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Albie the Mad Albanian: The Cross-Cultural Influence between Byron and Albania

Suzan S. Hyssen

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ALBIE THE MAD ALBANIAN:
THE CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCE BETWEEN BYRON AND ALBANIA

by
Suzan S. Hyssen

Thesis

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Thesis Committee:

Laura George, PhD, Chair

Elisabeth Däumer, PhD

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Suzan Hyssen

APPROVAL:

Laura J. George, PhD.
Thesis Chair

Date

Elisabeth D. Däumer, PhD.
Committee Member

Date

Russell R. Larson, PhD.
Department Head

Date

Robert O. Holkeboer, PhD
Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Edward Owen, and our daughter, Grace Hyssen Owen, for their unfailing good humor in the face of scholarly adversity, and for kicking me off the computer so they could play computer games and check hockey scores, and I could procrastinate in peace.

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ABSTRACT

The subject of Byron and Albania has been historically neglected but merits study for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the importance Byron himself gave to Albania. While Western Byron scholars have tended either to omit discussion of Albania or to conflate Albania with Greece in Byron's writing, a reading of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and its notes will demonstrate the centrality of Albania to the formation of the Byronic persona. In addition, this thesis draws on Albanian scholarship on Byron, furthering international work on this crucial aspect of Byron's career.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: BYRON AND ALBANIA IN TEXT AND LIFE.....	7
Byron and Albania.....	7
“Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”: Images of Albania.....	16
CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL RESPONSES.....	37
Byron and Orientalism.....	37
Western Response.....	47
Albanian Scholarship and Interest in Byron.....	59
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION.....	65
WORKS CITED.....	68

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1992, Paul Simpson-Housley wrote that “Tepelene, Albania, is almost peripheral to Byron’s world” (Simpson-Housley 92). What was written in 1992 still holds true to some extent more than 10 years later in the realm of Western Byron scholarship. Yet for the Romantic poet, Albania in many ways played a key role in Byron’s life and works, and he was always careful to treat it as a distinct entity, even if that distinction was subsequently disregarded. A prime example, which will be discussed in detail later, is Byron writing “Land of Albania! where Iskander rose” (Byron "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" 2.38.1). Byron’s use of Iskander (which he cites in his notes as the “Turkish word for Alexander”) in naming Alexander the Great shows his knowledge of the area and his own differentiation between Greece and Albania (“CHP” 878). The origins of Alexander the Great are hotly contested by almost too many factions to mention because the political boundaries of that area of the world have been in flux for millennia, yet for most Westerners, the automatic assumption is that Alexander the Great was Greek. By using the Turkish word, Byron summarily removes Alexander/Iskander from the Greek camp and creates a deliberate distinction between West and East.

This distinction highlights the significance Albania had for Byron. Yet the influence of Albania on Byron and his work is not a subject that is given much emphasis in literary studies; still less attention is given to the influence of Byron on Albania. The lack of consideration paid to these intertwined topics should not be equated with a lack of importance. Instead, this disregard may

be explained through the following reasons: Albania has, through recent history, been a closed society; the language barrier has kept many western scholars from this study; rather than taking a broad view of Albania's influence on Byron, most scholars deal primarily with the text and do not take into account that the text is only part of the whole, ultimately ignoring the richness in Byron's notes; finally, what Edward Said classifies as Orientalism permeates the whole of scholarly receptivity to Albanian influence on Byron--it is labeled as "Other" and neatly ignored.

That Albania and its people influenced Byron is without question; one need only read Don Juan or "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" to find Byron waxing rhapsodic about the beauty of the countryside and the wonder of its people. Byron is considered the archetype of the British Romantic poet, yet one of his most popular and enduring images is that of Byron in Albanian dress. This image is an interesting juxtaposition of the familiar and the unknown. Byron the Englishman, while fascinating, still represented the known; Albania and the East were shrouded in the unknown. In the early 19th century, Albania was little known even by those who considered themselves well-traveled. This lack of knowledge was one among many reasons Byron cultivated the image of the Mad Albanian to give him a certain cachet among English society. By creating an image of exoticism and "otherness," Byron shrouded his work in an aura of mystery and knowledge, and especially knowledge of what is forbidden or taboo. This aura permeates Byron's works, especially poems such as Don Juan, The Giaour, and "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage".

Byron's desire to cement his reputation in England as Other found its apotheosis as Albie, the Mad Albanian, mythopoeic persona of Byron. Byron created this character of the Mad Albanian in order to set himself apart from his own countrymen. It lends a certain appeal that Byron embraced an identity within a group that even Albanian author Ismail Kadare notes "have always been rather an elitist people," especially with regard to dress (O'Donnell 194). Arrayed in Albanian attire, Byron presented a dashing, impenetrable figure, one which was unknowable and therefore removed from the mundane. Few of Byron's contemporaries had traveled the Albanian countryside; fewer still celebrated the people and their lifestyle. Even Byron's traveling partner John Cam Hobhouse was neither as entranced nor as influenced by their journey through Albania as Byron was. Byron relished any opportunity to elevate himself into a superior position, and through his exclusive knowledge of a mysterious land and its people, in effect by *becoming* one of those people, he maintained a division between himself and others.

The esoteric aspect of knowledge of Albania and its people is due, in part, to the fact that Albania has been, and continues to be, a separatist nation, even during those times it was nominally under the rule of some other entity, be it the Ottoman Empire or Italy. Enver Hoxha, Albania's Communist president from 1944 until his death in 1985, continued to keep Albania independent of the West. This disengagement should not presuppose ignorance; an Albanian scholar, Peter Prifti, noted that Hoxha was "well informed about literature" and was a great fan of Byron, citing him as one of

his favorite writers (qtd. in O'Donnell 196). While Hoxha's death opened Albania somewhat to the world, Albanian literary scholarship has yet to be discussed in a more available forum. No work in western literary criticism discusses Byron's influence on Albania, and few works give Albania's influence on Byron the attention it deserves. What is mentioned is limited to short pieces regarding Byron's relationship with his guides (see Guy Evans "Byron's Albanians") or Byron's pleasure in the countryside and its people (see Anahid Melikian's Byron and the East). That he was entranced is evidenced in Stephen Coote's discussion of Byron's fascination with Ali Pasha, and Simon Bainbridge's discussion of Byron in Albanian dress. Though Byron affected an off-handed genius, he was sincerely, deeply involved in the creation of his art and his image. That Byron chose to include Albania in his work and display himself as an Albanian is given only the most cursory evaluation in scholarship. Byron's use of Albania as Other with regard to his work and himself has not been explored deeply enough.

I propose to bring to western scholarship a greater understanding of the influence Albania had on Byron and that Byron had on Albania. Enver Hoxha is quoted as saying, "Unë e dua Bajronin jo se jam romantik, por sepse aie ka dashur sinqerisht populin tim (I like Byron not because I am a romantic, but because he sincerely loved my people)" (Karagjozi 3). That such a critic of the western world, one who even considered communist China less than stringent in its rejection of the West, would praise Byron is something that must be delved into and more deeply understood, especially with Albania's doors now

open. In this way I hope to assist in creating a literary dialogue about the cross-cultural influence of societies.

While Edward Said's position in his treatise Orientalism, that there is always a presumed superior and an inferior when cultures meet, is generally true, I would hope to show that even with Byron's blatantly ethnocentric viewpoint there was still much in the relationship between Byron and Albania that was mutually beneficial and that should be discussed. Said writes that "the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating [Western] frameworks" (40). The situation between Byron and Albania has created its own set of rules if only because Albania was a part of a number of "dominating frameworks," including the West and the Ottoman Empire, and yet, as I will discuss, its people refused to be part of that representation. In maintaining their autonomy, and through Byron's occasional disconnection from a solidly superior stance, the relationship between Byron and Albania moves away from a strictly Orientalist framework.

Much of Byron criticism with regard to the East continues to fall into line with Said's Orientalist precepts. Said states that Byron was among the writers who

restructured the Orient by their art and made its colors,
lights, and people visible through their images, rhythms, and
motifs. At most, the "real" Orient provoked a writer to his
vision; it very rarely guided it. (23)

I argue that Byron does not fit so neatly into Said's group. A close reading of

Canto 2 of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" shows the shaping of Byron's images by the Orient's countryside and its people. Using Byron's relationship with Albania as an example, this work shows that there are any number of ways in which Albania and Byron collide and synthesize without a consistent, Orientalist superior/inferior relationship. Chief among these inconsistencies is Byron's relationship with Albania during his travels and after, as well as the care Byron took to learn about and honor these people and their land in his writings. Byron's Western contemporaries added to the ambiguity in their interactions with Albania, which squarely put English in the superior position, neglecting the richness of the Ottoman and Albanian cultures. One need only review the bulk of Byron scholarship from his era to the present to note that this disregard for Albania has continued unquestioned and nearly unabated. The nature of the association from an Albanian point of view brings an even greater density to the topic.

In order to study Byron and Albania fully, these aspects must be taken in concert, especially as together they present a problematic interconnection. Byron's distinction of Albania as its own entity, even in the face of the subsequent dismissal of that distinction during his own time and throughout later literary study, should not be overlooked simply because it flies against the prevailing viewpoint. Byron's slippery relationship with an Orientalist view, highlighting his inherent belief in British superiority while admiring and praising the Albanian Other, is worth delving into. The neglected study of Albanian criticism and interest in the subject of Byron, especially Byron and

Albania, should not be discounted simply because of difficulties in accessing that information. Ultimately, all of these topics work to create a dissonance on this subject that should no longer be ignored.

This research will be of significant value to the discipline of Romantic studies. In focusing on Byron, I will use the critical theories of Orientalism, Deconstructionism, and Dialogic Criticism. The concept of Orientalism, originating with Edward Said, still resonates with this topic, offering an explanation for the prevalent slant of thought on Western Byron studies. The concept of Deconstruction, where everything is text, highlights the omission of Albanian input into the world literary-text. By introducing Albanian viewpoints on Byron and his image and work, another voice will be added to the heteroglossia that exists in the competing realms of literary studies. There is a desire for knowledge on this topic, and I feel that this work will act as a means of opening up the dialogue on Byron and his work in a way that has heretofore been missed.

This brings us to the premise of my thesis: I propose that Byron was markedly influenced by Albania, more than is evident from the few mentions found in the current scholarship. And because of Byron's predilection for Albania, which I will demonstrate through a discussion of his literature and his penchant for Albanian dress, Albania itself was influenced by Byron, not only because he was a remarkable poet but because, as Enver Hoxha noted, Byron truly loved the Albanian people.

I have researched not only American and English texts, but Albanian

works as well. In checking databases for literature on Byron in English and Albanian, I have found a wealth of information on Byron but little on Byron and Albania combined; most of that is written in Albanian and not easily accessible. Yet what information I have found proves my assertion that while these cross-cultural influences may be inequitable, they are also important and should be studied.

By winnowing through the vast amount of material on Byron, I have found examples of influence that support my hypothesis. In doing so, I focus on examples of Albania's influences on Byron in dress and literature, and finally the Western reaction to these influences. I also briefly note the influence of Byron on Albania, information I have gathered thanks to the aid of Albanian scholars, many of whom have willingly lent their time and offered countless suggestions on this topic. The research bears out my supposition that Byron's influence on Albania is much discussed in Albania, while Albania's influence on Byron is woefully, painfully, underrepresented.

CHAPTER 2: BYRON AND ALBANIA IN TEXT AND LIFE

Byron and Albania

The very concept of Albania remains a footnote in most of the West's consciousness. Often consolidated with Greece, Yugoslavia, or the Ottoman Empire, comparatively little has been written about this nation and its people. Once part of the mystical land of Illyria (composed of what is presently Albania, Macedonia, and Bosnia), modern Albania retains its position as outsider. It occupies a space that is not European or Western, nor is it entirely Eastern; it is instead "a place where fact and fiction meet," from Byron's time to our own (Wallace 213). Writing during the 19th century, William Martin Leake felt that the Albanians he encountered were descendants of the ancient Illyrians and as such served "as a buffer between the known and unknown world," a position that allowed Western travelers the opportunity to immerse themselves in a culture that was foreign, but not overly so--note Byron's description of Albanians as being similar to Scottish Highlanders, as well as Leake's feeling that Albanians were (somehow) "purer and therefore possibly more Greek than Greeks" (Wallace 220). The image of classical Greece was quite popular in Romantic and Victorian England, and was therefore more welcome. The association of Albania and Albanians with other, more familiar, nationalities has continued to be a means by which the country and its citizens may be annexed and understood by the West.

This transitive property of familiarity is not unknown to this day, and perhaps happens more often and with more nationalities and ethnicities than

even the most liberal scholar would care to admit. What makes this flow of identity interesting with regard to Albania is that Albanians are in the same breath described as being “fiercely nationalistic” and yet identical to Turks or Greeks (Wallace 220). This paradox has several explanations, both external and internal. The simplest external explanation is the inherent Orientalist disinclination to look too far into disparate stereotypes. In order to reconcile a discrepancy, an Orientalist would need to go beyond the comfortable, facile identifications that have already been put into place and actually *see*. Said’s description of the Western premise that things in the Orient exist because they are said to exist easily glosses over even the most egregious inconsistencies by stating that existence into being. Perhaps the more agreeable interpretation is an internal one, that of a tolerance and cultural pluralism inherent in the Ottoman Empire itself, one that allows simultaneous identities to coexist peacefully (Gawrych 519).

This propensity toward Albanian nationalism has deep roots. Miranda Vickers notes that even during the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were “a people who lived on the fringes of the empire in tightly knit tribes or clans” and comments that their propensity “to emphasize the fact that they were Albanians” set them apart from the Western homogenous concept of Ottoman (15). George Gawrych echoes this when he notes that Albanians always considered themselves and “identified themselves [. . .] as Albanians” (520). Hobhouse, writing during his and Byron’s journey, notes this same propensity. That this national identity existed at all is a testament to the open-mindedness

of the Ottoman Empire, quite a different view of the East and Islam than the usual hegemonic depictions of savage, intolerant barbarians. In fact, Gawrych argues that “Ottomanism came to mean that all subjects of the Empire, regardless of origin and religion, were Ottomans [. . .] united by their equality before the law and by their common citizenship” (522). This image of the Ottomans is markedly different than the typical one of fanatical despots who are inferior to Western civilization and understanding. It is unlike the image one has of *any* empire, but most strikingly, this description of the Ottoman Empire is perhaps what the English wished to see in themselves as a civilized, benevolent state. While that argument is beyond the scope of this paper, it is an interesting side note in considering Byron and his contemporaries’ views of Albanians (and Ottomans) as savages, entities with only the basest understanding.

Neglected by most scholars is the work created by citizens of the Ottoman Empire, unless, of course, the work is sufficiently aged to have meaning. Even today, a majority of the discourse on Albania and Byron regrettably ignores Albanian contributions, whether the information is a year old or one hundred years old. As evidenced by the proceedings of the Byron symposia, much of the discussion of Byron in the East ties itself to Greece, from his love of the classics to his last days as a freedom fighter in Missolonghi. Bowing to the fact that Greece played a major part in Byron’s life and death, the omission of Albania is still glaring. Even those points that are specific to Albania, such as Byron’s visit to Ali Pasha and his stay at Tepelene, are

conflated into the Greek mythos. By ignoring the Albanian in favor of the Greek, scholars create a schism that is difficult to breach as one must wade through material that manipulates or disregards the source (Albania). This omission is particularly glaring in that “Albanians were able to contribute to the national consciousness of other minorities” and in so doing create a heteroglossia within the realms of politics, literature, and society by which they deepened the understanding of those who acted and reacted in the dialogue (Gawrych 534). It has even been argued that the Greek independence movement in which Byron fervently believed and acted was, at its base, a reflection of consistent, inherent Albanian nationalism.

Jennifer Wallace writes that Byron’s description of Illyria/Albania is far richer than those of Leake or Hobhouse, for example, because Byron’s version does not allow itself to be narrowed by conventional limitations; it instead “draws upon the political Illyria, the literary, [and] the mythical” in order to create a vision of the East that, while made palatable to the West, is an entity unto itself (Wallace 223). That Byron found himself fascinated with such a mysterious land is not remarkable; Byron’s propensity for the new and different is readily acknowledged. As noted earlier, Byron opened the door to Albania for the West, and through this door came politicians, scholars, and travelers, each of whom wrote of Albania during the early 19th century. Wallace posits that “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,” specifically Canto 2, “marks the re-inscribing of the historical Illyria in the public consciousness,” an inscription that has been washed away with time, but whose imprint remains (225).

Albania is a country that “has been located on the edge of two worlds since the separation of the Roman Empire” (Hall xix). This location between East and West has caused Albania to be an enigma throughout history. Albanian nationalism had its genesis near the end of the Byzantine empire, when “the Illyrian-speaking peoples” of what is present day Albania were known as “Albani, and their language as Albanian” (Vickers 2). As a group, Albanians have considered themselves Albanian first and foremost, no matter where they live or what empire (or nation) they are part of, yet what that means is up for debate. As a woman of Albanian descent, I know that my family’s heritage is bound up in this group, even though my parents and their families come from what is now known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Yet this removal from what is now Albanian proper in no way diminishes the importance of our Albanian heritage.

Part of the problem with an Albanian identity is that so many of its claimants are either part of the Diaspora (including--but not limited to--people in Kosova, Macedonia, Australia, England, Canada and the United States) or were cut off from the rest of the world by the communist dictates of Enver Hoxha and his successors. Yet with all this disparity, a few things remain markedly clear: Albanians are extremely nationalistic, or perhaps ethnocentric; they are proud and bound by honor (*besa*, the Albanian oath, which cannot be broken under any circumstances); and they believe wholeheartedly in the principal of hospitality. (For excellent discussions on these topics, please see any of the works by Miranda Vickers, including The

Albanians: A Modern History).

The topography of Albania during Byron's time was somewhat different than today. The area then considered Albania was made up of parts of what are now Albania, Macedonia, and Greece. While Albania's present boundaries are more limited, and for so long were impermeable, this should not be read as a limitation of connection with the West. In fact, this country, "whose schoolchildren can quote more Byron--who extolled the land and its people--than many British counterparts ever could," should be invited into the so-called mainstream of modern culture (Hall xix). While "Albania's size, language and location have condemned it to a peripheral and superficial consideration by many in the West," this condemnation ought not continue, most especially in the case of Byron studies (Hall xix). By ignoring such fertile ground, scholars lose part of the importance of Byron and his works.

Byron may be viewed as an entity not only in and of himself, but also in conjunction with his works in that each aspect works together to create a greater, richer image. Byron may also be seen as a prime example of Deconstructionist theory, in that his existence is made up of signifiers, with meaning moving forward and backward, each sign adding to the whole of his meaning (in effect, the heteroglossia of Byron).

In doing so, in allowing for play and movement along meaning, scholars can create a lens with which to view an entity so involved in his own creation, in his own *jeu*, as Byron. Byron may be seen as the archetype of *différance*, each part creating a "*sameness* which is not *identical*," all of which serve to

illustrate “the differences between differences,” the multitude of meanings that make up this man (Derrida 385). Byron must be viewed as the Deconstruction of Byron (signifier to signifier) in that he moved, in an overly simple explanation, from George Gordon to Lord Byron to Poet to Albie, the Mad Albanian. In each of these characters, Byron created a referent that opened and expanded his being as well as offering up an awareness of the mutability of meaning and identity. Further, Byron was more often than not intertwined with his protagonists, and in doing so, he created and brought into play additional signs through which meaning is gleaned. Byron’s life is always interconnected with these works, so much so that one may easily posit that Byron the Poet is a character, a part of authorial intent, and must be viewed as such in order to gain fuller understanding of the text. In doing so, Byron opens up himself and his work so that “each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” offer themselves up for comprehension (Bakhtin 263). While Mikhail Bakhtin focused mainly on the novel as the focal point of this type of heteroglossia, even he noted that the “dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse” not the least of which may be the discourse between a poet and his work (Bakhtin 279).

By ignoring the importance of the connection between Byron and Albania, by not accounting for this heteroglossia or viewing Byron as a deconstruction, scholars effectively excise much of the meaning to be found in Byron’s life and work. Opening up this avenue of discourse allows scholars to

think in other, less traditional ways. Questions regarding the importance of Byron's Albanian costume and his creation of the identity of Albie, the Mad Albanian, are more easily answered if Byron and his work are considered in the realm of Deconstruction, where *every* aspect has its own meaning, and each meaning, each différence, imparts an understanding of the whole.

The mystery of Albania colors an understanding of the whole of Byron. By remaining in the West's shadow, Albania's influence on Byron is easily ignored. During Byron's era, and for some time after, while what is presently Albania was ruled by various Pashas of the Ottoman Empire, it was a somewhat known, traveled region, with a number of scholars and visitors finding themselves guests of Albanian hospitality. The Victorian traveler and writer M. Edith Durham wrote of Albania and its people as a correspondent to journals such as The Near East and the Journal of the Central Asian Society, effectively keeping Albania a part of Western thought (see Albania and the Albanians: Selected Articles and Letters 1903-1944 and High Albania: A Victorian Traveller's Balkan Odyssey). One need only note John Cam Hobhouse's A Journey Through Albania and the Provinces of Turkey, a work often cited within the same breath as Byron's works of that region and considered important in studies of that era and area. No less prominent a figure than Benjamin Disraeli followed Byron's footsteps in Albania, writing of his journey for the edification of his contemporaries. Yet even with this continued interest in Albania, it has never been fully a part of the mainstream Western world. In fact, "[d]espite recent media exposure in the West, Albania

remains an unknown country,” more inscrutable today than it was in Byron’s time (Hall xxiii). This situation is startling, but need not continue, as I can readily attest, thanks to the opened Albanian borders and the willingness of Albanian scholars, in that country and throughout the world, who wish to share scholarship on Byron and Albania.

“Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”: Images of Albania

In 1812, “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” was published. The poem, according to Byron, “was written, for the most part, amidst the scenes which it attempts to describe. It was begun in Albania,” which Byron visited in 1809-1810 and which plays a prominent role in Canto 2 (“Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” 179). In “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”, Byron creates an image of a world untapped and presents this world in a palatable form for his readers. While Byron’s poem is based on the sights and scenes of his journey, and while his protagonist is often considered intertwined with Byron, Byron decries Childe Harold as a “fictitious character [. . .] introduced for the sake of giving some connexion to piece” (“CHP” 179). Byron works to create a symphony of sights and sounds to surround his protagonist, fashioning an aura that is rich in variety and vaguely otherworldly. Byron casts a spell on his readers, entrancing them during Childe Harold’s voyage into the land of the unknown. Enchantingly, Byron uses his undeniable talent to craft an image of a land he held in high esteem, a land that truly was (and continues to be) part of the Western imagination. Byron takes pen in hand to describe the land and people of Albania.

As noted, Byron is careful to differentiate between Albania and Greece, something which few scholars bother with. Two present-day examples of this indiscriminate attitude are the use of the image of Byron in Albanian dress on the cover of Louis Crompton's Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England, and as an illustration in Andrew Rutherford's essay "Byron of Greece and Lawrence of Arabia."

Byron's image as the Mad Albanian served many purposes, not the least of which is that it lent credence to his poetic writings on the East. Byron's poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and its attendant notes recount a number of his actual travels through the Mediterranean. Byron was exceedingly engrossed by these people and their mysterious ways, delighting in their every aspect. After engaging in much scrutiny and study, Byron proclaimed himself quite the authority on the East. Through a close reading of several verses from this poem, I will show that Byron's marked interest in Albania is readily evident in his writing.

Byron, on his tour, was both emblematic of, and an antidote to, his contemporaries' predominant feeling of English superiority. He was more interested and respectful of the East and its people and cultural differences than his fellow Englishmen, but he still considered himself (and the English and England) vastly superior to all other races. In his letters home highlighting his descriptions of those he encounters on his travels, Byron never quite leaves behind "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures," but he is adamant in his delight with

the Albanians he encounters, especially with his servant Dervish, who wept bitterly and flung his pay to the ground when Byron took his leave (Said 7). Byron's description of Dervish's reaction to his departure in the notes to "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" eloquently speaks of the depth of Dervish's sorrow and its effect on Byron and his (non-Eastern) companions, concluding with the belief that no one would be left unable to "sympathize with the unaffected and unexpected sorrow of this barbarian" ("CHP" 879). Byron felt that Dervish's "present feelings, contrasted with his native ferocity, improved my opinion of the human heart," no mean feat for someone whose disgust with the whimsy of English society fostered his fascination with other cultures ("CHP" 879).

Byron's poetry had oblique and blatant references to Albania and its people. Canto 2 of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" is full of awe-inspiring descriptions detailing the countryside and its inhabitants. Auron Tare, a Byron scholar in Albania, notes that one should "not forget that one of his cantos at [sic] Child [sic] Harold has been taken from an Albanian song. Tamburgi, tamburgi," a reference to the song Byron included in the second Canto of his poem (Tare "Re: Byron Thesis"). Byron's lyrics and the notes accompanying this poem are his means of providing an Oriental adventure for his readers, positioning his protagonist (and himself) in an authoritative role with regard to the mysterious East. The work is considered a paean to the wonders of Albania and her inhabitants, a people and world Byron adored.

In verse 38, Canto 2, of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", Byron writes "Land of Albania! where Iskander rose" ("CHP" 2.38.1). Byron's use of Iskander

(which he cites in his notes as the “Turkish word for Alexander”) to discuss Alexander the Great, always an image associated with the Greeks both by themselves and the West (but not, interestingly, by Albanians or Macedonians, even to this day a matter of much contention in that area of the world), is an interesting, almost offhand twist (“CHP” 878). Byron, as we know, adored Greece in its contemporary as well as classical forms, yet he uses a Turkish word to describe arguably the greatest Greek in history. Byron then places that figure squarely *in* Albania. This distinction lends credence to my argument that Byron’s image is mistakenly identified with Greece rather than Albania. Byron took care to incorporate his knowledge of the area and his love of the land and people into his poetry, siding with the Albanians, however obliquely in western eyes, in this matter. A significant side note is the fact that Iskander is also the name of Skenderbeg, a leader of the Albanian resistance in the early 1400s (Elsie 229). This alternate meaning of the name Iskander underscores the importance it holds for Albania and Albanians.

Byron goes on to praise Albania and its inhabitants by praising Iskander, calling him the “Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,” an image that can resonate with either Alexander the Great or Skenderbeg (“CHP” 2.38.2). In doing so, Byron immediately sets up an image in his Western reader’s mind of Albania as a world full of knowledge and bravery by linking it with Alexander the Great, a Greek of monumental knowledge and ability, thereby maneuvering Albania from its existence in the shadowy world of Other by setting it up as a paradigm of virtue and might.

Byron uses the rest of verse 38 to fulfill his image of an illustrious Albania. Byron calls out to Albania “let me bend mine eyes / On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!” (“CHP” 2.38.5-6). Here, Byron uses a few, simple words to convey intricate, indelible images. First, he creates a space for Albania that is not usual, not readily accessible. The voyager must ask permission to “bend” his eyes to survey this land, which almost seems to exist in an unknown mythology. Byron creates an image of a landscape that is difficult to know not only physically but also mentally. In neither case is this land of Other readily accessible.

Byron also uses these lines to perpetuate an image that has held true through time: Albania as an unknowable land of ferocity, not only in its terrain, but in its people, as well. Byron remarks upon Albania as a “rugged nurse of savage men” (“CHP” 2.38.6). Here, he offers staid, civilized English readers a glimpse into an extremely foreign land. It is a place that is not only topographically unusual, with the emphasis on “rugged,” but it also creates and sustains a people who are the antithesis of polite society. How else could these “savage men” exist but in a world that was fierce enough to sustain them?

Byron ends verse 38 by highlighting a further, extremely important difference between the familiar and the alien, that of religion. Byron writes that “The cross descends, thy minarets arise” (“CHP” 2.38.7). With these six words, Byron evokes an almost impassable gulf. The decline of Christianity in the face of Islamic ascension could conjure a number of responses in Byron’s

contemporary (Christian) reader, including fear, aggravation, uncertainty, and repulsion. What place is this at the end of the civilized world? What land could possibly exist in a world full of minarets? What *is* a minaret? All of these questions create a distance between the reader and the poem, as well as the reader and the poet.

In this way, Byron takes steps to set himself up as the expert on an unknown, seemingly unknowable, land. He adds to his own image as Other by creating a space *between* East and West, a space that is significant in its ability to remove Byron's public image from the comfortable, known sphere of English Poet. Byron cements himself into the position of liaison between East and West, between known and unknown.

Byron shows his Western side, however, in the verse's last line, writing of "many a cypress grove within each city's ken" ("CHP" 2.38.9). By including such a blatantly Greek physical image as cypress groves in a description of Albania's topography, Byron fuses Greece and Albania together as Other. One may allow that Byron used this physical description as a means to positively link Greece and Albania in the minds of his countrymen. As noted, the English of Byron's era were great admirers of classical Greece, their esteem going so far as to plunder Greek ruins. While Byron had harsh words for those who were so disrespectful of contemporary Greece as to pillage it in the name of history, he must have been aware that Greece and its non-Islamic inhabitants were far more palatable to his English audience.

The effect this verse, this poem as a whole, had and continues to have on

Albanians should be mentioned. That Albanians have always had a fiercely developed nationalistic sense of pride has been noted. To find themselves and their country lauded by a foreigner would be a pleasure, one not often found outside of its environs at any time. Albanians have long held that Alexander the Great sprung from their soil, and to have their claim strengthened and put into verse serves to endear Byron to them. Even the backhanded praise of their rugged countryside and countrymen would be viewed in a positive light, and therefore deserving of Western consideration.

In verse 42, Byron continues to anthropomorphize the countryside of Albania, endowing it with what the West considers apt descriptions of emphatically foreign lands, emphasizing its aspect as Other. He writes of Childe Harold viewing how

Morn dawns: and with it stern Albania's hills,
Dark Suli's rocks, and Pindus' inland peak,
Robed half in mist, bedew'd with snowy rills,
Array'd in many a dun and purple streak. ("CHP" 2.42.1-4)

These lines serve a twofold purpose in that they echo a Western view of what is considered savage or at least uncivilized by using adjectives which are dark and foreboding: "stern," "dark," "mist," "dun and purple," while at the same time setting up Byron/Childe Harold as a knowledgeable, fearless adventurer. Byron uses these words to describe Childe Harold's view of the countryside in order to emphasize to his readers that this is not a place in which they will find comfort, perhaps because they are too English. Each word adds to the vision

Byron wishes to conjure, that of a mysterious, decidedly non-Western land. But nowhere in these dark images, of hills and rocks and opaque mists, does the reader get a sense that Byron/Childe Harold feels anything less than excitement, anticipation. Byron cannot wait to essay into this territory, perhaps heightening his thrill by creating an even greater anticipatory tingle of anxiety for his readers.

One reads in Byron's word choice that this anxiety is more expectation than trepidation, especially noting his use of soft words in his lines that temper the forbidding aspect of the countryside. By juxtaposing the austere, rigid "stern" with the rolling, sensuous image of "hills"; by noting that the peak is not only gently "robed" with "mist" but is also daintily "bedewed"; and finally by observing that the splashes of "dun and purple" are deftly "array'd," Byron crafts an image that simultaneously invites and repels, depending on the reader's own image of the Orient. Those who see the East as a vacuum of sense and civilization may linger on the harsh, scary words, while those who look to the East with some sense of eagerness note the incipient, implied invitation in the juxtaposition of Byron's words.

This invitation to sample Albania is evidenced in the closing lines of verse 42. Byron, speaking to the early morning sun, calls out "Arise; and, as the clouds along them break, / Disclose the dwelling of the mountaineer;" inviting a new day and a new vision of a rugged people and their soil ("CHP" 2.42.5-6). Byron's use of the idea of disclosure suggests a hidden, nearly impenetrable fortress in which the Albanians live. By creating a sense of mystery Byron

paints a picture of Albania as a location that must be searched out in order to be fully seen. This mysterious aura simultaneously creates a site that may choose to remain hidden from the eyes of those *Albanians* consider Other. Byron here implicitly bows to Western expansion and colonization in offering the idea that one must be prepared for a new vision, a new day, in order to see what Albania has to offer its visitor. Yet Byron does not make this invitation easily acceptable. One must be willing to journey to the land of the mountaineer, which insinuates a land not for the faint of heart (or for the civilized).

Byron follows this invitation with a further description of the land awaiting the intrepid visitor. This is no walk in the park; here we have a land where the wolf, the eagle, “[b]irds, beasts of prey, and wilder men” roam free and (presumably) in harmony (“CHP” 2.42.8). Byron is entranced with the sights and the imagery of a completely non-Western land where he can indulge his Romantic sensibilities about Nature and the natural state of man. Byron makes this distinction between what was known about the East and what he and Childe Harold will discover by ending the verse with the line “And gathering storms around convulse the closing year” (“CHP” 2.42.9). This image of the dying gasps of a bygone era entrenches Byron firmly in the Romantic predisposition for the new. The “gathering storms” which “convulse” show that this movement into a new, uncharted territory will not be easy for travelers and knowledge seekers, keeping with Byron’s dual purpose of highlighting Albania as explicitly (and admirably) Other while positioning those affected with

civilization firmly at the gate, with himself as gatekeeper.

In verse 43 Byron uses Childe Harold to detail the isolation of Albania and of himself as a traveler. Byron traveled in state, with John Cam Hobhouse, a company of servants, guards, and myriad items to ensure material comfort, but he was not immune to the isolation that Childe Harold feels, even if it was not an isolation that engenders fear or sadness in Byron. While Byron and Hobhouse did travel together, Byron was by far the happier and more eager of the two men. And though Byron numbered two Albanians among his servants and guards, as close as Byron was to Dervish, the younger of the two, the Albanians' innate Otherness would build a wall. Echoing this isolation Byron writes that "Harold felt himself at length alone, / And bade to Christian tongues a long adieu," further emphasizing the physical separation between East and West that the topography of Albania provides ("CHP" 2.43.2). Childe Harold immerses himself in a foreign, perhaps savage (at the very least, decidedly non-Christian) land, whereupon he will face the fact that his whole history and society is only a partial telling of the world. Byron here works against creating a positive/negative dichotomy between East and West. Although Byron/Childe Harold is an adventurer who must be amenable to the English world (in order to ply his trade as a poet), Byron does not cloud his reader's view of what is real in the East by overtly portraying the West as superior; familiar, certainly, but not superior.

Byron notes that Childe Harold "adventured on a shore unknown, / Which all admire, but many dread to view" ("CHP" 2.43.4). Here, Byron boldly

states the duality of Albania in the Occidental mind. It is a place admired but dreaded. And while it is universally admired, the uncertain knowledge of this place causes hesitation. Byron continues to play on this image of Albania in this verse by drumming in the fear that the East engenders, but as he does so, he also continues to stress the (new/different) response to this fear and dread: excitement. Byron writes that what Childe Harold viewed “was savage, but the scene was new”; that novelty was in and of itself enough of a selling point for Byron as the personification of Romanticism and its penchant for newness (“CHP” 2.43.7). The *ennui* that plagued the English of the Romantic era could be easily treated, according to Byron’s works, by embracing the Other.

Byron’s words also may be read as an indictment of the West’s immediate categorizing of the unfamiliar as degenerate or inferior. His verse may be read as an explanation for seeing the scene as “savage” simply *because* it is new. While the Romantic predisposition for novelty is well known and well documented, one must be aware that the newness and novelty of any entity could not be markedly unfamiliar. There needed to be some relationship to what was already known, and what was already deemed acceptable as far as Western thought and taste were concerned. It must further be noted that Byron’s attraction to the East and its Otherness was not a wholesale immersion into tolerance and acceptance; he still compared the countryside and the people of Albania to entities readily understood by his Western readers in order to make them more palpable.

Yet Byron does not gloss over the Eurocentrism he noticed in others. In

verse 46, Byron relates Childe Harold's travels through the land of Illyria, praising the countryside while remarking upon the West's disregard for such beauty. Byron writes of "many a mount sublime" which Childe Harold passed through, "lands scarce noticed in historic tales" ("CHP" 2.46.3-4). These Albanian lands surpassed the grandeur of the oft-traveled areas with which Western readers and adventurers were already familiar. Byron extolled these alien sights, writing that even "in famed Attica such lovely dales / Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast / A charm they know not" ("CHP" 2.46.5-7). Here again Byron carefully distinguishes between Albania and Greece, praising Albania.

Most readers (and to a certain extent, Byron himself) still fall prey to the prevailing ethos of the synchronicity between Other and inferior; nowhere in these verses does Byron connect the two. While he does discuss the relative merits of Albanians as a race in his notes, Byron's poetry that referenced the Albanians and their country is cast in nothing but the most glowing terms.

In the next several verses of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Byron turns his attention away from the beauty of the countryside to focus on Albania's interesting people, most especially Ali Pasha of Tepelene, a character whose importance during this time has already been noted.

In verse 47 Byron writes of Childe Harold's continuing on his journey to "greet Albania's chief," a man whose fearsome reputation precedes him ("CHP" 2.47.4). On the way to meet Ali Pasha, the real life travelers were greeted by the remnant of a man's arm hanging by a string; just a little reminder that as

mild-mannered as Ali Pasha seemed, he had barely hidden depths of fierceness (Cheetham 71). That this image made an impression on Byron is evident, but what he most discussed in his letters was the general good nature of Ali Pasha. Ali Pasha's barbarism is almost an aside, thrown in for color. In fact, "Byron was [so] fascinated by Ali Pasha. [. . .] He belonged to Byron's fantasies and became one of his heroes" (Cheetham 74).

In "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Byron's initial description of Ali Pasha belies his own real enchantment with this larger than life figure. Childe Harold hears alarming stories of this character, and writes of a man who, "with a bloody hand / [. . .] sways a nation, turbulent and bold" ("CHP" 2.47.5-6). Byron's judicious word choice sustains the uncertainty and trepidation with which Childe Harold and his Western readers approach this notorious figure of a wild and furious land.

Making no bones about the fact that Childe Harold and his readers are entering uncharted territory, Byron still almost casually describes the "lawless law" with which Ali Pasha rules, using his "bloody hand" to keep order ("CHP" 2.47.5). This may again be seen as Byron's wish to set himself up as the gatekeeper to a new, unknown world, one that is quite obviously foreign to even the most basic fundamentals such as the law. Using a "bloody hand" to keep a "lawless law" in check is hardly the manner of governance Byron's Western readers were accustomed to. In this way, Byron titillates his readers with images of savagery and brutality, images of an era and time that could only exist in a world peopled by those who are decidedly Other.

Byron continually tempers this savagery (which takes on a near buffoonish quality with its repetition) by having his protagonist show more anticipation than dread at entering this alien realm. The savagery, while still fearful, is made more exotic and therefore more palpable. The reader is led to think: Of course these alien beings rule themselves in such a brutal, visceral manner; they are not English, and therefore are inferior. This follows Edward Said's dicta that in Orientalist thought, what is said is so. Byron plays on this imagery for his own purpose; he wants to celebrate the foreignness of Albania and Albanians in order to draw interest from his readers while at the same time ensuring that Westerners do not become too comfortable. Although Albania is a small part of the discourse, Byron wants to keep the Natural purity of this land and people to himself, acting as the sole agent for understanding, only offering guided glimpses of this savage wonder to his readers. He does this in order to set himself apart from the society that at once rejects and adores him, creating a wall that cannot be breached, but that simultaneously acts almost as an invitation.

Through Childe Harold, and for his Western readers, Byron explores the luminous geography of the land of Albania, wondering at the beauty, reveling in the fact that "[f]rom heaven itself he may inhale the breeze" ("CHP" 2.50.4). This equation of primitivism with nature is reflective of the most basic tenet of Romanticism, that the pure, uncivilized being is closer to Nature/God than the being whose rough edges have been worn away through civilization.

Byron uses this to reinforce the marvel that is Albania. He does so in

order to create a sympathy between the reader and the dreaded savages who inhabit this pristine, wondrous land, a land that has not succumbed to the indignities which befall a city. Byron writes that Childe Harold does not see a “city’s towers pollute the lovely view” of this land, which is definitely a mark in Albania’s favor in the Romantic ideal (“CHP” 2.52.1). This is a land that has not suffered the indignities of the West and is as yet capable of offering an opportunity to commune with Nature.

Childe Harold’s first vision of Tepelene (or Tepalen, as it is called in “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”) comes in the evening after the weary traveler has made his way through this beautiful, almost uninhabited land. Childe Harold sees “like meteors in the sky / The glittering minarets of Tepalen,” images that incite wonder and anticipation in the reader as well as the protagonist (“CHP” 2.55.5-6). Even with these decidedly unfamiliar images, it should be noted that Childe Harold is reflective of Byron’s ease and that “[i]t always comes as a surprise to see how completely Byron felt at home among these strangers” (Melikian 24).

The intensity of image and delight found in visiting Ali Pasha was heightened by Byron’s wonder at the city. “Amidst no common pomp the despot sate,” Byron wrote, creating a vision of foreign splendor mixed once again with a savagery born of infidels (“CHP” 2.56.5). This is in keeping with the description of the “despot” Byron relayed to his mother, writing of Ali Pasha’s

[. . .] fine face, light blue eyes & a white beard, his manner is

very kind & at the same time he possesses that dignity which I find universal amongst the Turks.-- --He has the appearance of anything but his real character, for he is a remorseless tyrant , guilty of the most horrible cruelties [. . .] they call him the Mahometan Buonaparte. (Byron "Famous" 228)

Byron shows a touch of Orientalism, assigning Ali Pasha to the Turks. Yet Byron may be forgiven, in that Ali Pasha represents so many things. He is Albanian and yet a high ranking member of the Ottoman Empire, which is based in Turkey. Also, the connection between Albanians and Turks is a strong one, dating back centuries. Finally, the designation of Pasha being Turkish, it may be easily understood how Byron made this error.

It is a testament to his abilities as a poet that Byron creates an image that does a great deal to whet one's appetite for what is to come by playing on the ferocity of Ali Pasha and then neatly juxtaposing Ali Pasha's sweet countenance. Byron writes

ALI reclined, a man of war and woes:
Yet in his lineaments ye cannot trace,
While Gentleness her milder radiance throws
Along that aged venerable face,
The deeds that lurk beneath, and stain him with disgrace.

("CHP" 2.62.5-9)

Here Ali Pasha stands as the exemplar of Albania and its environs, creating an image that is at once serene and ferocious. Byron uses Pasha to describe this

world to his readers. He synthesizes the images and creates a poetic postcard, allowing his readers a manageable glimpse into the Orient via a beatific despot. In his notes, Byron flatly states that “[n]o nation are so detested by their neighbors as the Albanese” (“CHP” 878). This does not keep him from finding so much about them enthralling and enchanting.

Byron takes great pains to describe the Albanian dress in “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage.” This is a precursor to his creation of his image as Albie, the Mad Albanian. His delight in this costume is relayed not only in a letter to his mother, but also in his description of “The wild Albanian kirtled in his knee, / With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun, / And gold-embroider’d garments, fair to see” (“CHP” 2.58.1-3). Byron’s pleasure in this ensemble may also be due to its resemblance to Scottish attire, perhaps creating a pleasant link with his memories of his early childhood. As mentioned, Byron wrote that “the Albanese struck me forcibly by their resemblance to the Highlanders of Scotland, in dress, figure, and manner of living” (“CHP” 878). This similarity would also be a means to stave off any homesickness even the most intrepid wanderer would have had.

Byron takes an entire stanza to praise the people of Albania, inverting their “inferior” attributes by praising them.

Fierce are Albania’s children, yet they lack
Not virtues, were those virtues more mature.
Where is the foe that ever saw their back?
Who can so well the toil of war endure?

[.]

Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure.

(“CHP” 2.65.1-4, 7)

Byron remarks on those favored attributes he found in the Albanians, most especially their courage and their fierceness in battle. This intensity is also evident in the Albanians’ way of life, which Byron notes in the song he inserts in Canto 2, stanza 72. Byron wonders “Shall the sons of Chimari, who never forgive / The fault of a friend, bid an enemy live?” (“CHP” 2.72.3, 1-2). The no-holds-barred attitude toward life and war is enthralling, and holds itself in opposition to the gentility and civility of English and Western life.

Byron enjoyed the dancing and singing he witnessed. The Albanians danced a *valle*, which is a circular dance where all the dancers either hold hands or, especially in the case of men dancing together, throw their arms around each others’ shoulders. The steps are repeated and can be simple or extremely complex. The songs that accompany the dances are passed down through the generations and often deal with nationalism or home life. Byron portrayed the dance and created an “Albanian” song for inclusion in his poem, which critics feel is the combination of a number of Albanian folk songs.

Byron’s song refers to his newfound Albanian hero, “[a] chief ever glorious like Ali Pashaw” (“CHP” 2.72.9.4).

Byron’s poems “provided [his] contemporaries and their descendants with many a cultural myth,” opening up the West to images of the East the type of which were in short supply (Graham 30). Byron’s penchant for the

Orient is entangled with his belief in English superiority. While these two ideas may seem mutually exclusive, Byron manages to highlight one and temper the other through his work.

CHAPTER 3: CRITICAL RESPONSES

Byron and Orientalism

Albania is a representative of the East whose “lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West” (Said 5). While Albania’s existence as a vibrant entity is allowable, Said disenfranchises it when he writes

. . . I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. (3)

By this logic, Byron’s relationship with Albania was always already tainted and could never be more than an Englishman’s whimsy, lacking any depth.

According to Said, Byron would never be able to grasp any knowledge of this land that did not follow a universal set of strictures that presupposed a superiority in all things. While Said’s precepts regarding Orientalism undoubtedly hold true for many Western travelers and scholars, they neglect to account for individuals of uncommon understanding who refused to accept the supposed inherent inferiority of the Orient. Although Byron certainly believed in the superiority of the English, that did not necessarily negate his ability to appreciate Albania or the Albanians he encountered. Unfortunately, this opinion of Byron’s reaction is not one often found in Byron scholarship. Instead, one is presented with an almost unilateral acceptance of Byron’s

Orientalism.

Eric Meyer's discussion of Byron and the Orient in his essay "I Know Thee not, I Loathe Thy Race': Romantic Orientalism in the Eye of the Other" falls into line with Edward Said's precepts of Orientalism. Meyer begins his essay with an epigraph quoting Napoleon, "I must go to the Orient: all great glory comes from there" (Meyer 657). Napoleon's statement about the Orient is interesting in two ways: the first, in Napoleon's naming the Orient as the fount of glory; the second, in the notion that Ali Pasha is often characterized as the Muslim Napoleon, a sobriquet spread worldwide by Byron. This intermingling of East and West shows that the synthesis of these two social stratifications is not as deliberate or clear-cut as one would assume. Malek Alloula notes that "the Orient . . . has fascinated and disturbed Europe for a long time. It has been its glittering imaginary [and] also its mirage" (3). Meyer proposes that Napoleon went to Egypt, "pursuing a mirage of Oriental glory," a mirage that Byron does his best to make real in his rendering of Ali Pasha and the wonders of Albania (Meyer 657). This shadowy image of "mirage" brings with it both positive and negative connotations: either an ephemeral, ethereal dream or a malicious hoax.

The very idea that glory is to be found in a world so decidedly Other as Egypt (standing in for the Orient at large), and which is so fantastic as to be called a mirage, creates a disharmony in most renderings of the relationship between these two worlds, with England decidedly on top, and every other nation in a subservient position. What is neglected by Meyer and Alloula is

that this power structure, for Byron at least, is a prime example of his own ambivalence about English supremacy in all matters, an ambivalence that is evident in his poetry. Again, while Byron shares the contemporary view of English superiority, he also knows that the Other is not to be automatically denigrated for simply *being* Other. Saree Makdisi notes that in the second Canto of “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” Byron creates a vision of the East “as [a] refuge from and potential alternative to modernity,” that modernity being a British time and place that brought Byron much frustration (Makdisi 204).

Byron accords the unknown a respect and deference seemingly unparalleled in that time and place. Joseph Lew notes that in the nineteenth century, English men “could exercise talents unsuspected and achieve unprecedented power in the East” (180). The East offered this option because it was, for the West, completely unknown and therefore open to interpretation by those who “discovered” it. And this discovery or mastery of the mysterious engendered in those men the opportunity to discover themselves and become masters of their own fate. This opportunity to create the self echoes not only Napoleon’s interest in crowning himself emperor through his military excursions, but Byron’s own “intertwining of life, poetry, and ‘myth’ . . . [an] example of ‘self-fashioning’” that gave the British the image of Albie, the Mad Albanian, one in a series of personas developed and embraced by Byron (Lew 180).

But while Byron does become one of a seemingly endless number of Western men who head East in order to find themselves and glory, he does so

without the simultaneous denigration of those he encounters on his journey. Joseph Lew includes Byron in his description of those who are “typical of Europeans in the East,” assuming an arrogance toward and an adulation from the natives, which they took for granted (182). I hesitate to include Byron in this group because although he is flattered by Ali Pasha’s attention and goodwill, Byron’s arrogance seems to be more personal than national; Byron is arrogant and flattered because he is *Byron*, not because he is English.

Not everyone agrees with this split. In discussing his own view of Byron and Orientalism, Meyer writes

[t]he genuinely liberating impulse of Romantic Hellenism thus subsists within and serves to legitimate an imperial narrative that portrays the extension of European dominance over the East as historically inevitable. (661)

I would argue that Byron does not do so, especially in his discussion of Albania. Using Byron’s texts, one sees that while Byron’s narrators (or Byron himself in his notes and letters) marvel at the Other, they do so without malice brought by smug superiority. This distinction is important in that it showcases a complexity *within* the text itself, which Meyer does not account for. Instead, Meyer argues that Byron’s work must be skewed in the same manner that Malek Alloula uses in his discussion of postcards of veiled Algerian women.

Alloula turns the tables on the traditional view that the photographer of these veiled women is, in fact, in the dominant power position by positing the idea that “the feminine gaze that filters through the veil” is equally, if not more,

powerful, a “womanly gaze [which] is a little like the eye of the camera” itself (14). Alloula asserts that in reversing the power positions, the photographer “*is dispossessed of his own gaze,*” a situation that negates the established power structure and allows for another, less obvious point of view (14).

While this is undoubtedly true in Alloula’s case, I would argue that Meyer is mistaken in his attempt to apply this distinct superior/inferior reversal to Byron without making a note of Byron’s appreciation of Albania. Meyer states that “[t]o move beyond the legacy of colonialism requires the ability to see Orientalist discourse through the eye of the Eastern other,” a goal that is partially achieved in Byron’s glowing accounts of his journey (662). While this appreciation does not go so far as to allow for superiority in anything, it does exist and is therefore a means of *always already* skewing the reading of the text, enabling a movement beyond the traditional Orientalist reading. There is no need to turn the photographed into the photographer; Byron writes in fulsome terms of his journey through the Albanian countryside and of his dealings with the Albanian people, especially Ali Pasha. What completes this dissonance is a concerted effort to view the Albanian side of the story, to bring it into account. I would argue that this is not quite the same as Alloula’s turning of the photographer’s lens; it is instead a means of adding voices to the already opened discourse, of creating a fuller, more weighty and meaningful heteroglossia on which to base a discussion.

Meyer accounts for some ambiguity in Romantic Orientalism by noting that

in the shifting terrain of Romantic Orientalism, it is difficult to characterize the attitude of either writer toward the trope he employs, just as it is difficult to fix the relationship between ‘author’ and ‘persona’. . . . (666)

Yet while Meyer allows for this type of shifting and movement, he remains rigid in his declaration that the only means of viewing any type of pro-Eastern sentiment in Romantic writing, specifically Byron’s writing, is to turn the “normal” reading on its head. By ignoring the richness of Byron’s lyrical description of Other, Meyer ignores the pleasure evident in these works nearly two hundred years later. Meyer declares that

[a]n oppositional reading of Byron’s text, then, suggests that it is possible to read even the most hegemonic texts as structured around dynamic attempts to confront and subl(im)ate what they repress(683)

Meyer need not work so hard. Byron’s text is never hegemonic in regard to this type of power structure--it is always already in flux, offering alternate views within a “straight” reading. To ignore that is to ignore meaning.

What is most apparent in Byron’s works and in his incarnation of self is that he wished to exist as Other, through his protagonists and through his image as Albie. Byron’s embrace of the Orient, and especially of such a secluded, unknowable land as Albania, is his means of taking a journey and “proceeding forward in geographical space and backward in historical time” (McClintock 30). In this way, Byron continues to incorporate opposing ideas

and synthesize a new means of expression. Byron goes forward into a dark, mysterious, uncivilized world, just like the typical English conqueror, but unlike the conqueror, he has no interest in “civilizing” this world. Byron instead enjoys it for what it is. He even goes so far as to incorporate some aspects of this “Otherness” into his own identity, a move that has overtones of appropriation, certainly, but at base there is a deep, abiding love for that Other, a respect for its inherent being.

Another aspect of Byron’s relationship with Albania is that it is often ignored, that it is not seen as an entity. Saree Makdisi writes that this type of dismissal is part of the “violent ‘dialogue’ of imperialism,” a dialogue where both parts of this relationship, both East and West, are “non-identities rather than identities” (204). While an argument may be made for the hegemonic reality of the West, Albania continues to occupy a void, an area which holds little interest in any identification. Although this area is not codified, it continues to exist “still clinging to its own life, its own structures, its own meanings,” all of which are always already identifiable to those, like Byron, who choose to see (Makdisi 205). And even if Byron does display a tendency to relate the new to the familiar, comparing Albanians to Highlanders, he seldom limits the actual reality by forcing it to adhere to preconceived notions, whether by metaphor or metonymy. Makdisi argues that “Byron makes his Albanians seem more knowable by assimilating them to the familiar alterity of Highlanders,” a safe, oft-repeated assumption, but one which does not go far enough (211). Albanians and Highlanders as an equation are rife with

possibilities for signification, one idea of the East leading to another, or perhaps back toward a more palatable Western image, but Byron does his readers a service by acting against his society in refusing to limit the direction of the perception by his own prejudices.

It has been noted by Byron scholars that “Byron’s self-discovery or self-invention . . . takes place in the fantastic Orient produced in *Childe Harold II*” (Makdisi 210). This is important because Byron sets himself apart from his own society by creating Albie. Byron becomes the Orient. He annexes it for his own purpose. What is left out of the dialogue is the effect Byron’s transformation had on Albania. Is it completely Eurocentric to state that nothing came of it--or at least nothing worth discussing because the West had no knowledge? Or rather chose not to have knowledge?

Byron’s appreciation of the Orient is exemplified by Makdisi’s assertion that the East had “an otherness whose appeal would possess Byron for the rest of his life, and whose influence would shape his poetry more profoundly than by merely offering him exotic thematic material” (211). This declaration allows for the argument that this journey was not an isolated event which, once documented, could be relegated to the imagination and neatly compartmentalized as Other. Instead, one is offered the opportunity through Byron to reject the belief that the Orient must be regarded in stasis and through a fixed entity. Byron highlighted the West’s laziness by imagining a people who are more than the sum of their stereotypical parts, and thus offering a glimpse through the opacity that surrounds the Orient, and

especially Albania.

While this isolation of the Orient was important to Byron and his creation of himself, it became a hindrance to a complete understanding of the dialogue of this whole of Byron and his works. This heteroglossia existed and continues to exist whether it is acknowledged or not. A complete understanding is available only when one looks at all sides. There is an Orientalist duality at play here, one that has not yet been expurgated because the Albanian part continues to be parenthetical in the Western dialogue. Unfortunately, this view has many reasons for existence.

Part of the reason for this is the deliberate opacity of Byron and his handling of the image of Albania. Byron set himself up as the expert of “the Orient’s Orient--the real Orient ‘out there,’ and not only some vaguely realistic figurative landscape produced by a Western imagination” (Makdisi 214). Byron creates a demarcation of what is actually the Orient and what is merely a Western, filtered view. This idea sets Byron apart from the bulk of his countrymen. In fact, Makdisi notes James Mill’s staunch belief that an intelligent Englishman may learn more about the East in study than in actually living and exploring the foreign territory (203). Byron’s opinion is the antithesis of this. Byron’s scathing comments upon his reviewers’ lack of knowledge, wondering “[w]as it in Scotland that the young gentlemen of the Edinburgh Review *learned* that *Solyman* means *Mahomet II*, any more than *criticism* means *infallibility?*” confirm this sentiment (“CHP” 885).

Byron’s view of the Orient as a valuable, viable entity unto itself was not

shared by his contemporaries, but this friction allowed him to open a new world for himself. Not only was his travel exotic and rife with possibilities, but Byron was able to emphasize those Other aspects of himself *through* the dynamism of the East, creating and recreating images and entities in his poetry and his public face. His deliberate appropriation of Other allowed him to create play within himself.

Western Response

While Byron worked to synthesize an identity of Other, he came into close contact with one who came to epitomize Orientalism--Ali Pasha. Byron's fascination with Ali Pasha echoed the reactions of others who encountered the ruler, and so "Ali Pasha thus acquired a place in nineteenth century European literature that is probably unrivalled by any other figure in Ottoman history" (Skiotis 222). Ali Pasha was a figure of much admiration and interest for the Westerners who visited the Ottoman empire's outposts in Albania and Greece. Byron was, in fact, only one of many

who later published their travel experiences . . . diplomats, military men, spies, gentlemen of leisure, scholars, doctors, adventurers, renegades, as well as poets and painters, who made the long and arduous pilgrimage to Yannina or other parts of the Pasha's dominations. (Skiotis 222)

Little remains in the public consciousness of these visits and their effect on those Westerners who chose such adventurous travel. Even during Byron's time, the number and variety of visitors to Albania never quite managed to

move the country or its denizens into the limelight.

The idea that “Tepelene, Albania, is almost peripheral to Byron’s world” is reinforced by the fact that little in Byron scholarship concerns itself with the cross-cultural influence between Byron and Albania (Simpson-Housley 92). What generally occurs with regard to this topic is one of three things: A lumping together of Albania with Greece, thereby negating its autonomy; an Orientalist elimination of the Albanian aspect of the situation, focusing only on Western scholarship; or a general dismissal of the scholarship.

Simpson-Housley explains that one reason for the lack of scholarship may be due to the fact that the “regime of Enver Hoxha was not well disposed to foreign tourists,” a statement that overlooks the idea that there may exist Albanian scholarship on this topic (Simpson-Housley 92). This absence creates the impression that Simpson-Housley’s work follows Byron’s path--an Englishman’s foray into the exotic. Simpson-Housley goes on to note that Tepelene “has rich historical associations” and that “Byron’s impact on Tepelene is considerable,” but he somewhat taints this importance by citing as his example of this added “dimension” that an “attractive gypsy schoolgirl . . . informed me that she knew Byron was very handsome!” (Simpson-Housley 93). While Byron’s looks no doubt played a major role in his image as poet, this focus slants the intellectual discussion by ignoring any scholarship that exists.

Simpson-Housley does, however, make note of the exhibitions in the museum at Tepelene, noting that “the space allocated to a foreign citizen in a museum is significant,” with several images of Byron on display, as well as

letters from Ali Pasha and Canto 2 of “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” (Simpson-Housley 94).

Simpson-Housley writes of the plaque erected in memory of Byron in the wall of Ali Pasha’s fortress, and notes the inscriptions on it, including this by Enver Hoxha:

I like Byron, not that I am a
Romantic, but for the fact that
he sincerely loved my people. (Simpson-Housley 94)

Simpson-Housley does little more than offer translations of the words inscribed on the plaque, noting that they “demonstrate the Albanian appreciation of the poet” (94). This is all well and good, but Simpson-Housley lets pass an opportunity to delve into the connection, noting that such a loather of the West as Hoxha was moved, more than 150 years after Byron’s visit, to remark upon the poet in such glowing, affectionate terms. The words Hoxha uses, noting his affection for Byron (the Albanian word use, *dua*, is primarily translated as *love*) as inextricably twined with Byron’s love for Hoxha’s people, go far in highlighting this ill-lit connection. Hoxha went on to say about Byron (although Simpson-Housley does not discuss it, Karagjozi includes this as an epigraph to his work Xhorxh Bajroni):

Siç e dini, në Çajld Haroldin e tij të famshëm ai u ka
kënduar ehde trimërisë, burrërisë e pjekurisë së shqiptarëve
. . . Bajroni i donte popujt që luftonin për liri. (Karagjozi 1)

As you know, in Childe Harold and in his renown, he has always sung of

the bravery, virility and maturity of Albanians . . . Byron loved people who fought for freedom.

The very idea that such a tyrant as Enver Hoxha would celebrate Byron for his admiration of freedom fighters is not only ludicrous, but so intriguing that it deserves to be noted. Hoxha may be seen as the successor of the despot Ali Pasha, ruling his land with a ferocity and nationalism that left little room for dissension. Yet both men admired Byron, perhaps because Byron refused to be identified as distinctly Western.

Byron's fascination with Albania, and specifically Ali Pasha, is symbolic of the "interest of the Romantic current in European thought of the day, the embodiment of everything Oriental and exotic" (Skiotis 222). Skiotis posits that this interest in Ali Pasha was less about him as an Albanian ruler than as a ruler of the Greeks "for whose glorious classical heritage most educated Europeans were beginning to feel a strong attachment" (222). This attraction to classical Greece was noteworthy in that through it one may view a separation of time and space on the part of the English. To become enamored of classical Greece while disdaining the contemporary, as well as lumping Albania into the mix, is a prime example of Edward Said's very definition of "Academic Orientalists [who] for the most part were interested in the classical period of whatever language or society it was they studied" (52). Simpson-Housley's view fits quite nicely, too. This appreciation of a Westerner, an Other to the Albanians, is seldom reciprocated. Ali Pasha has often borne the brunt of Orientalism. It has been noted that

despite Ali Pasha's continued fame, or notoriety, his life, deeds, policies and influence have received relatively little scholarly attention; his few biographers have drawn mainly on the works of western contemporaries and ignored Ottoman archives. (Wiseman 11)

This fact resonates in the scholarship on Byron and his works, although Byron is surely not lacking in biographers or scholarly research.

An example of the Western dismissal of Ali Pasha, even during his own time, is the meeting between Ali Pasha and the Danish archaeologist Peter Oluf Brønsted after Brønsted's excavation of a site in Greece. While Brønsted was impressed with Ali Pasha's intellect and knowledge of world events, he repeatedly refused Ali Pasha's offer to dig at a site in Albania (Wiseman 15). Brønsted wished to go home after supervising the dig in Greece, ignoring the wonders that may be found in Albania--such as the recent discovery of a 2,000-year-old statue of Roman origin at Butrint. (For a discussion of the identity of this statue, see "Statuja e gjetur në Butrint nuk është Minerva." 'Statue Found near Butrint may not be Minerva.' Gazeta Shekull 'Century Newspaper'. 30 Aug. 2002. 9 March 2003.

<<http://www.shqiperia.com/arkeologjia/minerva.php>>

In a more positive light, it should be noted that the connection between Ali Pasha and Byron is so enmeshed in history that even Wiseman, in an article about archaeology, not literature, links the two. Wiseman begins his essay with an epigraph quoting the Canto 2 of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," as well as

quoting Byron's November 12, 1809, letter to his mother, in which Byron discusses Ali Pasha. However separate these two men were in life, history constantly intertwines them. A discussion of one is incomplete without a discussion of the other. As stated earlier, any discussion on any topic is incomplete without involving scholarship other than that created in the West.

As a means for understanding the breadth of Western inattention to Byron and Albania, I will briefly look at the proceedings of two symposia and a discussion of the history of Byron and Albania. In doing so, I will show that while a small amount of Byron-Albania scholarship may exist, one would be hard pressed to locate it through a reading of scholarly literature. It is somewhat disheartening to see that this topic is overlooked when it could be focused on directly.

Michael Rees writes of the 1988 gathering of Byron scholars in "Byron's Greece and Albania: The Athens Bicentenary Symposium." In this six-page essay, Rees discusses the proceedings of a "fifteen-day Tour [which] was held of all the major places in Greece and Albania in which Byron travelled in 1809-1811 and 1823-24," noting the sites seen and the papers presented (Rees 115). The listing of the symposium's workshops, attended by "some ninety participants from sixteen different nations," unfortunately contains no mention of Byron and Albania (Rees 115). To be fair, not every session topic was listed in the recitation of the symposium, but this omission is reflective of a continued disregard for the Byron-Albania connection.

The Albanian portion of the symposium is given little attention, in the

essay as well as on the occasion. When the tour turned to Albania “the travellers separated into two groups” (Rees 119). While the smaller group went to Ioannina, the larger group “crossed the Albanian frontier” (Rees 119). It may be construed that this portion of the tour was not deemed important enough to engage all of the attendees. The group in Albania visited several sites, including what remains of Ali Pasha’s fortress. Although at Missolonghi, a talk was given entitled “The Inhabitants’ Feelings towards Byron,” it was not indicated that any such talk was held at Tepelene, an area of import to Byron (Rees 118).

At the 1990 Lausanne Byron Seminar, Afrim Karagjozi discussed the “links between Byron and his country” (“Byron and Albania” 176). The fruits of this relationship are briefly described in this article, beginning with a mention of Jeronim De Rada, the “first Romantic poet of Albania . . . [who] read Byron from 1832 and later imitated him” (“Byron and Albania” 176-7). Much has been written about imitators of Byron; the Byron Journal itself published an article on this subject in 1999. M. Byron Raizis’s essay discusses these imitators of Byron, a group of English and Americans whose work was often inspired by “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,” and as a group adopted an un-Byron stringent Orientalist view of the East. Raizis’s comments on one of the poets, Felicia Dorothea Hemans, a contemporary of Byron, notes that she earned Byron’s ire “in totally refuting his position about the Elgin marbles” (Raizis 29). Whereas Byron was disgusted by the English pillaging of these antiquities, Hemans was wont to praise Elgin’s English initiative, firmly removing her from

the temperate Orientalism that shaded Byron's view of the East (Raizis 29).

Byron knew "no motive which can excuse" the looting of these relics, and did "not think the honour of England advanced by plunder" ("CHP" 878). Here, Byron separates himself from the prevalent English sentiment, distancing himself from the celebration of entitlement and casting aspersions on those whose ignorance and swagger would allow them to "rive what Goth, and Turk and Time hath spared" ("CHP" 2.12.2). But this separation is not total. Byron was far more open to and tolerant of the world's other (non-English) inhabitants, and still he considered himself, and the English, at the top of the world's hierarchy. This mix is difficult for modern ears to hear, but it speaks well of Byron's ability to move beyond class and race as sole arbiters of worth, of his ability to accept others/Others if not as equals, then at least as admirable entities in their own right.

In letters home highlighting descriptions of those he encountered on his travels, Byron never quite dismissed "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures," but he is adamant in his delight with the Albanians he encounters (Said 7). Perhaps the most visible example of this duality is in Byron's description of the Ottomans he encountered when he wrote

"[t]he Ottomans, with all their defects, are not a people to be despised. Equal, at least, to the Spaniards, they are superior to the Portuguese. If it be difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are *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. (“CHP” 886)

In all this, one notes the dichotomy of Byron’s flattery. Although races are distinguished by abilities and aptitudes, often at the expense of one another, the Albanians and Turks make a good showing, especially with regard to their martial abilities. By endeavoring to make that world known to the West, Byron takes a first step toward creating a dialogue of identity that is not bound by a rigid structure.

The history of Byron and Albania documented by Afrim Karagjozi notes that Byron’s work was known in Albania, when “Luigi Petrasi began translating Byron in 1843” (“Byron and Albania” 177). It is impossible to take this fact into account without realizing that the presence of Byron’s poetry had a certain impact on the literature of Albania; it could not exist in a vacuum. It is also noted that “[m]any Albanologists and foreign scholars, writers and travellers have spread knowledge of Byron and Albania ever since Krylander published Byron’s two Albanian songs in 1835,” yet little mention is made of this elsewhere in Byron studies. While there seems to be a wealth of primary source material available, not only in Byron’s work, including these “Albanian songs,” there is not as yet a corresponding amount of scholarly inquiry to be found. What we see instead, again and again, is the neglect of a fruitful topic due to a lack of vision. This lack of vision is directly attributable to the prevalent course of Orientalism in Byron studies. How does Byron’s visit and

its subsequent fallout on both sides remain neglected for so long? How does this scholarship, in every other respect first rate, allow its vision to be occluded by the image of the Orient?

The popularity of Byron in Albania is ignored. And the juxtaposition of this popularity is also ignored. A country such as Albania, which prizes its nationalism, which suffered greatly under the xenophobic rule of Enver Hoxha, a rule in which everything and anything non-Albanian was considered evil, still maintains so much admiration for a member of western society. One possible answer for this popularity is that Byron celebrated this country and this people almost without reservation. Byron's popularity in Albania continues, with "a documentary film transmitted on Albanian Television to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Byron's death" ("Byron and Albania" 177). In 1988, this celebration of Byron in Albania reached its "climax, with commemorative articles and television and radio programmes" ("Byron and Albania" 177). The essay ends with the explanation that "Byron is highly popular in Albania, and has been the subject of many poets [and] Albanian scholars in Kosovo have also contributed articles and studies" on this fertile topic, but neglect to list any for scholars to research ("Byron and Albania" 177).

Albanian Scholarship and Interest in Byron

"On October 19, 1992, an Albanian Byron Society was approved by [that country's] Minister of Culture" ("Albanian Byron Society" 132). This marks something of a turning point in Western Byron scholarship. The creation of the Albanian Byron Society may be seen as the means for allowing Western Byron

scholars the opportunity to engage in communication with Eastern scholars whose work would not necessarily be part of the mainstream of Byron studies. This openness did not preclude any problems; it has become clear in the course of my own work on this topic that while the scholarship exists, there continues to be difficulty in readily accessing it. While those who study Byron in Albania, as well as those Albanians in other lands, are more than willing to share their findings, transmitting the work is not quite as easy as one would hope.

The date of the Albanian Byron Society's formation holds significance for Byron scholars worldwide in that it is the "date of Byron's arrival at Tepelene" ("Albanian Byron Society" 132). In honoring Byron, the society also indirectly honors Ali Pasha and cements the connection between these two men. This commemoration highlights Albania's continued interest in Byron.

Also strengthening ties between Byron and Albania in Albania were the festivities which occurred on April 19, 1994, when "the Albanians commemorated the 170th anniversary of Byron's death by the most elaborate Byron event ever organized in Albania" (Karagjozi, "Albanian Byron" 118). One of the preeminent Byron scholars in Albania, Karagjozi relates the proceedings to the West, noting briefly which scholar discussed what aspect of Byron's work, including "impressions and reminiscences of Lord Byron" (Karagjozi, "Albanian Byron" 118). Karagjozi notes that during the ceremony he himself "described the way Byron had been known and honoured in Albania since the 19th century" but unfortunately gives no further details (Karagjozi, "Albanian

Byron" 118). An anecdote or two at that point in the recitation would have gone far to emphasize the connection between the two extremely disparate nations and their people, and show the West that Byron continued to be important in that country and among that people. Perhaps it could have been mentioned that Byron was always popular in Albania as an entity, and his work gained admiration as well when it was translated into Albanian in 1955 by Skender Luarisi ("Lord Bajroni").

What is striking is that the celebration of Byron in Albania included much celebration of Britain. There was "British music by British composers" and "various posters from Britain" were on display, and "[t]he British Representative exhibited many magazines and brochures about Britain" (Karagjozi, "Albanian Byron" 118). While this may have been "not only an expression of honour and love for Byron, but also an expression of friendship between the two peoples of Britain and Albania," it also seems to be an incorporation of the Albanian aspect of Byron *by* the British (Karagjozi, "Albanian Byron" 118). In fact, Karagjozi's detailing of the events gives almost equal space to discussions of Byron and of British-Albanian friendship. This interconnection should be praised, yet it seems almost dismissive of the Albanian side of the Byron-Albania relationship and what that aspect signifies.

An example of the interest that Albanians show all things Byron is evident from the 1997 notes on the Albanian Byron Society. Here, one finds that there will be a "Byron International Conference in Tirana in the Summer of 1999, on the occasion of the 190th anniversary on Byron's visit to Albania in

1809" ("The Albanian Byron Society" 135). One may also note that a second book of Byron's works will be published, this being The Giaour and the Prisoner of Chillon, as well as some short poems, Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" already having been published in that country ("The Albanian Byron Society" 135).

The Albanian interest in Byron is also reflected in the fact that at a cultural event, the *Youth Society of Byron's Friends* was founded in order to increase young people's awareness of Byron. The Albanian Byron Society noted that this event was "broadcast by Albanian Radio-Television, in a special programme for Albanian Youth" ("The Albanian Byron Society" 135). The interest in the Byron-Albania connection has not disappeared into the past, but is still a viable, integral part of Albanian literary societies, one that is being furthered by Albania itself.

Karagjozi also writes of the trip that he, Tessa De Loo and Daniel Koster took following Byron's path through Albania. These three travelers, "lovers of Byron are the first travellers who walked in his footsteps" (Karagjozi, "Byron's Footsteps" 136). Not one of these individuals was British; Dr. Karagjozi is Albanian, and Mrs. de Loo and Dr. Koster are from Holland. "It was Tessa de Loo's idea and initiative and strong wish to organize" this endeavor, as she was writing a book on Byron and had undertaken most of Byron's European journeys (Karagjozi, "Byron's Footsteps" 135). Karagjozi details the journey, noting the trio's adherence to Byron's trek, the group making their way through the outlying regions of Albania, through villages and on to Ali Pasha's

home in Tepelene. The travelers were glad to find that

[w]herever they went, common people knew the name of Byron and they had an idea of his journey through those villages up to Tepelena. A few people told stories and any legend about that strange visitor from England. His memory is still alive in that region from Peshkepi to Tepelena.

(Karagjozi, "Byron's Footsteps" 135)

These few lines go a long way to impressing the importance of Byron on Albania. His person has become legendary in a land he loved, among a people who fascinated him. One would do well to remember Wordsworth's concern about the resonating image of a poet and how fleeting even written words are. For Byron to have been kept alive by a people located so distant from his "homeland" (an intriguing concept for a man who was transient for most of his life), in both topography and society, is a testament to the importance of Byron and his work.

Perhaps the most readily known of Albanian Byron scholarship is Afrim Karagjozi's book Xhorxh Bajroni. This text is for the most part a history of Byron's life and travels, as well as an explication of his works. Karagjozi goes on to include the Albanian response to Byron, integrating this into the body of the work, making it part of Byron. Karagjozi writes that Byron and Albania so profoundly influenced each other that

me popullin shqiptar, i pasur në filozofinë, në artin, në estetikën, në kulturën; në botën e tij shpirtërore

‘with the Albanian people, he was enriched in philosophy, in art, in aesthetics, in culture; in the world they were his spiritual equals.’ (Karagjozi 332)

This ephemeral, spiritual connection between Byron and Albania is one that has simply not been taken into account in Byron studies. That Byron so greatly affected this group of people, that he was so greatly affected by them, continues to be a topic of interest to Albanian scholars, and should be noted by Western ones.

Byron also plays a part in Albanian work where he is not necessarily the focus. The preeminent writer of Albania, Ismail Kadare, has written about Byron in his work Pashallëqet e Madh ‘Great Principalities’ in which he discusses Ali Pasha. Once again, it is impossible to discuss one without the other in any sort of study. Another excellent work on Ali Pasha, which discusses Byron’s visit is Sabri Godo’s Ali Pashë Tepelena ‘Ali Pasha of Tepelene’. Auron Tare has written several articles on Byron, as well as articles that feature Byron, including one on Disraeli that discusses Disraeli’s fascination with Byron’s Eastern journey; Disraeli went so far as to hire “Byron’s servants to escort him through the Albanian territories up to Ioanina” (Tare “Re: Byron Thesis”). While most of these works are difficult to find, they are certainly worth the effort.

The most recent example of the connection between Byron and Albania occurred early in 2003. The Albanian newspaper Shekulli ‘Century’ announced

the inauguration of the “Çmimi Bajron” ‘Byron Prize’, a literary contest for new prose and poetry “në 215 vjetorin e lindjes së Xhorxh Baronjit” ‘on the 215th anniversary of the birth of George Byron.’ This contest, consisting of three fields--best romance, best collection of stories, and best collection of poetry--is to be held every January 22nd, and was created by the “Shoqata Shqipater e Bajornit” ‘Albanian Friends of Byron’ who also organized a seminar of “Bajroni ynë” ‘our Byron’ (Shekulli ‘Century’).

The attention Albania has paid to the West with regard to its continued interest in Byron is flattering, most especially when that attention is filtered through such strident nationalism as evidenced by Enver Hoxha. Unfortunately, such an intriguing juxtaposition has long gone unheralded in Western scholarship. In the next chapter, I hope to rectify this by focusing further on the interconnection between Byron and Albania, and by offering up a close reading of “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” that takes that connection into account.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism may seem quaint, if not outdated, in this age of literary acceptance. The very definition of literature has opened itself to encompass all manner of works, from television shows to personal correspondence. The influences on literature, how texts come into existence, including (the lack of) authorial intent or the presence of cultural influence, are rich topics of inquiry. Each aspect of literature and its study has undergone a sea change from the days of mimetic criticism, with the acceptance of as many diverse theoretical ideas as there are critics to write about them.

With the prevailing interest in all such aspects of literature, it is remarkable that such an important aspect of Lord Byron and his work as his connection to Albania has long been overlooked. The general sentiment is that Albania played an almost miniscule role in Byron's work, being cited in only a few passages in a few pieces. What has been largely ignored is Byron's obvious captivation with the country and its people. Greece, which admittedly played a larger role in Byron's life and death, was not the country chosen for Byron's most prominent persona, that of Albie, the Mad Albanian. I believe that I have shown that Byron's choice was not insignificant, and not a confusion of Albania with Greece, and that there are a multitude of important reasons this topic should be further researched and discussed.

A significant hindrance to this field of study is that scholarship that discusses Byron and Albania almost always falls into an Orientalist trap--the *blase* encapsulation of Byron and Albania in a Western frame. What is

generally found in Byron studies is a Western view of Albania, a means of familiarizing the unfamiliar. As noted, Byron does this himself in his work, comparing the Albanians with the Scottish Highlanders. Yet although Byron (and even some critics) incorporate Albania in a favorable manner, what still shines through is the evident Westernization of Albania and its influence.

Byron in Albanian dress is used to discuss Byron the Greek. What may have transpired between Byron and Ali Pasha, or what effect Byron had on Albania, is mostly overlooked in Western scholarship most probably because of the isolation, both physical and linguistic, between Albania and the West. But even with the borders opened between Albania and the rest of the world, even with Afrim Karagjozi's excellent scholarship on Byron and Albania from an Albanian viewpoint, the West still neglects the importance of this facet of Byron's life and work.

Work that decries Byron's or our own Orientalism often falls into the same trap in that it does not take into account the Albanian experience. As I noted, we are presented with variations on themes: Albania lumped in with Greece or part of an amorphous Other; parenthetical references to Byron's Albanian experience, which dismiss the importance of this event; a solidly Western viewpoint on this topic, even while noting the possible significance of Albania. What Byron scholars must look to is the idea that an entire world of scholarship is available in viewing the symbiotic relationship between Byron and Albania. The relationship between Greece and Byron has been studied almost non-stop since Byron first visited that land. While the fact of the matter

may be that the English of Byron's time were completely enamored of the ancient Greeks, which made it easier and more desirable to highlight the connection between Byron and Greece, this nearsightedness shortchanges Byron scholarship by neglecting other aspects of his life and work. It is time to redress that imbalance, and I hope that this work may be seen as a beginning.

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