

A Brief Outline on Scanderbeg in English Literature

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Abstract:

The topic of Scanderbeg in English literature has not sufficiently been studied and it requires more close attention and consideration. The figure of Scanderbeg has been treated in English by a number of English writers, including prominent authors like Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, George Lillo, and Lord Byron. The main aim of this paper is to illuminate the presence of Scanderbeg in English literature from the 16th through the 19th by referencing books, papers and reviews written by Albanian and Anglo-American scholars and researchers. The paper concludes that many literary works were written and published on Scanderbeg by some outstanding and prominent English writers, who depicted Scanderbeg as a statesman, diplomat and military genius. These works were mostly received with warmth and enthusiasm, leading to Scanderbeg becoming one of the popular and well-known historical leaders and figures in English literature by the end of 19th century.

Key words: Scanderbeg, historical sources, English literature, inspiration, impact, Comparative literature

Introduction

George Castriot Scanderbeg is thought to have been born on May 6, 1405, the youngest son of John Castriota and princess Vojsava's 9 children. Scanderbeg was taken hostage by Turkish invaders at a young age and was sent to

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the Sultan's court in Adrianople. According to B.B. Ashcom (1953): "His father, John, lord of Mat Vumenestia, seems to have been under the somewhat uncertain protection of Venice. He was not allowed to control the city of Croy, and he received no help when the Turkish sultan, Amurath II, send an army into Albania in 1423. The Albainans were defeated, JohnCastriot became perforce a vassal of the sultan, and his sons, in accordance with the Turkish recruiting system, joined Amurath's slave family at Adrianopole to be treated for service to the Ottoman state".

In Adrianpole, ingenuity and dexterity led GeorgeCastriot Scanderbeg to the Sultan's school, which trained servant commanders. There he took the name Iskender (Alexander). After finishing school, Scanderbeg performed military duties in the Balkans and Asia Minor, becoming distinguished for bravery and being given the title "bey".

He never forgot his beloved homeland and eagerly awaited the opportunity to return to the land that gave birth to him. For more than 12 years (1426-1438), he served in Albania. With the death of his father, Scanderbeg hoped to take his place, but the Sultan appointed him SanjakBey outside Albanian lands. However, Scanderbeg did not give up the idea of finally returning to Albania, until the year when he left under the command of the beylerbey of Rumelia who was warring against Janos Hunyadi.

On November 3, 1443, when the Ottoman and Hunyadi-led armies clashed near Nis, the Ottoman army was routed and retreated in panic. Scanderbeg began to plan an uprising; together with 300 Albanian cavalry and his nephew HamsaCastriot, he returned to Debar, where the people welcomed him as a liberator. He took measures to control the roads from which the Ottomans could come, and from there he headed to Croya. With a false decree, he captured the city and garrison and so on November 28, 1443 the establishment of the Castriot principality was announced. The flag with the black, double-headed eagle was raised over the castle of Croya. Scanderbeg's speech fostered a patriotic spirit. During December, Central and Northern Albania were cleared of Ottoman forces, and the castles of this area were liberated one after another. Scanderbeg was the organizer of the Assembly of Arber, in which he was elected leader of the Albanian League of Lezha. He fought against the Ottoman army for 25 years and he won all the battles. One of the main reasons for his success in defending his homeland against the Ottoman invaders was because he received military training and education in the Ottoman army and thus was very well aware of their military strategy and tactics. However, unfortunately in January 1468 Scanderbeg fell ill during the holding of an Assembly of Albanian princes convened by him. He died on January 17, 1468 in Lezha and was buried in Lezha.

After his death, many books, academic papers, poems, dramas, and novels were written about Scanderbeg. To demonstrate the progress of scholarship of the theme of Scanderbeg in English literature, in 1968 at the International Conference organized in Tirana (on the 500th anniversary of Scanderbeg's death), only 10 English and American authors were mentioned who explored the Scanderbeg theme. Today, we can say that there are at least 31 historical and literary works (seven poems, 3-4 plays, three novels, etc.) published in English on the topic of Scanderbeg. As a matter of fact, English writers have written about Scanderbeg since the 16th century, and the interest of English writers continued to grow during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Among the most well-known English writers who have written literary works on Scanderbeg theme are Edmund Spencer, William Havard, George Lillo, Thomas Wincop, Benjamin Disrael, Clement Clark Moore, H. Longfellow, Agnes Repplier, Lord Byron, etc. At the same time, although there are a few short articles and papers about particular English literary works on Scanderbeg theme, there are no comprehensive and systematic articles about Scanderbeg in English literature. This is clearly a gap that needs to be

addressed and filled. Therefore, the focus of this paper will be on books, articles, papers and reviews written on Scanderbeg by reputable Albanian and English-speaking scholars and researchers, including Refik Kadija, Nicholas Pano, Skender Luarasi, Robert Elsie, B.B. Ashcom, etc.

To this end we will examine in a chronological order both the English literary works and the books, papers and reviews that have been written about Scanderbeg in English literature. This paper will rely also on principles and methods employed in comparative literature to do so. Paul Van Tieghem is clear and concise when he explains that the object of comparative literature is essentially the study of diverse literatures in their relations with one another. However, Stallknecht and Frenz provide a definition which best fits with the aims of this paper: "Comparative literature often deals with the relationship of only two countries or two authors of different nationality or one author and another country (e.g., Franco- German literary relations, Poe- Baudelaire, Italy in the works of Goethe)" (Stallknecht and Frenz, 1973, p.10). In our case, the focus is on the historical, literary and cultural relations between Albania and Great Britain.

1. Main English historical sources on Scanderbeg

Thousands of historical volumes and hundreds of literary works have immortalized countless famous historical figures; among these, Scanderbeg's name has become synonymous with superior military leadership and fighting for his nation's independence and freedom (Luarasi, 1968, p. 1). Many poems, novels, dramas about Scanderbeg have been written in English and the name of Albanian national hero has been mentioned with praise by the most prominent scholars and writers in the history of England, allowing Scanderbeg to occupy a special place in English literature.

English thinkers and writers understood very well the importance of Scanderbeg's wars. While the English princes in the time of Scanderbeg were fighting in the War of Roses, the Albanian people under the leadership of Scanderbeg fought to defend their homeland, but also indirectly Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance, where English scholars went to be endowed with culture. According to the well-known historian Torenz, with their admiration and gratitude such scholars inspired new generations of English scholars and writers to explore the Scanderbeg theme.

It is thought with great certainty that the English literary public has been acquainted with Albanian motifs, especially the history and deeds of Scanderbeg, since the time of Queen Elizabeth I and Shakespeare. In 1596, the most famous publisher of the Elizabethan period, William Ponsonby, published the famous work "The historie of George Castriot, surnamed Scanderbeg, King of Albanie" by Albanian Catholic priest and historian Marin Barleti (ca. 1450-1512), translated into English by Zachary Jones Gentleman and accompanied by three sonnets, one of which is Edmund Spenser's sonnet on Scanderbeg. According to Prof. Refik Kadija (2018), Spenser's sonnet is the first literary work on Scanderbeg in English literature. Per Kadija, Spenser's sonnet was composed before the translation and used as an epigraph for Gentleman's translation.

The English translator Gentleman translated Marin Barleti's famous Scanderbeg history, published in French in 1576, into English in 1596. The title of his translation is: "Historie of George Castriot, surnamed Scanderbeg, King of Albanie; containing his Famous Actes, his Noble Deedes of Armes and Memorable Victories against the Turks for the Faith of Christ". According to prof. Nicholas Pano, "this translation of the Barleti biography of Scanderbeg

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remained one of prime sources of information regarding the life and career of Scanderbeg in both England and the United States into the 20th century” (Pano, 2005, p. 238).

There are other important sources and translations that had an impact on the English speaking world. One is Paulus Jovius', Bishop of Nocera's, "Commentario della guerra Turchi" (In English: "A short Treatise upon the Turkey's Chronicles"), which was translated into English and published in London in 1546. Another is Andrea Gambini's "Two very noble commentaries, the one the originall of the house of Ottomanno, written by Andrew Gambine, and the other of the warres of the Turke against George Scanderbeg." During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Scanderbeg theme reappears through historical studies such as Richard Knolle's "The General History of the Turks from the first beginning of the nation to the Rising of the Ottoman Kings and Emperors," published in London in 1603 and Edward Gibbon's "History of the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire," which was published during the American Revolution (1776-78). Among some other important assessments that helped advance Scanderbeg's reputation and image were those made by Sir William Temple, who considered Scanderbeg among the seven uncrowned chieftains of the history (Temple, 1754) and by General James Wolfe, the hero of the Battle of Quebec (1759), who said the following about Scanderbeg in a letter to Thomas Townshend: "...and if a tolerable account could be got of the exploits of Scanderbeg, it would be inestimable; for he excels all the officers, ancient and modern, in the conduct of a small defensive army. I met with him in the Turkish history, but nowhere else" (Beggles, 1909).

Other important historians, researchers and scholars who wrote about Scanderbeg are Southern Menzies in his "Turkey Old and New: Historical, Geographical and Statistical," vol. II; F.F. Knight in "Albania: A narrative of Recent Travel"; Lord Burgh in "Travels in Albania and Other Provinces of Turkey in 1809 & 1810" (in two volumes) vol. I; Alex Mackay, "Hand-book of the Seat of War in Turkey," second edition; Edwin Pear, "Turkey and its People"; and Harry Hodgkinson's "Scanderbeg," (1999).

However, B.B. Ashcom explains that: "Since 1800, besides occasional books and articles, there have been two brief revivals of interest in Scanderbeg, one during the Greek wars for independence, the other at the time of the Crimean War." (Ashcom, 1953, p. 21).

Be as it may, Dr. Gazmend Rizaj, a distinguished Albanian scholar and historian, in his paper on Scanderbeg concludes that: "English authors did not see Scanderbeg only a hero of Albanian people, but as part of their own history as well by considering his heroic deeds as not only aimed at defending Christianity but also European Civilization." (Rizaj, p. 357)

2. The first English literary works on Scanderbeg

Aside from historical and political books and articles in English, there were also many literary and artistic works written on Scanderbeg. Many English writers drew off of the aforementioned historical sources when writing their literary works on the Scanderbeg theme. Scanderbeg became so popular in English literature that for an action that did not have the desired result, because it lacked inner strength, it became customary to say, "Scanderbeg's sword must have Scanderbeg's arm". For example, in "Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets," Samuel Johnson says the following about Congreve: "He has the sword without the arm of Scanderbeg" (Manly, 1926, p. 302).

The first English literary works on Scanderbeg date back to Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), one of the greatest epic poets of the English Renaissance who wrote about Scanderbeg. Namely, in Sonnet III entitled "Upon the Historie of George Castriot, alias Scanderbeg, King of the Epirots," Spenser writes, "The scourge of Turkes, and plague of infidels, Thy acts, O Scanderbeg, this volume tells." This sonnet was mentioned in 1596 by Zachary Jones when he published the English translation of French historian J. Lavardin's "The History of George Kastriot, nicknamed Skanderbeg". Jones accompanied the English edition of this book with Spenser's sonnet about Scanderbeg.

Skender Luarasi, one of the first prominent scholars who has written about the theme of Scanderbeg in English literature, discussed for the first time this valuable sonnet on the Albanian National Hero in his research paper entitled "Scanderbeg in English literature" (Luarasi, 1968) and translated Spenser's sonnet into Albanian in 1977.

In addition to Spenser's sonnet, the preface to the English translation of Marin Barleti's famous historical chronicle has two additional sonnets dedicated to Scanderbeg; these last two sonnets were most likely composed by people close to the translator to praise the work of the translator. This is suggested by the titles of the sonnets, which are almost exactly the same, as well as by the first four letters of the author's surname for both sonnets, respectively "R. C. GENT." and "C. C. GENT." We think it is clear that "G-E-N-T" are the first four letters of the translator's surname "Gentleman".

The three lines of the second sonnet elevate the greatness of Scanderbeg:

*With their great deedes, and fild their children seares?
Who, rapt with wonder of their famous praise,
Admire their statues, their colossoes great,
Their rich triumphall arcks which they did raise* (Lines 4-7)

The third sonnet also heightens the figure of Skanderbeg, comparing him to Alexander the Great in bravery, power and glory. The poet invites readers who "hear of the deeds of his day" to "admire his values and exalt his glory" (Kadija, 2018, p.24).

It is now known for sure that on July 3, 1601, a play involving the character of Scanderbeg appeared in London, apparently written by the famous English playwright **Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)**. In the play, Albania is mentioned in Part I, Act I, Scene II, verse 164. Although this drama about Scanderbeg was never published and the manuscript was most likely destroyed, it exists recorded by E. Allde in the register of plays "The Stationers' Register" with the title "The true history of George Scanderborge as yt was lately played by the right honorable the Earle of Oxenforde his servants". The loss of the drama may also have occurred due to the fact that it appeared eight years after Marlowe's death and that the author left no heirs who could take care of his manuscripts. Nevertheless, according to Robert Elsie "Evidence for Marlowe's authorship is tenuous, although the subject matter would certainly have appealed to him after the success of his two-part play Tamburlaine the Great, ca. 1587." (Elsie, 1993, p. 19). Scholar **Samuel Claggett Chew (1888 - 1960)**, in his work "The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance" expresses regret for the loss of this drama. According to Chew, Scanderbeg was born in 1405, a year after Bayezid I of Tamburlaine was defeated; he was the son of an Epirote lord and was taken hostage by Murad II when Epirus was conquered by the Turks in 1423; he became a Muhammadan and for twenty years was under Ottoman

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military service - a member of the 'converted Christian warfare units' things about which Marlowe wrote" (Chew, 1937, p. 474).

Some short and very strange allusions to the name of the Albanian national hero are found in some English dramas of the seventeenth century. In these plays, Scanderbeg is sometimes exalted as a symbol of heroism, sometimes despised to the level of a ruffian. Ben Jonson (1572-1637), Shakespeare's immediate successor, mentions a "Horsonscander-bag rogue" in his comedy "Every Man in His Humor" (1598) (Act I, Scene III, verse 22), which was staged by Shakespeare's own theatrical troupe. The playwright and pamphleteer Thomas Dekker (1572-1632) refers to our hero as "SkellumSkanderbag" in his most famous play, "The Shoemaker's Holiday: Or the Gentle Craft". The London playwright of the Neoclassical period James Shirley (1596-1666) created the figure of Captain Squanderbeg, who appears in Act IV, Scene I of his play "Honor and Mammon". Shirley refers to Scanderbeg as a warrior in the another drama entitled "The Gentleman of Venice". Also, the cavalier poet **Richard Lovelace (1618-1658)** evokes Skanderbeg, or more precisely his bones, in a poem entitled "To the genius of Mr John Hill, on his exact translation of Hierocles, his comments upon the golden verses of Pythagoras". This poem is found in his volume "Lucasta" and the English poet talks about the violation of the sacred tomb of Scanderbeg in Lezha by the Janissaries, who quarreled with each other about who would take a piece of the hero's bone and keep it as a "talisman" believing that it would defend them in battle:

*And as that soldier conquest doubted not,
Who but one splinter had of Castriot,
But would assault ev'n death so strongly charm'd,
And naked oppose rocks, with his bone arm'd.* (Lines 37-40)

According to Dr. Nicholas Pano "The Scanderbeg theme reoccurs at various times in English literature throughout the 17th and early 18th century, again emphasizing his role as a bulwark of Christian resistance to the expansionist impulses of the Ottoman Empire." (Pano, 2005, p. 239). However, from 1601 to 1733, only two significant literary works were written on Scanderbeg. The first was "La Scanderbeide," translated in English as "Skanderbeide-The Heroic Deeds of George Scanderbeg, King of Epirus" by the famous poet of the Italian Renaissance Margherita Sarrocchi (1560-1617). This epic poem describes the events following George Castriot Scanderbeg's return to his homeland. The poem closes with his triumph over Sultan Murad in the first siege of Croya, in 1450. The second was a novel entitled "Le Grand Scanderberg" by the French novelist **Anne de la Roche Guilhem (1644 - 1707/1710)**. This novel about Scanderbeg was written in London, first printed in French in 1688, and published in Amsterdam, and then translated into English and published in 1690 under the title "The Great Scanderbeg" by Richard Bentley.

3. Important English literary works on the Scanderbeg

During the Neoclassical period in English literature, there was increased interest in Scanderbeg and his era. In the 18th century, three tragedies were published and two of them were staged, featuring Scanderbeg as the main hero. According to B.B. Ashcom: "On March 15, 1733, William Havard's "Scanderbeg" was presented at Goodman's Fields; on January 13, 1735, George Lillo's "The Christian Hero" opened in Drury lane; and in 1747 Thomas Wincop's unacted "Scanderbeg," written before 1730, was printed in London." (Ashcom, p. 23)

The famous statesman, diplomat and prominent English essayist **Sir William Temple (1628-1699)**, in his famous essay "Essay on Heroic Virtue," ranks Scanderbeg among the seven leaders "who have deserved, without wearing, the royal crown." The seven leaders who, according to him, deserved a royal crown are: "Belisarius, Narses, Gonsalvo of Cordoba, William the First Prince of Orange, Alexander - Duke of Parma, Janos Hunyadi and George Castriot or Scanderbeg".

William Havard's first success as a playwright was "Scanderbeg: A Tragedy" (1732 / 3), which premiered at the Goodman's Fields Theater in London on March 15, 1733. Charles Read, editor of "A Cabinet of Irish Literature of Irish Literature" (1876-1878), opines that Havard's Scanderbeg verse drama relied on Lillo's drama "Scanderbeg, the Christian Hero", but surpassed it. The tragedy is a five-act drama with a prologue and an epilogue and a frequent change of scenes - it has a total of 58 scenes. The setting of the drama is near Constantinople and the plot begins before the Nis war. After Scanderbeg is summoned by Albanian patriots and makes preparations to return to his homeland, he comes into conflict with Amurat and begins to war against him in the vicinity of Edirne and Constantinople. Scanderbeg, who had just returned from Asia, orders the release of the slaves he brought from the victorious war; he is unable to achieve the release of their princess, Deamira, but he saves her from the clutches of the Sultan after a fierce battle. In the second act, we find a contrast and comparison between Amurat the Sultan and Scanderbeg, who is accused of having ambitions to achieve as much power as the Sultan. In the end, after the Sultan dies mad, the drama ends with Scanderbeg's words, which imply that Scanderbeg leaves for Albania.

A second play written during Neoclassicism on the Scanderbeg theme is "Scanderbeg, the Christian Hero" by **George Lillo (1693-1739)**. This play was staged in London at the Royal Theater "Drury Lane" and published in 1735. This tragedy was based on a short story entitled "The Life of George Castriot," which was written by George Lillo himself and published in London in 1733 (Kadija, 2018, p.32). This tragedy has a prologue, five acts, twelve scenes, and an epilogue. The dramatist claims that his tragedy on Scanderbeg is based on the rescue of Croya from siege, as it had been surrounded for almost six months by the numerous troops of the Turkish Sultan, Amurat II, who died from despair and rage under the walls of that city.

The editor of this drama writes, "the plot of the tragedy is to be found in the history of the Turks. The character of Scanderbeg, the hero of the play, resembles that of Tamerlane, and is well contrasted with Amurath, the Turkish Sultan. The characters in this tragedy are in general strongly marked; some pathetic scenes of the Christian Hero would not disgrace the works of our most esteemed dramatic writers. The manners of the Turks and Christians are well discriminated. The interview in the second act between the generals of both armies, is happily conducted.— It is, I believe, an imitation of a similar parley between Caled and Eumenes in the Siege of Damascus. But the Scene in the Christian Hero is greatly beightened by the distress of Scanderbeg, whose mistress, Althea, had fallen by the chance of war into the hands of his enemies." (Lillo, p. 8-9). Lillo adds in the prologue, "Tonight we sing a pious hero and

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patriot king; By nature formed by providence defign'd; To fourge ambition, and to right mankind; Such Castriot was. O might it but appear, Then he reatians the least resemblance here! Should but the smallest portion of that fire, Which fill'd his ample breast our scenes inspire; The abject slave, to his reproach shall fee, That such a dear deserve it, may be free: And conscious tyranny confess, with shame, That blind ambition wonders from her aim; While virtue leads her votaries to fame." (Lillo, Prologue, pp. 2-3). B.B. Ashcom considers that out of the three plays written on Scanderbeg during the Neoclassical period, Lillo's play is by far the best. (Ashcom, 1953)

A third tragedy, "Scanderbeg or Love and Liberty" by **Thomas Whincop**, was written in 1730, but published only in 1747. In the introduction to his work on Scanderbeg, Whincop explains that the Turks came into hostile contact with the Albanians at the end of the 14th century and that for three quarters of a century, the Albanians fought to preserve their independence; the twenty-five years of this war under Scanderbeg are the culmination of their heroism for national independence (Whincop, p.7). The drama is followed by a 17 page historical description of Scanderbeg's Albania based on Barleti's work.

Whincop, as the youngest friend and companion of the well-known writer Alexander Pope, wrote the work under the influence of the Neoclassical literary movement; in the lyrical drama, Scanderbeg's sense of love is somewhat exaggerated, but the hero is distinguished by his feelings of patriotism and commitment to Renaissance humanism. Among the other characters in the drama are Aranit and his daughter Arianissa, who represent and personify the virtues of the Arber people—faith, honor, manliness, and unwavering resistance against the Turks. For the backdrop of the plot, the author chose the siege of Croyain 1451 by Sultan Amurath. During this year Scanderbeg married Donika, poetically represented by Arianissa. Whincop portrays Skanderbeg as a heroic warrior who marshaled his bravery and fearlessness for the liberation of his homeland. Through his work, Whincop also erected a beautiful monument to two important friends of Skanderbeg, the old man Uran and the boy Thopia, who stood firm in the three sieges of Croya, defending it against the Sultans Amurath and Mehmed (Luarasi, 1968, p.6). Whincop's play was eventually translated into Albanian by the prominent translator and professor of English literature Skënder Luarasi, and was published in Tirana in 1968 on the occasion of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of Scanderbeg's death (Kadija, 2018, p. 35).

A central feature of Romanticism's greatest poetic works, G.G. Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," features the Albanian struggle for independence and the importance of their national hero, Scanderbeg.

*Land of Albania! where Iskander rose,
Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
And he his namesake, whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise;
Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
Through many a cypress grove within each city's ken.* Canto II, XXXVIII

The publication of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" in 1812, made a great impression on Byron's readership and the English public as a whole. The great success of the poem was due to the poet's ability to

touch on the sharpest socio-political issues of the time. During the Byron's trip to Albania in the summer of 1809, he found an interesting land filled with history and ancient traditions, customs, and folklore. He also noted the high virtues of Albanian people, which inspired him his hundreds of verses in Canto II of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage". In these lines, Byron talks about how he begins to breathe freely and forget for a moment the sadness and disappointment of life in England.

*From the dark barriers of that rugged clime,
Ev'n to the centre of Illyria's vales,
Childe Harold pass'd o'er many a mountain sublime,
Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales;
Yet in famed Attica such lovely dales
Are rarely seen; nor can fair Tempe boast
A charm they know not; loved Parnassus fails,
Though classic ground and consecrated most,
To match some spots that lurk within this lowering coast. (Canto II, XLVI)*

Robert Elsie maintains, "of all English writers to have influenced Scanderbeg and Albania to the English-speaking public, none was more influential than Lord Byron (1788-1824). Byron was fascinated by Albania and the Albanians during his travel in Mediterranean and indeed began to learn the Albanian language. He had not been uninfluenced by Gibbon's portrayal of the Albanian prince" (Elsie, 1993, p. 20).

Another important writer **James M. Ludlow** wrote the novel "The Captain of the Janizaries" on Scanderbeg theme in 1887. Ludlow's work appears to be the second novel about Scanderbeg (Bentley's "The Great Scanderbeg"). In the first chapter of "The Captain of the Janizaries," the Hero is still in Bursa, and we get to know both the thoughts and feelings that boil inside of Scanderbeg. When nearby soldiers nearby are mocking a dumb man, Scanderbeg approaches and disperses the soldiers; at that point, the dumb man says, "I bear thee a message from Moses Goleme, of Lower Dibria, and from all the provinces of Albania, from every valley and every heart."

"Let me hear it, for I love the very flints on the mountains and every pebble on the shore of old Albania," replies Scanderbeg eagerly. "Heaven be praised! Were my ears dull as the stones they would open to hear such words," said the man with suppressed emotion.

As Scanderbeg listens to the tragedy of his people in shock, he has but a moment to whisper: "Return our salutation to the noble Moses Goleme; and say that George Castriot will honor his confidence better in deeds than he could in words. I know not the future, my brave fellow, and might not tell it if I did, even to ears as deaf as yours. But say to Goleme that Castriot swears by his beard—by the beard of Moses—that brighter days shall come for Albania even if they must be flashed from our swords. Farewell!" (Ludlow, 1887, p. 11)

For all its flaws, the novel provides an interesting panorama of the thirteen years it covers, and has descriptions that are wonderful. "By the beard of Moses" (Ludlow, 1887, p. 11) became the slogan of the rebels against the Turks and Scanderbeg in this novel shines as an exemplary and true national hero.

During the Victorian era, another prominent writer who wrote about the Scanderbeg theme was **Benjamin Disraeli**. His novel "The Rise of Iskander" is a short novel of 22 chapters and 113 pages (the 1903 edition) and was

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most likely written in the southwestern English city of Bath during the winter of 1832-1833, two years after Disraeli returned from his tour of the Albanian lands. Influenced by Byron's "Childe Harlod's Pilgrimage", Disraeli used the story and figure of Scanderbeg to create a melodramatic story of adventure and romance, which pleased the tastes of the broad masses of early 19th century readers. In doing so, Disraeli did not make the slightest attempt to stay true to history or to give a realistic picture of Skanderbeg's life; he simply created a romantic narrative in the form of a short novel, which has Skanderbeg as its central figure and Albania as an exotic background, with its oriental colors and costumes (Kadija, 2018).

"The Rise of Iskander"'s nature is an essentially Romantic and there was no way it could be otherwise as at the time of publication (Europe was at the peak of literary Romanticism); any Hellenic elements found in the work can be ascribed to, the interest and sympathy for ancient Greek and Roman culture during the Romantic period. Moreover, in England, a particular literary and cultural movement known as Victorian Hellenism appeared and it coincided with the reign of Queen Victoria. At that time the study, knowledge and mastery of classical Greek culture was seen as the only way to be affirmed in English intellectual and elite circles.

Disraeli may have fallen in love with Scanderbeg and become familiar with his history and deeds during his youth when he went for a long tour to the Mediterranean, from June 1830 to October 1831, during which he traveled from Spain, Malta, Albania, Greece and the Middle East. This tour left indelible memories throughout his later life. From Corfu he traveled to Arta and Ioannina. In Ioannina he wrote letters to his family and father; these letters have been studied and published by Dr. Robert Elsie.

Although "The Rise of Iskander" was not one of Disraeli's major triumphs as a novelist, it was nevertheless read with great interest by a wide mass of English and American readers throughout the 19th century. During the years 1833-1927 this novel was published in England and America over twenty times; it was even published twice in Greek and once in Slovenian. In the early 20th century, interest in this novel began to wane as the tastes of the readers changed.

At the same time, "The Rise of Iskander" is a novel of considerable importance because it is one of the few popular works of English prose that deals with an Albanian subject and Scanderbeg himself. As a matter of fact, Dr. Robert Elsie provides the best assessment about the importance of Benjamin Disraeli's novel "The Rise of Iskander". According to Elsie, "As the only work of literary prose published in England which used Scanderbeg as its subject matter and as the first work of original literary prose in English to be written on an Albanian theme, "The Rise of Iskander", dusty and relegated to oblivion though it may now be, constitutes a monument to Britain's literary discovery of Albania in the nineteenth century, and to Anglo-Albanian literary and cultural relations in general." (Elsie, 1993, p.22)

Finally, I would like to single out a Canadian writer, Charles Ewert, who in 1981 published the novel "SCANDERBEG - Eagle of Albania". Kadija maintains that this work on the history of Scanderbeg and the Albanian people is both enlightening and deeply exciting. For Kadija, Ewert found in the personality of Scanderbeg those elements of humanity and the human soul that can serve as a guiding light for any culture and civilization—a man to whom much was given, from whom much was expected, and from whom much was taken. Ewert's esteem for Scanderbeg is so great that he considers Scanderbeg's courage, commanding authority, and deep-rooted

desire the very nourishment of human life; they signify a willingness to receive and accept the power of God.” (Kadija, 2018).

Conclusion

Beyond doubt, Scanderbeg meets all the criteria and standards set by Max Weber for a charismatic and historic leader: he was a great personality, with distinct talents in military, political and diplomatic leadership, deeply esteemed by his contemporaries as a military leader with extraordinary skills and talents and special ethical and aesthetic values.

During the 16th century, the following English writers have written literary works on Scanderbeg theme: Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Richard Lovelace. From 1601 to 1733, no special literary work was written in English literature save for an epic poem "La Scanderbeide" or in English "Skanderbeide-The Heroic Deeds of George Scanderbeg, King of Epirus" by Margherita Sarrocchi (1560-1617) and a novel entitled "Le Grand Scanderberg" or in English "The Great Scanderbeg", by the French novelist Anne de la Roche Guilhem (1644 - 1707/1710).

During the second phase, which lasts from 17th to 19th century, there are quite a few authors who developed and explored the Scanderbeg theme in their literary works, among them William Howard, George Lillo, Thomas Wincop, George Gordon Byron, Benjamin Disraeli, etc.

In general, the English writers who had written literary works about Scanderbeg enjoyed a considerable success, but because during the 18th and 19th centuries the Ottoman threat to the continent gradually declined, governments and public opinion in England, Europe and the United States were more preoccupied with the so-called Eastern Question and the issue of the decay of the Ottoman Empire.

The literary works about Scanderbeg were mainly written according to two artistic models—a model that glorified the history and deeds of Scanderbeg and a model that favored a more realistic approach—however, both aim at presenting the dignified figure of the hero, Scanderbeg.

English writers, with few exceptions, did not see and consider Scanderbeg only as an Albanian hero, but also as part of their own national histories and cultures by considering his deeds as aimed at defending Christianity and the entire European civilization. The figure of George Castriot Scanderbeg continued to be one of the main symbols of Albanian identity in the European continent even after his death.

English writers have articulated in their works through the figure of Scanderbeg the troubled Albanian world, its efforts to emerge from the yoke of the Ottoman occupier and defend the values of European Christianity through bravery, manliness, courage, vision, and determination. Therefore, Scanderbeg's life story has inspired English historians and writers to write about his glorious deeds and frame them as his defense of the Albanian homeland, values of European culture, civilization and Christianity. In general, Scanderbeg in literary works written by English authors is depicted as a statesman, diplomat and military genius who had a pivotal role in saving Western Europe from Ottoman occupation, leading to Scanderbeg becoming one of the popular and well-known historical leaders and figures in English literature from between the 16th and 19th centuries.

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