “new” land. His utilization of visuality created optical scenery for the reader, which awakened sensory perception, hence proving himself as a master in objective depictions through vivid verbosity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHP – *Childe Harold pilgrimage* (Byron, 1818/2013)

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Język Byrona w opisie Wschodu/Zachodu i jego odbiór wśród Albańczyków

W niniejszym artykule, stosując podejście hermeneutyczne, omawiamy sposób użycia języka przez G. G. Byrona w opisie kwestii społeczno-politycznych i geograficznych krajów, które odwiedził on podczas swojej podróży po Europie, przede wszystkim w odniesieniu do Albanii. Pokazuję, że w *Wędrowkach Childe Harolda* Byron przedstawił albańską rzeczywistość, sugerując powinowactwo z rodzimym kontekstem kulturowym. Analizuję również albański odbiór wizji angielskiego poety. Uzasadniam zasadność włączenia do świadomości narodu albańskiego stanowiska Byrona w kwestii Albanii, jak i uzupełnienia języka albańskiego o wykorzystane przez niego orientalne słownictwo.

Słowa kluczowe: George Gordon Byron; Albania; Wschód/Zachód; *Wędrowki Childe Harolda*; Bałkany, język; kultura

Byron's use of language in description of East/West and its Albanian reception

In this paper, using a hermeneutic approach, I discuss G. G. Byron's use of language in describing the socio-political and geographical issues of the countries he visited during his travels in Europe, primarily with regard to Albania. I show that in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron depicted Albanian scenery in an attempt to create homophily. I also analyse the Alba-

nian reception of the English poet's vision. I justify the relevance of incorporating Byron's position on Albania into the consciousness of the Albanian people, as well as supplementing the Albanian language with the oriental vocabulary he used.

Keywords: George Gordon Byron; Albania; East/West; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; Balkans; language; culture

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