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**MARIN BARLETI'S *HISTORY OF SCANDERBEG*  
IN ENGLISH, 1560–1596\***

If the history of a particular figure is not recounted across multiple languages, then that figure is destined to remain obscure beyond the geographical boundaries of his or her own ethnic group. In 1968, at the Second Albannological Conference dedicated to George Castriot Scanderbeg, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, various scholars highlighted world literature as a primary factor spreading Scanderbeg's renown. The three papers that emphasized this were: "Scanderbeg in World Literature" (Androkli Kostallari), "Scanderbeg in Italian Literature" (Henrik Lacaj) and "Scanderbeg in English Literature" (Skënder Luarasi).<sup>1</sup> Building upon these foundational works, this paper shall examine in greater detail the English translations of Marin Barleti's *History of Scanderbeg*. This is of particular importance because of the role English plays today as the world's foremost language, due to the spread of the British Empire in the nineteenth century and the growth of America's culture influence in the twentieth. In particular we shall present several impressive details that do not appear to have been treated before in Scanderbeg studies related to English literature.

It is widely accepted that among the earliest authors who wrote about Scanderbeg, Marin Barleti had the greatest influence, especially on the spread of Scanderbeg's fame in Western Europe and beyond. In Barleti's first book, *De Obsidione Scodrensi* (*The Siege of Shkodra*), Scanderbeg is mentioned only four times; but this work prepared the way for his second work, *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi*. *The*

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<sup>1</sup> *Konferenca e dytë e studimeve albanologjike: me rastin e 500-vjetorit të vdekjes së Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeut, Tiranë 12-18 Janar 1968*, Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1969.

*Siege* was written not later 1501<sup>2</sup> and was published as a book in 1504. Since Barleti was an eyewitness of the siege, he wrote with the authority of a historian and the pathos of an author: that is, we have both history and literature together in one book.

Barleti's second book is much more voluminous and widely-known. It was published several times in Latin (first in 1508–1510) and was translated and published in German (1533), Italian (1554), Portuguese (1567), Polish (1568) and Spanish (1582, from Portuguese). These translations were republished several times.<sup>3</sup> This a testimony to the impact of the work in Europe, feeling itself threatened, as it was, by the expansionism of the Ottoman Empire. The book was also published in French by Jacques Lavardin in 1576, but it was not a direct translation from Barleti's account. It drew from nineteen sources, all named by Lavardin, but the translator clarifies that "the most part of this history is drawn word for word [from Barleti]."<sup>4</sup> As such, Lavardin's French translation has been considered a translation of Barleti, a characterization that is acceptable so long as it comes with the appropriate caveat.

The existence of such publications in the chief languages of Europe, from the sixteenth century, illustrates why Latinist Henrik Lacaj wrote: "The figure of George Castriot extended well past his own borders and became an international figure ... who fed the aspirations of poets,

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<sup>2</sup> In 2018 Prof. Dr. Lucia Nadin discovered an unknown original manuscript at: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc65216f>). In cooperation with Prof. Dr. Aurel Plasari, they studied the document and noted that it was dedicated to Doge Agostino Barbadiago, unlike the published version of 1504, dedicated to the subsequent doge, Leonardo Loredano. This discovery sheds further light on Barleti as a historian and writer, as well as on the context in which he wrote *The Siege of Shkodra*.

<sup>3</sup> Prifti, Stefan, in: Barleti, Marin. *Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skënderbeut*. Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, 1964, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Lavardin cites these 19 authors/works as the basis for his French version: "Marin Barleti (Marinus Barletius), priest of Shkodra in Epirus, from whom the most part of this history is drawn word for word; The life of Scanderbeg, of an uncertain Author; Volaterrane; Eneas Silvius, alias Pope Pius the Second; P. Callimachus, experient of the battle of Varna; Paulus Jovius; André Thevet, in his *Cosmography*; Peter Perondin; Bartholomew Facius; Theodore Spandugin, a Gentleman of Constantinople; Andrew Cambin; Leonardus Chiensis, Archbishop of Mytilene (Lesbos), of the siege and sack of Constantinople, at which he was present, and taken prisoner; Isidore Ruthenian, Cardinal; Christopher Richier; Wolfangus Chronicle; Francesco Sansovino; Melanc-thon his *Chronicle*; Pandolph Callenucius of Pesaro, in his *Neapolitane histories*; Bonfinius, in the *History of Hungary*".

writers, and the masses, all of whom saw in this hero a defender and savior not only of his own motherland, but also of the Balkans and Europe, from a great invading power.”<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that Barleti's works have historical problems, especially if they are judged by today's standards of scholarship. They must be studied within their complex geopolitical and social contexts. For this reason, when Henrik Lacaj published his masterful Albanian translation of *De Obsidione Scodrensi* (*Rrethimi i Shkodrës*) from Latin, it was enriched with a lengthy historical introduction by historian Aleks Buda. It is a key to interpreting the work. Buda acknowledges the criticisms of the work but also presents convincing arguments for a mature, scientific, and contextual posture in the evaluation of the details, discerning where artistic creativity is inserted into the text, for example the statistical estimations and exaggerations (which also exist in the Ottoman chronicles about the same event) and the long, flowery speeches, some from the camp of the besieging army—speeches Barleti himself could not have heard from his position in the parapets of the besieged Rozafa fortress of Scutari.

If Barleti is criticized for exaggerations in his first work, he is criticized all the more in his second. *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi* is far more voluminous than *De Obsidione Scodrensi* and Barleti was neither a witness of the events nor an immediate contemporary of Scanderbeg (Barleti was born in c.1450–1460; Scanderbeg died in 1468). Thus, he had to rely on the testimony of others. For this reason, his work has been criticized, sometimes harshly, and his reputation as a historian has been undermined, some going so far as to suggest his work is more a novel than a history. This is an unfortunate overreaction. One must not forget that Barleti grew up at the end of the Scanderbeg era and in the immediate post-Scanderbeg years, and heard multiple accounts of his life and deeds. He was a young Albanian living in a context of castle sieges and a perpetual threat by Ottoman invaders. Later, as a more mature man, he consulted with eyewitnesses. He was well informed and one of history's most important links to the age of Scanderbeg.

Just as Aleks Buda wrote an introduction for the Albanian translation of *The Siege of Shkodra* (*Rrethimi i Shkodrës*), so Stefan

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<sup>5</sup> Lacaj, Henrik. “Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë italiane”. *Konferenca e dytë*, 445–446.

Prifti wrote an introduction for the Albanian translation of *The History of the Life and Deeds of Scanderbeg* (*Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skënderbeut*), wherein “Barleti’s value as a historian” is evaluated and in which Prifti debunks some of the more extreme efforts to invalidate Barleti. Certainly Prifti acknowledges Barleti’s imprecision in chronology, his tendency to exaggerate in order to produce a more aesthetically pleasing book, etc. But on the other hand, Prifti gives concrete examples of Barleti’s efforts to write with the responsibility of a true historian. Barleti himself conveys his desire to portray truth. He cites sources (e.g. discussions with Pjetër Engjëlli). He uses qualifying terminology (“it *seems* to me”, “I *perceive*” etc.). These devices show that Barleti writes with a researcher’s bent and does not claim to be giving the final word to every issue he treats. He critically considers the testimony others have given him. He gives explanations for facts which seem to contradict each other. He rebuts arguments presented by other writers, due to the lack of supporting evidence and documentation. He refers to “the laws of history,” etc.<sup>6</sup> As such, we observe in Barleti the elements of a true historian, despite his works’ shortcomings, errors, and the intermixture of strict historical data with artistic literary license.

The Albanian scholar Aurel Plasari, in his treatment of the work of Francesco Pall, notes that over the course of time it has been discovered that some of the statistics and details given by Barleti, long judged as impossible, have more recently been confirmed to be absolutely precise, after the publication of archival documents from Venice, Ragusa, Aragon, etc., “sometimes defying the very bounds of the incredible.”<sup>7</sup> This kind of discovery is instructive to scholars, discouraging hasty prejudgments and dogmatic conclusions. Our purpose here is not to evaluate Barleti as a historian, but merely to propose that without studying Barleti, one may not become an expert in Scanderbegian studies. This will remain true whether or not future archival discoveries confirm factual accuracies or inaccuracies in Barleti’s histories, because hundreds of historiographic and artistic works are already built upon them, sometimes unwittingly, to one

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<sup>6</sup> Prifti, Stefan, te: Barleti, *Historia*, 13–22.

<sup>7</sup> Plasari, Aurel. *Skënderbeu: një histori politike*. Tiranë: Instituti Shqiptar i Studimeve “Gjergj Fishta”, 2010, 24–27. See also: Pall, Francisco. *Marino Barlezio: uno storia umanista*. Bucaresti: Imprimeria nationala, 1938, 65–105.

degree or another. Without knowing Barleti, it is impossible to distinguish whether or not a particular historian is following Barleti's historical depictions and chronology as a foundation, even subconsciously.

Here we may cite an example: the distinguished German scholar Franz Babinger (1891–1967), an Ottoman and Balkan historian. In his work *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, Babinger calls Barleti “untrustworthy,” then builds the greater part of his chapter on the sieges of Kruja and Shkodra upon Barleti's work.<sup>8</sup> This kind of contradiction is not unique to Babinger. It is distinguishable in many scholars treating Scanderbeg. On one hand, a Scanderbeg scholar feels obligated to disclaim Barleti as a historical authority, lest he be perceived as a naïve scholar, but on the other hand, he is obliged to consult Barleti (or more modern but eminently Barletian authors), because of the sheer volume and influence of Barleti's work, and his proximity to Scanderbeg's life and times.<sup>9</sup> A careful historian must find a way to walk this tightrope without falling into one or the other extreme.

If it is true that the study of Barleti is *essential* for knowing and researching Scanderbeg, or if it is merely *important*, then, naturally, it is essential that his works become available in the languages of those studying his life. (If a scholar can understand the nuances of Barleti's original Latin, all the better.) Naturally, the majority of interest and research on Scanderbeg is by Albanians. For this *The Siege of Shkodra* was published in Albanian in 1961; whereas, *The History of Scanderbeg* was published in Albanian in 1964, both from Latin.<sup>10</sup>

When were English speakers first introduced to Barleti? And what is the condition of English-language versions of Barleti today? This consideration is important because English is now the world's lingua franca and because more and more people around the world are being

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<sup>8</sup> Babinger, Franz (trans. Ralph Manheim). *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*. Princeton University Press, 1978, 359–368.

<sup>9</sup> For this, see also the introduction of David Abulafia (University of Cambridge) in: Hodgkinson, Harry. *Scanderbeg: From Ottoman Captive to Albanian Hero*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Barleti, Marin (trans. from Latin Henrik Lacaj). *Rrethimi i Shkodrës*. Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1961; Barleti, Marin (trans. from Latin Stefan Prifti). *Historia e jetës dhe e veprave të Skenderbeut*. Tiranë: Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, 1964.

introduced to Scanderbeg. Albania and Kosovo have an increasing number of foreign tourists, and Scanderbeg's bust stands in or near prominent English speaking cities such as Detroit and London (the latter unveiled in 2021).<sup>11</sup> In the above-mentioned articles by Skënder Luarasi and Androkli Kostallari, we are introduced to three English works, published in 1560, 1562 and 1596, but we are not provided many details. In fact, we are left with the impression that Luarasi and Kostallari may not have seen these works personally, but rather only indications and titles. Luarasi wrote, for example: "Fortunately, we finally have a photocopy of the sonnet"<sup>12</sup> (the sonnet of Edmund Spenser about Scanderbeg, 1596, treated below). Whereas, Kostallari wrote that these books were not available in Albanian libraries and were difficult to find in European libraries. The absence of access to these materials led them to make several errors. For example, Kostallari wrote that Lavardin based his work *only* on Marin Barleti's work (see footnote 3 for the list of nineteen sources Lavardin actually used).<sup>13</sup> If they had had these English works readily available, they might have treated them more exhaustively, an effort that remains to be done.

The first English work was published in London in 1560, with this title: *Orations of Arsanes agaynst Philip the trecherous kyng of Macedone: of the Embassadors of Venice against the prince that vnder crafty league with Scanderbeg, layed snares for Christendome: and of Scanderbeg prayeng ayde of Christian Princes agaynst periurous murdereng Mahumet and agaynst the old false Christian Duke Mahumetes confederate: with a notable example of God's vengeance vppon a faithlesse Kyng, Quene, and her children.*<sup>14</sup> Luarasi provided only the name of the publisher, John Daye, not the name of the author/translator, Thomas Norton (1532–1584). Nor does he mention that in this publication, there are only two orations translated from Barleti's second work: one from the ambassador of Venice and the

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/albanian-national-hero-commemorated-in-bayswater-8367625.html> (accessed January 23, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Luarasi, Skënder. "Skënderbeu në letërsinë angleze", *Konferenca e dytë*, 433.

<sup>13</sup> Kostallari, Androkli. "Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë botërore", *Konferenca e dytë*, 375.

<sup>14</sup> <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A21541.0001.001>. The spelling here is indicative of the English spelling of the times, and is why the 1596 version needs to be republished with updated English spelling.

other from the archbishop of Durrës. In addition to these translations, Norton presents a speech by Scanderbeg to Christian princes, but this he has not translated. Rather, he has invented it himself on the basis of Barleti's history. Norton's self-described purpose was to present a speech "as [Norton] *thought he might* then aptly have said" (emphasis mine), in order to transmit needed lessons and warnings to his readers. We are unaware of any earlier writings in English about Scanderbeg and certainly no earlier translations of Barleti, even portions, previous to Norton's. Who was Norton?

Thomas Norton had an impressive cultural and social profile. He was a politician, barrister, poet and playwright, educated at Cambridge.<sup>15</sup> He was married to the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, the chief theologian and leader of the English Reformation. Norton is most distinguished for his English translation of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), the magnum opus of French Protestant theologian John Calvin. Norton's English translation from Latin was published in 1561 and contained approximately 3,000 pages. This work is among the most important works of Protestant theology, a work with wide circulation and significant influence even today.<sup>16</sup>

In Norton's introduction, he acknowledges that the speeches he translated from Barleti should not be viewed as verbatim quotations, but as literary creations based upon historical facts, speeches recreating what might have been said, for the readers' benefit and instruction. This literary device in historical works of the times, Norton believes, is "both pleasant and profitable." Here, therefore, we see the importance of reading Barleti's text in light of the context in Europe. That is, in the sixteenth century, readers expected such authorial interventions. They expected embellished speeches and did not reject the historical integrity of a work because of such intervention.

The second English publication about Scanderbeg mentioned by Luarasi is from 1562, a translation by John Shute, titled: *Two very notable commentaries the one of the original of the Turks and Empire*

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, Sidney, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XLI, 221–225 (Norton, Thomas). Online te: <https://archive.org/details/dictionaryofnati41stepuoft>.

<sup>16</sup> This work is also published in Albanian, as: Calvin, Jean (trans. Mirgin Dobruna ; ed. Ledia Ikonomi). *Institutet e fesë së krishterë*. Tirana: Vernon, 2011.

*of the house of Ottomanno, written by Andrew Cambine, and the other of the wars of the Turks against George Scanderbeg, prince of Epiro, and of the great victories obtained by the said George, as well against the Emperur of Turkey, as other princes, and of his other rare force and virtues, worthy of memory, translated out of Italian into English by John Shute.*<sup>17</sup> The work has approximately 250 pages, 90 of which concern Scanderbeg. Shute does not cite the name of the author, but Luarasi tells us it is Dhimitër Frangu. In the introduction, Shute explains that it “is a commentary written also in the Italian, by whom, I know not, for that the name of the author is suppressed but whatsoever he be that did it, he hath deserved to be well thought of for his travail, for it is well worth the reading.”

The final translation we shall treat and by far the most significant was published in London in 1596 and contains more than 500 pages. The title is: *The History of George Castriot, surnamed Castriot, king of Albania, contaning his famous acts, his noble deeds of arms, and memorable victories against the Turks, for the faith of Christ, comprised in twelve books by Jacques Lavardin, lord of Plessis Bovrrot, a nobleman of France*<sup>18</sup>. It was translated and prepared by Zachary Jones (born ca. 1558). As mentioned previously, the book was not translated directly from Barleti’s Latin, but from Lavardin. It was “a history out of French into English”. Insofar as Lavardin translated his French work chiefly from Barleti’s Latin, Jones’s translation from the French may be considered the first and, currently, the only translation of Marin Barleti’s *History of Scanderbeg*. It was the work that made Scanderbeg known to the English-speaking world.

Jones’s translation was published in the Elizabethan Era at the zenith of the English Renaissance, an era known for two of the most distinguished English writers, William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. Additionally, this time period is known for the famous Bible translation project under King James. No work may automatically be considered good or significant because it is published in a country’s golden age of literature, but the elegance of Zachary Jones’s work, with

<sup>17</sup> <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17733.0001.001>

<sup>18</sup> Përkthyer shqip: *Historia e Gjergj Kastriotit, mbiquajtur Skënderbe, mbret i Shqipërisë, me të bëmat e tij të famshme, veprat e tij fisnike ushtarake, dhe fitoret e tij të spikatur kundër turqve, për besimin e Krishtit.*



approximately 365,000 words, reflects his times and stands on its own merits. It is a masterful translation in the Elizabethan English used by Shakespeare.

The work is significant not only for its length and beauty, but also for the reputation of its translator. Zachary Jones, long known only by "Z. I. Gentleman" (not Z.J.), had connections with the literary elite of England. He was a member of Edmund Spenser's literary circle<sup>19</sup>, and possibly knew Shakespeare personally.

As presented more than fifty years ago by Kostallari and Luarasi at the Second Conference of Albanological Studies, Edmund Spenser himself wrote a sonnet about Scanderbeg that was published in Jones's English translation.<sup>20</sup> This shows not only Spenser's faith in the translator, but also his evaluation of Scanderbeg's importance as a hero with international significance. Scanderbeg, according to Spenser, is on the same level with the greatest heroes of world history. Both Androkli Kostallari and Skënder Luarasi translated the sonnet into Albanian<sup>21</sup>, as compared with the original below:

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, Franklin B., Jr. "Spenser, Shakespeare, and Zachary Jones". *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 (Summer, 1968), 205.

<sup>20</sup> In an article for [www.telegrafi.com](http://www.telegrafi.com), titled "Figura e Skënderbeut në letërsinë angleze" (The Figure of Scanderbeg in English Literature), Refik Kadija claims a significant fact, should it ever be verified. He writes: "Spenser's sonnet was composed before the translation and was published on October 12, 1593; then it was used as an epigraph in the Gentleman's translation" (April 14, 2018, <https://telegrafi.com/figura-e-skenderbeut-ne-letersine-angleze>, accessed October 30, 2018). Unfortunately, the author of the article did not provide publication details for 1593, and we have not discovered any other source evidencing the existence of the sonnet before 1596 (see, for example: Morris, R. *The Complete Works of Edmund Spenser*, London: MacMillan, 1897, p. 608 and 703, which gives 1596 as the year of its publication). The sonnet itself seems to claim its composition specifically for *The History of Scanderbeg* ("Thy acts, o Scanderbeg, *this volume* tells," emphasis mine). This suggests it was not an existing publication appended to Jones's text. Therefore, until Kadija's claim is verified, we maintain 1596 as the date of its first publication, not 1593.

<sup>21</sup> *Konferenca e dytë*, 387 (Kostallari), 433 (Luarasi).

<b>Edmund Spenser</b> (original)	<b>Androkli Kostallari</b> (a more faithful translation)	<b>Skënder Luarasi</b> (a more elegant translation)
<i>Wherefore doth vain Antiquity so vaunt Her ancient monuments of mighty peers, And old Heroes, which their world did daunt With their great deeds, and filled their children's ears?</i>	<i>Pse mburret koha e lashtë kaqë fort Me monumentet e moçëm të zotërve të fuqishëm Të heronjve, që me veprat pa mort Mahnitën botën, dhe fëmijët i lexojnë të etshëm</i>	<i>Pse mburret Koha e lashtë kaqë fort Me monumentet e moçëm burrash trima, Heronj që përmes veprave pa mort Mahnitën botën, dhe në prrallë e rima</i>
<i>Who, rapt with wonder of their famous praise, Admire their statues, their colosseums great, Their rich triumphal arcs which they did raise, Their huge pyramids, which do heaven threat.</i>	<i>Kushdo me lavdinë e tyre habitet, Admiron statujat, kolosetë e tyre të lartë Harqet e pasur të triumfit, që ngritën Piramidat vigane, që kërcenojnë qiejtë.</i>	<i>Çdo foshnjë i nxën? Njerzimi i admiron Statuët e tyre, kolosej të lartë, E beret triumfore që i përshkon E bukura me madhështit' e narta.</i>
<i>Lo! one, whom later age hath brought to light, Matchable to the greatest of those great; Great both by name, and great in power and might, And meriting a mere triumphant seat.</i>	<i>Por ja ai, që kohë e vonë e nxori në dritë, Që me më të mëdhenjtë ndër ta matet, I madh në emër, në forcë e në vetitë; Vend i triumfit atij i përshtatet.</i>	<i>Ja një, që Kohë e vonë e nxorr në dritë: Ndër të mëdhenjt krah më të madhit shkon, I madh në zë, pushtet e në vetitë; Triumin e vërtetë meriton.</i>
<i>The scourge of Turks, and plague of infidels, Thy acts, o Scanderbeg, this volume tells.</i>	<i>Kamzhik për turqit, rrufë për të pafetë, Për bëmat e tua, Skënderbe, ky libër flet.</i>	<i>Kamzhik për turqit, për armiqetë rrufë, – Ky libër flet për Ty, o Skënderbe!</i>

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In addition to this sonnet, Zachary Jones wrote an “epistle to the reader” in praise of Scanderbeg, reproduced here:

### ***Epistle to the Reader (1596)***

*Gentle reader, I have here presented you with a history out of French into English, containing the life and glorious acts of Scanderbeg, king of Epirus, a prince no less admired in his life than memorable after his death. I need not commend unto you either the excellency of the history or the worthiness of the party, for both the one and the other are sufficient to commend themselves and the shadow of my praises will but eclipse the brightness of their deserts. Notwithstanding—because it may be expected that I should say*

*somewhat—give me leave to speak what I think, though I cannot think what I ought to speak. First therefore, touching Scanderbeg, so exquisite was his skill and experience in the military art and science, so excellent and heroic was his carriage and government amongst his soldiers, amongst his subjects and towards his very enemies, so amiable and lovely were his virtues, so unspeakable and unmatched were many of his qualities, so honourable and glorious were all his actions, and so extraordinary was his fortune in the multitude and rareness of his victories, that it may be a question whether his virtue or his fortune was greater. The one was rare, the other admirable, and both together have exempted him from comparison, insomuch that if Hannibal the Carthaginian, the scourge of Rome, and Scipio the Roman, the plague of Carthage, were now living to revive their old disputation—who should be reputed the best captain—I doubt not but each of them would give Scanderbeg the garland, at leastways they would acknowledge him if not superior to all, yet inferior to none, and equal to the worthiest. If we compare his small means with his mighty exploits, you will say they were wonderful. If you consider his policies and fine stratagems, you will say they were singular. If you respect his corporal gifts and ornaments, nature herself will say she was prodigal in gracing him, having made him as comely as Edgar Aetheling, who was called England's darling, and as impenetrable as Achilles, whom no weapon could fasten on. If you regard his fortune, fortune herself will tell you that she was fond over him. For in him only she shewed a change of her nature, which being usually changeable and inconstant to all men mortal, yet to him continued constant and unchangeable. As for his virtues, oh how they shine most glorious as the sunbeams, dazzling the eyes of the beholders with the excellency of their object. Look into his life and let this history be the glass to show you his perfections. You shall find that for wariness and prudence he was comparable to Fabius Maximus, who by temporising repaired the estate of Rome almost ruined. For love to his native country he was another Camillus, who being exiled by his ingrate citizens, yet rescued them from the Gauls. For discipline he was equal to Manlius, whose severity to his own son hath made him ever famous. He was courageous as Hector who never turned back to his enemies; bountiful and courteous as Caesar, who by giving, forgiving, and relieving, made*

himself way to the Roman Empire; merciful as Trajan, who never signed a bill for the execution of malefactors but he bedewed it with his tears; and dear to his subjects and soldiers as Titus, who was termed the delight and the jewel of the world. Alexander the glory of Macedon got the name "Great" amongst the Greeks because he overran the Orient like a tempest. Pompey the joy of the Roman nobility had the name of "Great" given him by the Romans because he purged the seas infested with pirates and because he stood for the common liberty. Charlemagne the honour of the French was entitled "Great" because he brake the force and power of the Saracens. Gonzalo the pride of the Spaniards and Italians was called the "Great" captain because he extorted the kingdom of Naples from the Frenchmen. As justly may the Epirotes vaunt of their Scanderbeg to be the glory, the honour, the pride and the joy of Albania, seeing the Turks themselves, his sworn and mortal enemies, have given and attributed the name of "Great" unto him, and seeing the greatness of his exploits do testify that the name and title of "Great" is no greater than his deserts. Nay, all Europe may worthily acknowledge him to be as great as the greatest, seeing his conquests in Asia and Europe under Murad and seeing the strange recovery of his kingdom and of the liberty of his country, which he purged from the infidels. His often and wonderful victories achieved against infinite and huge armies and the continual course of his life and of all his actions do show apparently that he was the glory and only stay of his own country, the sole protector of the common liberty, a bulwark to Christendom, a champion for the religion, the paragon of that age, the wonder of posterity, a terror to his enemies whilst he lived, and adored by them after his death. Pardon me (my masters) if I be somewhat immoderate or superstitious in admiring his excellency, for what almost can there be in any man that was not abundantly in our Scanderbeg? So many were his perfections and so few his imperfections, as it may justly be imagined, that God created him as a mirror for the world rather to wonder at than any way possibly to be matched, and yet, most worthy of all men to be imitated.

Now by the excellency of the person here represented, the worthiness of this history may easily be imagined, for where the subject is so rare and notable, the estimate of the history must needs be made correspondent and agreeable. I will not compare it with the best that

*have been written, but this I dare aver, that therein is little or nothing wanting which in a history is thought needful. The ornaments of an history are elegance of the style, truth of the reports, variety of the discourse and profitableness of the matter. For the style, howsoever this history may seem defective, it is not much material, for though it want the grace of elegant and fine phrases to make it pleasant to curious ears and to dainty appetites, yet for all other the accomplishments of a good and perfect history I think it may go beyond the most. If it compare not with the best touching the truth thereof, diverse circumstances and arguments do prove it to be without controlment: the age and time wherein it was first written, the consent of succeeding times which have received it without reproof, and the testimonies of sundry authors who have recorded the most notable and strangest accidents contained in this history. For the variety thereof to procure delight, I appeal to your own judgements when you have read it. And I doubt not but you will confess that you have found few histories or none more copious, more delectable and more delightful. For profit, likewise: in many points it will show itself to be excellent and you can turn to no part thereof but you shall find matter of benefit. Hence may the sage philosopher and prudent poletist derive all or the most precepts of the military art and science. Herein may both the expert martialist and the simple soldier see the excellency and perfection of his calling and profession, the benefit of good order and martial discipline; and out of the idea of Scanderbeg his actions, may they behold (as it were) the anatomy and shape unto themselves, the image both of an expert general and an absolute soldier. Here may princes and great persons behold the bright, shining lustre of many royal and heroic virtues, making their names glorious in the eye of the world, their power fearful and terrible to their enemies and their persons dear and gracious to their subjects. Here may they take a view of those pernicious vices and enormities of those rash and inconsiderate affections which make them odious to God, hateful to men, discontented their estates and most wretched and miserable even in the greatness of their fortunes. In sum, such is the variety, the verity, the profit and the excellency of this discourse, that there is no estate, degree or calling, but may find therein somewhat to admire at, much to delight in and most things to imitate and to put in practice and execution.*

*It resteth now (my masters) that you make that estimate and account of it, which both the excellency of Scanderbeg his virtues and the worthiness of the history do require and merit, and that you measure the goodwill and painful labours both of the authors and of the translator by their dispositions affecting your good and benefit, and not by any sinister singularity of your misdeeming conceit. For if you be not too ingrate and injurious to the memory of a prince so well deserving, if you show not yourselves more than barbarous in condemning a monument of so great reckoning, or if you be not too austere and rigorous in your censures, you cannot but graciously accept the acquaintance of this history. You will friendly welcome the rare example of Scanderbeg, his peerless virtues and his surpassing fortune. And last of all, you will cover the imperfection of this work (if you find any) with the veil of your self-gracing courtesy.*

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Insofar as in 1560 there emerged a partial translation of Barleti's *History of Scanderbeg*, from a translator (Norton) with close connections with eminent figures of the Protestant Reformation (such as John Calvin) and the English Reformation (such as Thomas Cranmer), and insofar as there emerged a nearly complete translation of Barleti's work in 1596, with such grand introductory material from figures such as Edmund Spenser and the translator himself, Zachary Jones, it should therefore come as no surprise that the fame of Scanderbeg continued to spread in the West.

With such a distinguished heritage of English translation behind us in the sixteenth century, and considering the development of the English language in the centuries following, and acknowledging the role of English as the global lingua franca of our day, and recognizing Marin Barleti as the *de facto* father of Scanderbeg studies, we hereby welcome intensive scholastic reviews of the extant English (and Albanian) translations and, where needed, corrected and modernized versions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> As of this writing, a project is ongoing to republish Zachary Jones's 1596 translation, in modernized spelling and punctuation, scheduled to be published in 2021 as: *The History of George Castriot Scanderbeg, King of Albania* by Marin Barleti and Jacques Lavardin, translated by Zachary Jones, adapted by David Hosaflook.