The English Passage to Balkans

İngilizcenin Balkanlara Bir Geçidi

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Abstract: Balkan identity holds emphasized characteristic within itself which ascertain similarity in demeanor and culture among its inhabitants. Partially the distinctiveness of this population is a virtue of Ottoman presence which introduced Oriental flavor to the region. Lord Byron, as an English representative in Orient and Oriental representative in the English language and the western world, was subject to many criticisms for his characters and plot description, nevertheless, he was never judged for the uniqueness of his masterpieces *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Turkish Tales*. One of the frequent themes treated of this region which was considered a stigma of Orient and Balkan culture was the cruel superiority of the men and oppression of women that affected Byron's early vision of how an eastern woman is treated. As a reaction to his objection, he decided to empower his female characters ending their position of a silent recipient of their destiny making them vigorous women who dare to defy and enter the male realm of action, acting for their rights and sometime going further to protecting male characters. Western authors used their assumption in these descriptions of the eastern world since the contact of an eastern woman and western man was nonexistent. Thus, in this paper, we treated Byron's usage of his experience from the Balkans which presented him true Balkans and Orient, discussing his most efficient works, as well as the portrayal of this region for the western world.

Structured Abstract: In this study, we strive to describe Byron's stance regarding Balkans and Oriental characteristics it embraced. It is an undeniable fact that the European population constructed certain notions on the subject of Balkans, namely southeastern Europe. There were not rare occurrences when Balkans was "othered", likewise it was "othered" by English society which represented Byron's home. Byron did not just fantasize about this region which attracted his interest from his childhood, hence, it is many literary works penned by predecessor writers that helped his vision structure.

Balkans presented a place that corresponded to Byron's personality and that is being divergent, and a type of outcast. He considered this place as a representative of himself. He could not overlook the resemblance

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nor pass without visiting this place. Thus, he shipped and started a journey going through Portugal, Spain, Malta, Albania, Greece, and Turkey. The decision of undertaking this journey was crucial for his career as a writer. It gave him material and substantial elements which made him what he was then and what he is today.

We were likewise indicative of the prejudice he had for the Ottoman world. In any case, he was a member of a society that undermined others to upheave themselves, and in this case, it was Balkans that experienced the stigma of wilderness and untamedness.

From his work, we hereby selected his leading literary work *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which included four cantos. Nevertheless, we focused on Canto II with its depiction of Albania. The title itself was criticized for its inconsistency with Byron's feature of a pilgrim. While he qualified his journey as one which made him awaken the love for his motherland.

We did not overlook Byron's extolling of Albania and Albanians. He expected wild and brutal people bearing in mind the reason why the region is considered unappealing. Yet, he encountered hosts and hospitality like never before. The unexpected warmth of this nation urged Byron to give a detailed description of a group of men and some particular leaders of the region. This unique presentation created irresistible imagery which offered vivid visuality of the surrounding. He portrayed the physical look and courage, the virtue of honesty and trustworthiness as in friendship in the enmity as well. Albanians' physical appearance reminded Byron of Scottish Highlanders, the feature which made them more acceptable for the European reader.

Not undermining the importance of Byron's work in the creation of a mental picture of this region, we went through his subsequent work *The Turkish Tales* which consisted of five lengthy, descriptive poems aiming to reveal his presentation of this mystic world. Byron's approach in *The Turkish Tales* was critical of the Ottoman way of rule and, particularly, treatment of women which showed his not very objective perspective. *The Turkish Tales* were the fruit of his Balkan journey through which he constructed these not very complicated moral stories partially from his supposition of women's state and partially from hearsays.

The first of *The Turkish Tales* is *The Giaour*. This debuting work proved that Byron's success with *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was not a coincidence. Using the traditional plot for the region he expressed his opinion on oriental women's state which he defined as not enviable. He hereby used the character of Leila married to a Pasha, who showed her revolt for her condition in the harem, requiring more from life and that is love and affection of Giaour, an infidel, a non-Muslim young man. Through the fight, Byron strived to give a clear picture of the Ottoman woman, the portrayal which we did not attribute to his experience as much as hearsay, due to his harsh and unfair description of the man.

The Bride of Abydos is the second tale immediately following the success of *The Giaour*. This tale was often assessed as the most oriental due to its description method. This tale varies from the rest by having only Muslim characters, the fate of whom does not differ from many "infidels" included in other tales.

In the third tale *The Corsair*, Byron granted a more courageous role to the female character Gulnare, who was Seyd Pasha's slave. This slight change in women's state in Ottoman society gave Gulnare masculine quality yet not a happy life. In this tale, Byron gave a comparison of a non-Muslim Medora and Muslim Gulnare. As a sequence of *The Corsair* Byron presented us Lara, where he showed the loyalty of Gulnare and decrease of Conrad's fame who now did not fight an Ottoman pasha but his own people.

The Siege of Corinth is the last Turkish Tale based on the historical event and referring to the Ottoman-Venetian Wars (1714-1718) in Corinth. The story incorporates the love of Alp (once Lanciotto) and Francesca and Alp's now merciless behavior after joining Ottoman forces to fight his own Venetian people.

With an informative approach, we went through these literary works which showed us Byron's approach to the region and their mentality. Byron acquainted with Ottoman rule through his Balkan journey which provided him material for these jewels. Going through these works as much as cleared some of the issues that much raised new questions on Byron's mental acceptance of Balkans and its mindset. We noticed his attraction to the region and people. We noticed his fondness of nature as it reminded him of English foothills. We saw his approach in the description of Muslim and non-Muslim characters, as well as his occasional discrimination of Ottoman mentality and criticism of their treatment of women.

Keywords: The Turkish tales, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, mentality, depiction

Öz: Balkan kimliği, yerlileri arasında davranış ve kültürde benzerlik belirleyen kendine özgü bir özelliğe sahiptir. Kısmen bu halkın ayırt edici özelliği, bölgeye Oryantal gizemliliğini sunan Osmanlı varlığından kaynaklanmaktadır. Doğu’da bir İngiliz temsilcisi ve Batı dünyası ve İngiliz dilinde bir Oryantal temsilcisi olarak bilinen Lord Byron, kullandığı biçim ve tekniği yanı sıra, karakterlerin tanımı ve hikayelerin yoğunluğu ile ilgili birçok eleştiriye maruz kalmasına rağmen, okuyucuya sunduğu Şövalye Harold’un Haç Seferi ve Türk Hikayeleri özgünlüğü hakkında eleştirilememiştir. Bu bölgeyi tanımlayan ve Balkan kültürünün bir damgası olarak bilinen konulardan biri, erkeklerin zalim üstünlüğü ve neredeyse her batı edebi eserinde betimlenen kadınların ezilmesi olmakla birlikte, Byron’un üzerinde doğulu bir kadının yaşamını ve gördüğü muamele hakkında edinmiş algısını etkilemiştir. Byron kadının toplumdaki rolüne itirazına bir tepki olarak, kederli kaderlerinin sessiz bir alıcısı pozisyonunda olan kadın karakterlerini cesaretlendirir, onları, karşı koyabilen ve erkeklerin eylem alanına girebilen bir rol vererek, kendi haklarını arayabilmekten öte bazı hikayelerinde erkekleri de koruyan pozisyona sokar. Aslında diğer batılı yazarlar, doğu dünyanın anlatımında varsayımlarını kullanmışlardır; zira batılı bir erkek hiçbir zaman doğulu bir kadınla temasta bulunmamıştır. Çalışmamızda Byron’un dönemin diğer yazarlarından çok olan ve özgün Balkan ve Doğuyu sunan, Balkan dünyası deneyimlerinin betimlemesi hakkında bilgi vermekle birlikte Balkanları batı dünyasına nasıl tanıttığını gösterme gayretinde bulunduk.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Balkanlar, kültür, doğu, kadın, batı dünyası

Introduction

The Balkan mentality is a label given to the southeastern Europe population by other parts of Europe. The phrase used in a pejorative way suggested nontolerant and untamed people. Stojanovich writing on Balkans notices a lack of communal awareness among the population, nevertheless the presence of dominant personal value tendencies (Plas, 2005:12). The uniqueness and adaptability of the Balkan mentality are likewise owed to the Ottoman presence of hundreds of years in this territory. Ottoman ruling, hence, the domination of Islam, which resulted in numerous conversions, is one of the issues marking the period and the region. Todorova writes on Balkans as an area of intensive cultural and linguistic merging due to the contacts between communities as a result of Balkan’s regional stance and Ottoman heritage (Petrovic, 2005: 59).

Balkan identity was subject to many studies and the theme of many literary works due to the interest in its mentality. Lord Byron was one of the writers interested in Balkans who affiliated the region to Europe. Nevertheless, he was not the first. There were many before him whom Byron read and supposedly created a picture on Balkans and shaped his opinion from, and as an enigmatic person as he was Byron was attracted by the shadowy nature of this area. This anti-hero and outsider, thus, departed to explore the geographic outcast from Europe since Balkans were mainly “othered” by the Westerns, comparably as he was othered by upper English society.

Indeed, Byron had some audacity in his personality. While with Balkans it was not the insolence of the place, yet it was the dread of Ottomans which conquered it and spread its roots in, that made the westerns ignore the place rather than face it. This anxiety started much earlier, as “[t]he fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 is sometimes regarded as the end of the Roman Empire, or as the absorption of a redundant relic by a new and expansionist superstate” (Taşdelen, 2015: 255).

Byron’s unconventional figure could not be tamed; thus, he was known as an incompatible person. His inherited title of lord could not dictate his demeanor. The disdain in his personality came from his aristocratic line as well the selfishness which inflicted on his deformed right leg. The sullen state followed him throughout his lifetime which was accompanied by a despised attitude towards the others. His extravagant stance was subject to many criticism and alienation. The intolerance was mutual. Byron did not fit the norms and the aristocrats did not tolerate the breach of their pattern. This distance of the two entities made Byron do something not very consuetudinary, hence something

befitting his character. Byron took a journey to uncommon places for an English nobleman. He headed the East, going through Portugal, Spain, Malta, Albania, Greece, and Turkey.

This decision of his was not unexpected, nevertheless, the fruitfulness of the journey was a thunderbolt. His works from this point on overshadowed the works such as *Hours of Idleness* (1807) and *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). Byron's style included fresh lyrics and rich description with all his independence and freedom. While suitable to the romantic poets and poetry he presented the reader genuineness of his experience.

Evidence of his primary interest to Balkans is seen in a letter to his mother written in 1810 where he writes, "of Constantinople you have of course read fifty descriptions of sundry travelers, which are in general so correct that I have nothing to add on the subject". Hence, we see that his journey was not the one with a virgin mind but with a virgin first-hand experience. This particular journey made Byron what he is and put him in the spot where he is even today. The decision of making this journey to the "dark" place of the world as considered by Europeans, respectively British was a courageous one. Nevertheless, this daring act introduced Byron to the exceptional world and rare inspiration for a writer. He discovered a "diamond in a rough" with all its unrefined surface and hidden affluence.

His depiction of the environment was not always polite and reflecting the bright side of a place such as "Oh, Christ! it is a goodly sight to see./What Heaven hath done for this delicious land!" He was realistic narrator, narrating what he believes he sees, being this ugly or uglier, just like he does in the description of Portugal "this purple land, where law secures not life" (Byron, 1831: 44), the impression he got as a result of being attacked on his way to the theater. Emphasizing the fact of self-protection in this land that if they weren't armed themselves now others would tell his story rather than himself.

Byron was perceived as a heroic image due to his sacrifice for a cause and death in Greece. Nevertheless, things did not always go smoothly. Although after his departure from England in the company of his friend Hobhouse on 2nd July 1809 and arrival to Portugal expresses that he is ready for the material this place would offer him, he starts his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* part on Portugal with the words: What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold!, while his offending comments on Portugal caused his exclusion from their literature as they perceived "it caused a profound sense of national insult" (Cardwell, 2004: 7), which recovered by time from the Portuguese side.

His accusations on behalf of Ottomans were not any less. Byron's prejudice to the ottoman world never withdrew, yet again, the peculiar nature of this existence attracted him. The general bias of the western world for the oriental culture was undermining and carried the philosophy of underrating one for the upheave of its status. This attitude was spread in Byron's society and injected to himself as the product of that civilization. For them, the clash between the eastern and western culture will always exist, and the aversion will always be present.

Balkans in *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Byron's first experience with the oriental world or the glimpse of it started in the *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* where he writes on his journey in Balkans, which was under Ottoman rule, consequently effected with the ottoman culture and mindset. He further uses his experience in Greece in 1809 the country he pitied believing that it was a Christian country occupied by ottomans who demanded revenue for them in the return of peace. In his mind Greece needed a rescue, hence he went to the extremes and sacrificed himself for the Greek cause.

The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage drives attention as a title which indicates a journey in pursuit of a "holy" experience and not a simple journey of an English aristocrat. Well-thought entitlement of this literary work provides it with a credential of a special quest which nevertheless could not spare it from the comments as a journey with "no clear destination and it was more a

narrative of a modern tourist than a pilgrimage”(Caminita, 2014: 25). Personally, Byron lastly qualified the journey as one which made him love his country which he thus far hated and criticized for its governance and people who insulted him. Hence, he does not regret the financial cost nor the exhaustion that the journey brought him.

Apart from the love to his country, the journey brought him fame which surprised many, as well as himself, the development which was commented as:

“The most surprising thing about the present work, indeed, is, that it should please and interest so much as it does, with so few of the ordinary ingredients of interest or poetical delight. There is no story or adventure—and, indeed, no incident of any kind; the whole poem—to give a very short account of it—consisting of a series of reflections made in travelling through apart of Spain and Portugal, and in sailing up the Mediterranean to the shores of Greece”(Bloom, 2009: 144).

We are of the belief that the inclusion of his Balkan journey and experience of the oriental side of it added mysterious flavor to the work. This was the most reliable source of the region written thus far. The works prior to Byron written on the theme of Orient was based on hearsay and prejudice. Now it is Byron’s time to open the window of the reticent world. His courage to undertake this “risky” journey was appreciated and evocative. Thus, further interest to his journey which started with *The Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*.

This sweeping poem started with his impression on Portugal and Spain, while the most precious part of this poem for us is the second canto which includes the Balkan part of the journey. “I ... embark tomorrow for Patras from whence I proceed to Yanina where Ali Pacha holds his court, so I shall soon be amongst the Mussulmen ...” writes Byron (1830: 144).

Hereby he mentions his journey to Albania where to his surprise, he was welcomed and was befriended, the truth he proves with his letter to William Bankes whom he instructs and tells about his friend who can help Bankes as well, in his journey.

Letter 117. to William Bankes, December 26, [1812].

“It is by no means improbable that I shall go in the spring; and if you will fix any place of rendezvous about August, I will write or join you.—When in Albania, I wish you would inquire after Dervise Tahiri and Vascillie (or Bazil), and make my respects to the viziers, both there and in the Morea. If you mention my name to Suleyman of Thebes, I think it will not hurt you; if I had my dragoman (translator), or wrote Turkish, I could have given you letters of real service; but to the English they are hardly requisite, and the Greeks themselves can be of little advantage ... I believe G. Forresti is now at Yanina; but if not, whoever is there will be too happy to assist you. Be particular about firmauns; never allow yourself to be bullied, for you are better protected in Turkey than any where; trust not the Greeks; and take some knicknackeries for presents—watches, pistols, etc., etc., to the Beys and Pachas” (Byron, 1830: 132).

Lord Byron through *The Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* starts the depiction of his Albania journey with the words similar to his entrance for Portugal “What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold!”

Land of Albania! Let me bend mine eyes

On thee, thou rugged Nurse of savage men

(Childe Harold Pilgrimage, Canto II, 38. verse 338-339)

Though he wants to show the blank mindedness and enthusiasm for the experience this place will offer him, Byron still gives a hint of prior knowledge of the region and its population of savage men. This is the prejudice he held when first entering the country not being prepared for what is to

come and pleasantly surprise him. He expressed this unexpected amazement in 360 verses where he included the surroundings, the culture, and the residents.

This Balkan country offered him fervor not conventional for the region nor fitting to the European understanding of this Eastern state. These people should be vicious, wild, menacing, and repelling. Is this not the reason why no English nobleman explores this and surrounding places? Indeed, Byron realized that this is not the reason why Europeans are withdrawn; hence it is what they have been told and taught on the Balkan community and culture. This realization and witnessing the injustice of westerners done to Balkan mentality prove their attempt of undermining eastern nations. This attempt was partially overthrown with Byron's writing on the true face of Balkans. Detailed description used in Byron's writing created irresistible imagery which offered vivid visuality of the setting of the place. The graphic description and the mystery of the region did not just excite the reader but writers as well. The interest in Orient now arouse to the point where it did not just contribute "The Oriental Renaissance" but it reversed the western concept of Orient.

Byron initiated a description of his experience in Albania by writing on their hospitality, warm welcoming of an unexpected guest, offering shelter and food. He depicted their physical appearance and audacity, and the virtue of honesty and loyal friendship. Their devotion did not stand only for the friendship; nonetheless, they were devoted to their enmity as well, where their wrath was deadly.

Byron likewise touched the theme of Balkan's religion. Experiencing the domination of Islam, he portrays the month of Ramadan and its importance for the Albanian people. The month of Ramadan was a time of religiousness and spiritual growth. The prayers, the fasting, the repentance showed the power of will which was remunerated after the twilight hour with a feast.

The description continued with the climate and nature which Byron noticed was not very distant in quality from that of Caledonian. While the costumes with the kilt, cloak, and waistcoat not dissimilar from the Scottish Highlanders, confirmed his English reader resemblance to themselves. Besides, nature, the mountains he equally praises the architectural beauty of the region.

Byron's overnight success with *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* held him to this territory which revealed his eccentric productive side. He was now about to create a set of stories entitled *The Turkish Tales* which would include mutineers and pirates fighting and rebelling against pashas "for the greater good".

The Turkish Tales and the Balkan mentality in Byron's depiction

Byron's approach in *The Turkish Tales* was a critic of the ottoman way of rule and, particularly, treatment of women which showed his not very objective perspective. He constructed the tales as not very intricate moral stories where he incorporated rebels of the traditions, national customs, and the environment, in overall depicted the mystery of Orient.

The Giaour written in 1813 is the first of *Turkish Tales* written by Byron and it is one of the tales with Byron's conventional form and plot. Using Leila, one of Hasan pasha's wives, as a major female character, Byron expresses his opinion on oriental women's state. He hereby depicts the situation of a woman in the harem who has no right to choose her love or husband. The choice for her husband made by others must be appreciated and accepted. Leila's rebellious behavior which would not be accepted by her strict society created many disputes and dragged her to death. Whereas, the infidel, Giaour, is the hero who struggled to liberate Leila from her oppressive patriarchal society by which Byron gave his protagonist egalitarian quality. In this tale, Byron reveals his opinion of Ottoman society as oppressive and cruel almost misogynistic towards women. Hence, he gives all the positive attributes to the non-Muslim Giaour and criticizes Pasha for his "unscrupulous" behavior.

The Bride of Abydos was first published by the end of 1813 just to be followed with ten more editions until 1815. This tale was often assessed as the most oriental due to its description method. In this poem which he wrote “in four nights” (Diary, November 16) the depiction of the atmosphere, surrounding and nature conveyed the spirit of the region in the most vivid manner.

*Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;*

(Bride of Abydos, lines 5-8)

This tale varies from the rest by having only Muslim characters, the fate of whom does not differ from many “infidels” included in other tales. The tragic end did not favorize them as members of oriental culture living in Balkans.

Selim and Zuleika, who are children of Giaffir Pasha create an unconventional brother-sister relationship. Through the basic plot of the relationship just like in all the tales, Byron criticizes the Islamic way of marriage arrangements where woman's feelings and opinions are not of matter in the choice of her husband. Byron condemns the idea of Muslim praising of woman's modesty and silence once again displaying the consequences of acting rebellious.

The Corsair is another *Turkish Tale* produced as a result of recollection from Byron's Balkan journey, published in 1814. In this tale, changing his direction, Byron granted a more courageous role to the female character Gulnare, who was Seyd Pasha's slave. Though he bequested masculine features to Ottoman Gulnare, as something new in comparison to other female characters who are gentle and fearful, Byron did not change his depiction of Pashas as ones who own haram full of enslaved girls. This preserved image of “cruel” Ottoman chiefs did not surprise us as this is typical Byron and his criticism of Ottoman Turkish rule, the regime that he remarkably enough did not cease to use as a source of inspiration.

The Corsair is likewise different in juxtaposing of two female characters, the Christian Medora and Ottoman Gulnare, where as much as wife Medora was helpless in stopping Conrad, the corsair, from going to a battle, that much Gulnare is given a power of changing Conrad's fate and rescuing him. Being aware of Byron's critical stance of Ottomans there arises a question yet not clear to us of Byron's true purpose in having these two female characters in the tale. Did Byron intend to show the gentle side of non-Muslim women and the wild side of Muslim ones? Or, he intended to accentuate the courage and daring acts of Ottoman Gulnare for the sake of Conrad's love? Was he through this indirectly giving merits to Conrad's compassionate nature, due to his attempt to rescue her from Pasha, which inflicted female attraction? Yet we ought to quote the Edinburgh Review editor, Francis Jeffrey's criticism as a representative of western viewpoint regarding Byron's depiction of eastern characters:

“Lord Byron has made fine use of the gentleness and submission of the females of these regions, as contrasted with the lordly pride and martial ferocity of the men: there is something so true to female nature in general, in his representations of this sort, and so much of the oriental softness and acquiescence in his particular delineations, that it is scarcely possible to refuse the picture the praise of being characteristic and harmonious, as well as eminently sweet and beautiful in itself...There is something grand and imposing in the unbroken stateliness, courage and heroic bigotry of a Turk of the higher order” (Irwin, 1910:26).

Pertain to the fact that *The Corsair* was published in February 1814 after being finished on 31st December 1813, and *Lara*, next Turkish Tale, published in August, one cannot overlook the close connection. Otherwise, the *Corsair* and *Lara* are appraised as written in a more enhanced manner than his previous works (Roberts, 1814: 16).

Lara as the sequence of *The Corsair*, where the main character is in fact, Conrad, from the *Corsair* returning to the British Isles, who was presented in an utterly different light. The distinction of this Tale from the others stands in the fact that it does not revolve around a woman, respectfully the clash of the protagonist and the antagonist does not include the issue of love, but the vicious features of the war and its effect on the protagonist as well as his soldiers. In this tale, count Lara brings with him a page called Kaled who is, in reality, disguised Gulnare from the previous tale *The Corsair*. Giving this role to Gulnare as a representative of Ottoman female, Byron goes step ahead into breaking strict eastern rules of women's submission. Gulnare who previously stripped herself from the passive female role and acted in rescuing Conrad, now disguises into a page, stepping into the male realm of action, hence she is granted even more audacity.

Moving the setting of the story from the Balkan region made Byron sustain the easternmost state through Kaled, a page described having a 'darkly delicate' face which proves his/her orientalism. The moving of the setting is observed as "the orientalism of the other Tales is here condensed and displaced, rather than stripped away" (Stabler, 2013: 67). Irwin comments Kaled's sacrifice for Lara and Byron's intention as: "By constant little touches Byron draws in Kaled a picture of Eastern devotion that reaches its height in the death of Lara" (Irwin, 1910: 28).

Otherwise, Peter Thorslev describes the character of count Lara "as darker, more Gothic and less sympathetic than Conrad" (1962: 160). The question arising from is whether Conrad is more sympathetic because he fought against Muslim Pasha, while count Lara fights against his compatriots and by fighting Pasha for his cruelty to women does he ennoble western mentality and condemns supposed eastern misogynistic behavior as an element that would rejoice western reader.

The Siege of Corinth was founded upon historical circumstances that Byron read in *The Complete History of the Turks* (1719). In this tragic narrative poem, Byron wrote opening lines in the role of a narrator where he introduced the setting and his journey through Balkans with "a gallant company". Referring to the Ottoman-Venetian Wars (1714-1718) in Corinth, where Ottomans came victorious, at this point Byron was sitting at Acrocorinth's crest and recalled a century-old event where in the plot included the Venetians' last efforts to protect the Acrocorinth and the love story between Alp and Francesca.

Although the name Alp leaves the impression of an Ottoman character, he is Venetian Lanciotto, who found harmony and shelter among Ottomans becoming one of their leading soldiers, after being falsely accused by his fellow Venetians. At this juncture, we have Venetian Alp as representative of Ottomans who is portrayed as "a traitor in a turban'd horde" and Minotti (Francesca's father and Venetian governor) as representative of Venetians. As a matter of fact, Gleckner finds it similar to the *Giaour* where "both contain an infidel as the main character, and both dramatize the conflict between Moslem and Christian ideals" (Gleckner, 1970: 54). On the other side Susan Scott writes:

"The Siege of Corinth completes the correlation of Near Eastern despotism and European Imperialism, radically to suggest that the latter is no less violable than the Ottoman Empire that it seeks to replace. Lanciotto's (Alp) action, furthermore, takes the Tales in a full circle back to the revenge of the *Giaour*, who joins a band of Albanian bandits to destroy Hassan (the association of the British with Ali Pasha is referred to here). In each case, Byron equates the ambitious European on the border with savage behaviour and with passions of revenge more regularly associated with a 'cruel' East" (Oliver, 2005: 288).

The question stands on how much would Byron agree with Susan Scott as he continuously describes Balkans as a region “Where Freedom still at moments rallies, / And pays in blood Oppression’s ills;” (28-30), depicting Christian fight as a struggle for freedom and not equal to “oppressor’s” cruelty. Peterson is more realistic on the issue where in the process of narrative analysis, he writes “His (narrator’s) nationality and creed remain unknown (11. 18-21), allowing him, at least in theory, an unprejudiced vision in relating the events of the story. Despite this initial declaration of neutrality, the narrator possesses certain sentiments that gradually show him to favor the Western outlook above the Eastern”. Yet again Byron renounces himself from the direct accusation of the Ottomans and “speaks philosophically of the blood and bones paid out by both sides in the many battles for Greece” (Peterson, 1970: 56).

Conclusion

It is an undeniable fact that Balkan’s mindset and destiny were determined with hundreds of years of Ottoman presence and legacy in the region. While ottoman existence lasted, it simultaneously caused numerous conversions and cultural, and linguistic integration between the communities which ultimately created one Balkan mentality with the slight nuances of distinctions between these communities.

Balkan was indeed rather unique. It did not belong to the East nor the West. It held its own character and turbulence in itself. As a result of its history, it eventually retrieved the features of Eastern culture which made it attractive to westerners as a mystic place, yet more available for them than the far East. It was Lord Byron one of the westerners who was attracted to this region which was rather underrated by Europeans and consequently Englishman. This fact of unappreciation made Byron feel a resemblance to his own position among the English nobility. Hence, he decides to explore what other similarities does this place has with himself. Forwhy it must hold some moral “treasure” unknown to others just like himself.

Byron found a muse for his literary work in Balkans. Nevertheless, he was not always polite in his depictions. He was realistic and often bitterly “honest” yet never lacked colorfulness in his verses.

His Balkan journey was initially noted in the *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the work promising in its content, yet not expected to bring the repercussion it brought in reality. Byron started his journey and consequently his work with some prejudice and cognizance he previously took from other’s literary works. Nevertheless, he faced the reality which caught him by surprise with its vibrancy.

Our subject of interest was Byron’s Albania journey which he took after his visit to Portugal, Spain, and Malta. Byron in the II Canto of *The Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* expressed his amazement with Albanian people where he depicted their customs, culture, clothing religion and architectural beauty of the region.

The unexpected success of the *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* urged Byron to continue with the themes and characters of the Oriental world. Hence, he initiated his *Turkish Tales*. The approach in these tales was critic to the Ottoman way of rule and, particularly, treatment of women which showed his not very objective perspective. The five of *Turkish Tales*, *The Giaour*, *Bride of Abydos*, *Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Siege of Corinth* with the traditional Byronian form and plot used stories of his own experience as well as hear-say from his journey, with the occasional reference to his own destiny of outcast and unlawful relationships.

Byron in his *The Turkish Tales* is mainly critical of ottoman culture and manly unscrupulous demeanor towards women which makes female character victims of their rebellious attitude towards discriminating tradition. With regard to this, we have, Leila, Gulnare, and Zuleika, all in an attempt to change their destiny become a victim of their own tragedy. Nevertheless, in the inclusion of a

picturesque element, Byron uses courageous Gulnare through which he breaks his own mold of Ottoman woman and unshackles her from the patriarchal chains.

On the other side, male characters were in constant elevation in their fight against “ruthless” Ottoman rulers and in defense of victimized female characters, the role which dignified Christian heroes in opposition to Muslim Pashas. One proof of this is the tale *Lara* where the count Lara, who substantially is Conrad from the previous tale the *Corsair*, was defined as less sympathetic than Conrad. The reason for this can partially be hidden in the fact that the same character, as Conrad fought against pasha, while as Lara fought against his compatriot Venetians, the deed that was not exhilarating enough for British reader.

Regardless many criticisms on his heroes and heroines, as well as his own nonadaptive character, Byron is one of the rare writers who experienced Orient in its outmost and conveyed the stories from his experience or local gossips which still were far closer than any other writings of his period that mainly were based on presumptions and little on the contact with Orientals through Eastern Balkan.

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