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## The Heroes of Byron: A Study of their Origin, Development, and Meaning in the Poetry of George Gordon, Lord Byron

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THE HEROES OF BYRON:  
A STUDY OF THEIR ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND  
MEANING IN THE POETRY OF GEORGE GORDON,  
LORD BYRON

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
College of the Pacific

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Robert Lester Thomas  
June 1956



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## CHAPTER I

### THE HERO IN THE EARLY POEMS OF BYRON

Lord Byron was very much concerned with the problems of immortality and fame. Perhaps his greatest single theme in poetry is human greatness. An especial aspect of human greatness, namely of heroes in spirit and in action, is, of course, one of the most permanent and best known features of Byron's poetry, the creation of the "Byronic hero" being one of the poet's most outstanding contributions to world literature.

This study is concerned with all of the heroes Lord Byron created. It is to be a study of their origin, development, and meaning in the poetry of Byron.

Lord Byron published his first poetry, Hours of Idleness, which included some thirty-nine poems of varying length and quality, mostly written in the style of Alexander Pope and many of them employing the heroic couplet, in 1807. Byron was nineteen.

The volume was attacked rather severely by The Edinburgh Review, January, 1808:

The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that

exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water.<sup>1</sup>

The Monthly Reviewers, in 1808 next in circulation to The Edinburgh,<sup>2</sup> gave a much more favorable notice of The Hours of Idleness:

These compositions are generally of a plaintive or an amatory cast with an occasional mixture of satire; and they display both ease and strength--both pathos and fire . . . We discern, in Lord Byron, a degree of mental power, and a turn of mental disposition, which render us solicitous that both should be well cultivated and wisely directed, in his career of life.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Walter Scott, an influence of great importance upon Byron, and then a foremost literary figure, thought that The Edinburgh Review was unduly severe. Scott thought that many of the poems in Hours of Idleness contained passages "of noble promise."<sup>4</sup>

There is no suggestion of a hero as a literary figure or type in this earliest attempt at poetry. There is much in this first volume, however, to suggest the quality of the mature Byron. There is wit and there is some satire. The young poet seems preoccupied with death;

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<sup>1</sup>Lord Byron, The Works of Lord Byron, p. 419; hereafter cited as Byron, Works.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

many of his verses are concerned with love and friendship; there is an interest in the past and in the heroes of old. Byron strikes a mood and a pose in the short verse "Remembrance" which is worthy of mention here because of its similarity to many of Childe Harold's gloomy utterances:

'Tis done! I saw it in my dreams;  
 No more with Hope the future beams;  
 My days of happiness are few;  
 Chill'd by misfortune's wintry blast,  
 My dawn of life is overcast,  
 Love, Hope, and Joy, alike adieu!  
 Would I could add Remembrance too!

In the study of his hero-types, Byron's youthful poems Hours of Idleness are of great interest, for in them is heard the occasional echo of a melody the poet is later to expand. In the poem quoted Byron takes leave of love, hope, and joy, desiring to add to them even the memory of their existence. As typical products of a precocious youth they reveal a kind of insincere, sentimental yearning over the lost joys of youth and present a sense of emptiness which hardly convinces. Between these verses and the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage much happened to the poet that gave to the words of the latter a lasting influence.

Byron as a poet both began and ended his writing in the satirical mode. The negative reviews of Hours of Idleness goaded Byron to write his first wholly satirical

poem, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," in 1809. The severity of the criticism touched Lord Byron where his original strength lay: it wounded his pride and aroused his bitter indignation. This satire, again suggesting the influence of Pope's poetry and written entirely in heroic couplets, represents Byron's youthful boldness, his sharp wit and intellect; for his undertaking so huge a task as to satirize and ridicule the literary world of his day, and to strike back at The Edinburgh Review was indeed an overwhelming one. Byron writes in his preface to the poem:

--As to The Edinburgh Reviewers, it would indeed require an Hercules to crush the Hydra; but if the author succeeds in merely "bruising one of the heads of the serpent," though his own hand should suffer in the encounter, he will be amply satisfied.<sup>5</sup>

He published "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" and recorded a victory over those who had controlled the public mind. There was more strength in the boldness of the attack, in the fearlessness of the venture, than in its intrinsic force. The quick acceptance and praise of this poem was one of those rare and lucky developments which cannot often occur; it fixed Lord Byron's fame. From that day he was accepted by the public as a writer of undoubted talent and energy of both intellect and temper.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Byron, Works, p. 421.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



This famous verse satire begins as a paraphrase of Juvenal; it has no real action and is composed of a series of descriptions and characterizations, joined by necessary connective material. Byron takes up his adversaries one by one and covers each with abuse. It is unfortunate that this early success was gained at the cost of much personal embarrassment for its author. The fiery Byron was not wise in his 1808 dismissal of Wordsworth as tedious and vulgar. The young poet referred to Lamb as an ignoble follower of Southey; Byron called Coleridge a braying half-wit, and he thought Burns to be inferior to Gifford. Byron lived to repent these follies of offence. Indeed, he later regretted the satire as a whole, and in 1811 he authorized no further edition during his lifetime.<sup>7</sup>

In this effort there is evidenced the spirit and the fire of the hero. Does a hero compose verses? There is no reason he should not. This one did. Byron at twenty was at the door of the literary world and threatening to war upon it. With the publication of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" Byron had won his first victory with his pen. The success of this satire was convincing, and Byron was now ready for his brilliant flight into the world of

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<sup>7</sup>John Drinkwater, The Pilgrim of Eternity, p. 136.

poetry just as the romantic movement in the literature of England was ready to emerge into prominence. Byron, also, was beginning to emerge into prominence, and he was later to become the dominant English literary artist of the romantic period. Byron has been many times referred to as the spirit and essence of romanticism, and especially upon the continent of Europe it cannot be doubted that he was the single great literary influence of his times. Goethe ranked him as the first English poet after Shakespeare, and is followed by the leading critics of France, Italy, and Spain.<sup>8</sup>

Two other early poems, "Hints from Horace," 1811, and "The Curse of Minerva," 1811, were not printed until after Byron's death. They are in the satirical vein and are chiefly interesting as specimens of Byron's early work. The "Hints From Horace" was meant to be a sequel to "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." It is interesting that Byron thought "The Hints" a superior piece to the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, and at the time of the publication of the latter, Byron was ill-disposed to hold "Hints From Horace" from the press.<sup>9</sup> In

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<sup>8</sup>John Nichol, Byron, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Byron, op. cit., p. 437.

"The Curse of Minerva" Byron rails against Lord Elgin for removing the sublime works and ruins of Greek sculpture to London. Byron's idea was that the Acropolis and its temples were made less beautiful as a result of removing the objects to London. Time has proved, contrary to Byron's view, that Lord Elgin's service was a valuable one indeed, and Byron's wailing here seems inconsiderate. In neither of these poems is there a recognizable hero or hero-type.

In the earliest of Byron's poetry there is no evidence of an attempt to portray an heroic-type such as he develops in most of his later major poems. The first hero-type appears in the first two cantos of the poem which so permanently established Byron as the poet of his day, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRST HERO-TYPE

#### I. BYRON'S LIFE-HEROES AS POSSIBLE MODELS

It is not the purpose of this study to outline in complete detail the literary lineage of the romantic hero and to present its relationship to Byron's heroes. It is possible, however, that this could be done. Present-day students of Byron have not ventured in such a direction, and there seems to be little or no interest in such a project. It may be asked, nevertheless, where a poet reaches for material or models when he is in the act of creating a hero for his work. Did Lord Byron model his heroes after his own personal-life-heroes? Did Lord Byron in the creation of the hero give birth to a type that was entirely new and completely unrelated to past literary heroes in English literature or other romantic literature? It is necessary that an explanation be attempted for the foregoing questions before proceeding further in the matter of the development of Childe Harold, the poet's first hero-type.

It is reasonably safe to state here that Alexander Pope and Napoleon Bonaparte were two of the most highly revered personages in Byron's mind's eye. Byron was fond

of associating himself with Pope. He paid homage to him as a master and sustained, in theory at least, Pope's principles of versification; Byron offered him the tribute of quotation and imitation. Over and over again he repeated his belief in "the Christianity of English poetry, the poetry of Pope."<sup>1</sup> Only in satire, however, did Pope's influence become noticeable in Byron's poetry; but in satire this influence was very important. Today Lord Byron's literary immortality rests heavily upon his verse satire, especially Don Juan. Though Pope obviously ranked highly with Lord Byron, Byron did not seize upon any aspect of Alexander Pope's life or person for the modeling of heroes.

From his youth Byron retained an adoration of Bonaparte, the soldier of the Republic; he brought as a student to Harrow a small bust of the First Consul and defended it with all the violence of his fists against the school boy patriots.<sup>2</sup> Later, during The Hundred Days, Byron proclaimed his wish for Napoleon's victory, and when he heard of Waterloo he said, "I'm damned sorry for it."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Claude M. Fuess, Lord Byron As A Satirist In Verse, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Andre Maurois, Byron, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Bertrand Russell, "Aristocratic Rebels," SRL, February 12, 1938, p. 3.

Only once for a moment did he turn against his hero: in 1814, when (so he thought) suicide would have been more seemly than abdication. At this moment, he sought consolation in the virtue of Washington, but the return from Elba made this effort no longer necessary. In France, when Byron died, "It was remarked in many newspapers that the two greatest men of the century, Napoleon and Byron, had disappeared almost at the same time."<sup>4</sup> Carlyle, who, at the time, considered Byron "the noblest spirit in Europe," and felt as if he had "lost a brother," came afterwards to prefer Goethe, but still coupled Byron with Napoleon."<sup>5</sup>

It well may be that Napoleon Bonaparte and Lord Byron were the two great figures of the nineteenth century. In Byron's poem "The Age of Bronze" Napoleon, "who born no king, made monarchs draw his car," is praised by the poet. (III) The summary which Byron presents of Napoleon's career is full of admiration for the fallen emperor's genius, and of resentment at the indignities which he had been compelled to undergo on St. Helena. The man "whose game was empires and whose stakes were thrones" was forced,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

says the poet, to become the slave of "the paltry gaoler and the prying spy." (III) There is a glowing picture of Napoleon in Childe Harold. Byron sees him towering above that restlessness of genius which refuses to be controlled, that fever of the heart fatal to the world and to genius itself. (III,xxxvi,xxxvii,xxxviii) Byron also penned "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte," in 1814, and several lesser poems dealing especially with Bonaparte. However, as in the case of Pope, Byron did not seize upon any personal or physical aspect of the emperor when he began the creation of his heroes. Pope and Bonaparte are only two. In "The Age of Bronze" Byron also applauds Kosciusko, Washington, and Bolivar. (V-VI) One could with ease compile a long list of personal-life-heroes from whom Lord Byron might have borrowed traits in the creation of his poetic, narrative, and dramatic heroes; however, Byron did not utilize this approach to any great extent. In the portrait of Childe Harold it is noticeable that the poet did not borrow or draw from those individuals Byron himself considered heroic and worthy of great admiration.

## II. A LITERARY APPROACH TO THE HERO

Lord Byron did not give birth to a hero-type that was entirely new and completely unrelated to past literary heroes in English literature or other romantic literature.



It would not be utterly absurd to begin any comparative study of heroes in English literature with the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf. Here, however, Shakespeare is suggested as a beginning point. Indeed, in literary matters, especially in English literary studies, Shakespeare is usually safe harbor. It cannot be said that either Shakespeare or Byron invented the melancholy man any more than it can be said that Shakespeare invented the Hamlet type. Hamlet is a popular phantom who has appeared in literature from time to time. When Shakespeare wrote Hamlet in 1601, the "melancholy impressive man" was then a fashionable figure. Jacques in As You Like It, who styles himself a melancholy man, is a mocking sketch of this type. Harold, Hamlet, and Jacques strike many a similar pose and tune. Child Harold is always close to the estimation of the world revealed by Hamlet in his first soliloquy:

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
(I,ii)

Jacques' "All the world's a stage" speech is also echoed by the moody pilgrim. (II, vii) That there are many similarities here is a point that will not easily be denied, but to think that Harold is a mere continuation of these two Shakespearean characters is absurd.

The melancholy man crops up again in the mid-eighteenth century, with its appropriate background of



tombs, moonlight, and yews, especially in the works of the poet Edward Young, one of the founders of the "graveyard school." He prepared the way in France for Chateaubriand.<sup>6</sup> Scott at once discovered when reviewing Byron's poems a resemblance between the Byronic heroes and those of Mrs. Radcliffe--and not in malice.<sup>7</sup>

Byron, doubtlessly, had been a reader of terror-romanticism and steeped himself in the atmosphere of ancient crimes and decay and a sense of the sublime in nature.<sup>8</sup> The field was as familiar to him as it was to Scott. Byron had no need to go to the German romanticist, Schiller, for his type of romantic hero, for it already existed in the works of Mrs. Radcliffe and in the Zeluco of Dr. John Moore.<sup>9</sup> It was Scott, however, who was poet of the day, and he was busy inaugurating a new, lyrical, narrative style of poetry and achieving with it a great success.

By 1812, however, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage was exactly right for a public taste that had been educated by and was now rather tired of Walter Scott's narrative poems.

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<sup>6</sup>Desmond MacCarthy, "Byron, Man and Poet," SRL, March 22, 1930, p. 844.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>R. W. Zandvoort, "The Case for Byron," English Studies, 1922-1923, Vol. 4-5, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>Maurois, op. cit., p. 31.

With The Lay of the Last Minstrel, 1805; Marmion, 1808; The Lady of the Lake, 1810; and Rokeby, 1812, stories in verse had become so popular a form of reading that in 1814, more than a year before Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh was finished, readers were beginning to want heroes less remote from their own experience. Childe Harold, a modern young man seeing the sights of Europe and expressing himself in terms of contemporary events and manners, was just the thing for the public fancy. Byron drove Scott as a poet from his hold on popular favor, and to the great advantage of mankind set him off on the creation of the Waverley novels.<sup>10</sup> In 1812 Sir Walter Scott wrote:

My own popularity as a poet was then on the wane,  
and I was unaffectedly pleased to see an author of so  
much power and energy taking the field.<sup>11</sup>

In English literature Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Radcliffe, Dr. Moore, and Thomas Moore may in some way have influenced Byron's choice of a hero-type.

Goethe is the great name in the German romantic movement in literature. Goethe's aristocratic, well-educated German youth, Werther, in The Sorrows of Werther, 1774, may be said to resemble Childe Harold in mood,

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<sup>10</sup>John Drinkwater, The Pilgrim of Eternity, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

feeling, and tone. This work infused itself into the core and whole spirit of literature; it gave birth to a race of sentimentalists who raged and wailed in every part of the world. Wertherism is synonymous with morbid sentimentality, romantic melancholy, and disgust with life. That the German romanticists heavily influenced English thought and literary expression of that day is as true as the fact that Goethe patterned his Werther after himself.<sup>12</sup> Alfred de Musset, "the French Byron," observed that

Byron and Goethe were accomplices in the wicked work of instilling the poison of melancholy into the cheerful Gallic soul.<sup>13</sup>

This statement appears unreasonable in the light of the work of the French romanticist, Chateaubriand.

The romantic movement in literature did not by-pass France, and it is impossible to understand French literature from 1800 to 1850 without Francois Rene de Chateaubriand. He breathed new life into the spirit of France, and he created in Atala and Rene two of its permanent literary landmarks. In European literature Rene is the link between The Sorrows of Werther and Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Putter, in Francois Rene de Chateaubriand, Rene-Atala, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup>Russell, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup>Putter, in Chateaubriand, op. cit., p. 1.

Few works illustrate so concisely the various elements of romantic literature as this work by Chateaubriand. Rene appeared once in English in Paris, 1807.<sup>15</sup> It is highly improbable that Byron ever had such copy in his hand.

Byron's mention of Chateaubriand in "The Age of Bronze" attests to the fact that the English poet was aware of the Frenchman's existence and role in politics, at least. (XVI)

No comparison of literary heroes in English and German romantic literature can be as strongly stated as a comparison of Rene and Childe Harold. The similarities here are many. It is not to be thought of as strange that these two literary heroes appeared before the world in such close order: Rene in 1802, Childe Harold in 1812. Goethe, Chateaubriand, and Byron found it necessary, as other great writers have, to put their own stories into words. Chateaubriand and Byron sat on the edge of the coming nineteenth century, and a brooding despair seems to have marked the youth of England, France, and Germany during these times. It is from this background of war and death and political uncertainty that the two heroes, Rene and Childe Harold, emerged. Literary traditions, a continental outlook which spoke of the coming storm--these things set Chateaubriand

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

and Byron, who did not differ in political alignment, into a framework which was altogether similar.

The effect of Rene was profound and durable. The self-centered, mysterious, passionate, and uncompromising romantic hero of the early nineteenth century stems from Rene.<sup>16</sup>

A multitude of readers among the young generation were impressed by Rene's proud and melancholy attitude and often imitated it. Chateaubriand himself decried in his Memoirs the fashion he had created. "If Rene did not exist," he tells us, "I would no longer write it; if I could destroy it, I would. A family of Rene poets and prose writers has been swarming about. We can hear nothing now but pitiful and disconnected phrases; they talk of nothing but winds and storms, and mysterious words whispered to the clouds and to the night. There is not a scribbler just out of school who hasn't dreamed of being the unhappiest man on earth, not an upstart of sixteen who hasn't given himself up to his vague passion, struck his pale and disheveled brow, and astounded men with sorrow which neither he nor they could describe."<sup>17</sup>

Rene must remain as the model of the romantic hero in France. When Chateaubriand combined Rene with Atala in a separate edition in 1805, he was in fact offering to the reading public, in the hundred-odd pages of these "burning twins,"<sup>18</sup> all the major elements of the nascent romantic movement.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

In order to clarify the ensuing discussion, a brief resume of Rene is presented:

The young Frenchman, Rene, has fled to the New World and its solitudes. He relates to his adopted father, Chactas, and the French missionary Father Souel, his previous life and the causes of his self-exile. (The story is in effect a monologue.) Seated under a great tree in the haunts of the Natchez Indians, of whose tribe Chactas is a chief, the young man tells his listeners the story of his boyhood, and his restless wanderings from land to land in search of mental peace. Rene has wandered out of his native France into the haunting ruins of Italy, Greece, and into the Orient before returning to France and voyaging to America. He has passed through ancient countries and modern; he has studied humanity in its earliest monuments and in the life of his own day, and finding no satisfaction in any phase of life, has remained long in forest solitudes,--only to meet there thoughts of death.

He tells further how he was rescued from this temptation by the love of his sister Amelie, who came to him and led his mind back to life, then disappeared from his sight forever in the living death of a convent, where she hid a heart oppressed by a feeling for Rene too strong for her peace. The tragedy of his sister's confession has driven Rene to these American wildernesses.

His passion for his sister Amelie and his scorn of civilization are at the root of his misery. Shortly after Father Souel has presented to Rene the cure for all his ills, a band of marauding Indians kill the hero of the tale.

Some of Rene's posings are worthy of delineation here: the figure of Rene brooding about destiny at the mouth of a crater, or striding along feverishly with the wind whistling through his hair, or stripping a willow branch and anxiously watching the leaves float downstream--images which were accepted at the time as lofty and which



today seem so hollow--these tell us more about the romantic's feeling than any possible analysis.<sup>20</sup>

The following literary themes, which became somewhat basic in romantic literature, are clearly discernible in Rene:

1. The theme of "the noble savage"
2. The idea of the escape from the evils of civilization into nature and the wilderness
3. The search for the unknown or the unattainable (Part of Rene's pilgrimage is characterized by the hopelessness of ennui, but the prevailing tone is that of restless pursuit of an unknowable, and ever-retreating vision.)<sup>21</sup>
4. The return of the wanderer to the scenes of earlier love and happiness
5. The suggestion of possible incest
6. Much travel, especially in Italy and Greece
7. An overwhelming focus upon death
8. An overwhelming focus upon love; love usually proves impossible or leads to tragic ends
9. Shame and remorse beclouding the background of the hero

These themes and qualities in Rene combine to make of him one of the most important predecessors of the romantic hero, one of the earliest sufferers from the mal romantique. Rene has all the symptoms of those

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Phyllis Crump, Francois Rene de Chateaubriand, Rene-Atala, p. xvi.

smitten by this disease: the limitless desire to pursue a happiness in whose very existence he cannot believe, the yearning for love and sympathy in a world from which he has deliberately estranged himself and the sense of moral isolation which he bewails, not without some complacency, the self pity and the constant pre-occupation with his vain sorrows to the point of enjoyment of his grief. The reluctance, or inability, to exert his will, the complacency and self-consciousness of his lamentation would deaden all pity for Rene were it not for the reality of his suffering, not the regret, elaborately staged, for the loss of Amelie, but the more subtle torment of his inward conflict, perpetual, dominating and unsolved. In no succeeding romantic hero is there so powerful a combination of the potentially great and the actually futile.<sup>22</sup>

Rene's ennui, or boredom or feeling of weariness and dissatisfaction, is best described by Chateaubriand:

Alas! I was alone, alone in the world! A mysterious apathy gradually took hold of my body. My aversion for life, which I had felt as a child, was returning with renewed intensity. Soon my heart supplied no more nourishment for my thought, and I was aware of my existence only in a deep sense of weariness.<sup>23</sup>

Rene's dissatisfaction seems rooted in a flagrant egoism. The experience of others means nothing to him. His instinctive reaction is to retire--to past civilizations, to the suburb, to the country, to America, or to suicide. Rene's refusal to engage in any "practical" activity is an implicit revolt against society. Since he does nothing,

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. xvii.

<sup>23</sup>Chateaubriand, op. cit., Putter, p. 98.



he will never do anything "great or noble or just."<sup>24</sup>

There is compensation for this. Rene finds true satisfaction in his hours of endless introspection. Indeed, the "ordinary" misfortunes soon seem unworthy to him.

Great sorrow becomes a method of individualizing oneself, or asserting one's existence as being apart from and superior to the rest of mankind. Suffering is less the law of life than the privilege of the exceptional individual. This is what distinguishes Chateaubriand from true pessimists.<sup>25</sup>

"Great writers have put their own story into their works,"<sup>26</sup> writes Chateaubriand, and in certain respects Rene constitutes a miniature of the first three books of his Memoirs. The malady which afflicts Rene, then, was intimately felt by the author himself. He was not the first to experience it, for Goethe in The Sorrows of Werther had dealt with similar states of mind. Other writers, even Rousseau, must have known emotions related to those of Rene. Rene was not only the most intense and brilliant portrayal of the lassitude of living; it also had the advantage, like Atala, of appearing at the perfect moment.<sup>27</sup>

Rene and Childe Harold, it will be shown, resemble one another greatly. Although Werther, Rene, and Harold

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<sup>24</sup>Putter, in Chateaubriand, ibid., p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Chateaubriand, ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Putter, in Chateaubriand, ibid.

are similar in many ways, the resemblances between Rene and Harold are more obvious. Because Rene and Harold are so alike in their moods and actions, a detailed description of the French romantic hero has been deemed necessary; however, the foregoing is not meant to instill the idea that Lord Byron was either directly or indirectly influenced by anything Chateaubriand ever wrote, especially Rene. Werther, Rene, and Harold are ideal exemplars of the hero in the literature of Germany, France, and England at the beginning of the romantic movement.

By 1812 Werther and Rene had taken their appointed place in the imagination of mankind; but, great as was the influence exercised by Goethe and Chateaubriand, their effect was less instantaneous and far-reaching than that of Childe Harold.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Peter Quennell, Byron: The Years of Fame, p. 75.

### CHAPTER III

#### BYRON'S FIRST HERO-TYPE

Sir Walter Scott wrote in London, March, 1812:

Byron now appears as a serious candidate, in the "First two Cantos of Childe Harold." I was astonished at the power evinced by that work, which neither the "Hours of Idleness," nor the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," had prepared me to expect from its author.<sup>1</sup>

The world which received these cantos echoed a wild acclaim, and Byron became famous overnight. The publication of the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is still looked upon as one of the truly great events in the history of English letters. Few authors, if any, have received such astounding fame and acceptance upon the publication of a single work. With amazement and apprehension, the world at large--particularly the feminine half of it--assumed that Childe Harold and his creator were one and the same being. Byron himself could deny the resemblance; but there was no doubt that the suspicions of his admirers were well founded, for in manuscript drafts of the poem, Childe Harold figured as "Childe Burun"<sup>2</sup>--the last an archaic

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Walter Scott, The Poems of Sir Walter Scott, I, 238.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Quennell, Byron: The Years of Fame, p. 76.

version of the Byron name--while the personal aspect of the narrative was undisguised. Thus Childe Harold's Pilgrimage had the fascination of an autobiography.

The great success of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is due chiefly to Byron's having dared to give utterance to certain feelings which every one must have encouraged in the melancholy and therefore morbid hours of his existence.<sup>3</sup>

Childe Harold was the first to echo the tragic scepticism of a sickened generation. Art had at last fallen back into step with life. At last a young Englishman, akin to those who read him, had discovered the Europe of 1812 as revolution and wars had left it. For a people severed from all Continental life by ten years of blockade, the story of a journey in Albania amongst the Suliotes was more amazing than a voyage to the Indies or the South Sea Islands. They enjoyed the bold originality of the political notes which accompanied Childe Harold. It was a poem of the sea; and the Viking breed, so long held off from the Ocean by the blockade, could catch in it that salt tang of sea-spray which they were beginning to miss.<sup>4</sup>

Childe Harold echoed a profound uneasiness in the life of his time. He foreshadows the spirit of a new age, which would gaze and wonder at the vast extent of its own complexity.<sup>5</sup>

Childe Harold was the first true hero-type to appear in the poetry of Lord Byron. Today, perhaps Don Juan is the

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<sup>3</sup>Ernest J. Lovell, His Very Self and Voice, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup>Andre Maurois, Byron, p. 174.

<sup>5</sup>Quennell, op. cit., p. 221.

best known of Byron's heroes, but it is not incorrect to suggest that both Harold, the first hero, and Juan, the last hero, are the best known of all Byron's heroes. Between 1812 and 1824, the year of Byron's death, the poet's poetical output was staggering. In some twelve years Lord Byron peopled his major poems, satires, narratives, and dramas with an array of heroes.

The first canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage was begun in Albania, October 31, 1809. The poem was written, for the most part, amid the scenes which it attempts to describe.<sup>6</sup> Byron writes in the preface to the first and second cantos that a "fictitious character is introduced for the sake of giving some connection to the piece; which, however, makes no pretensions to regularity."<sup>7</sup> The "fictitious character," of course, is Childe Harold, the first of Byron's many heroes.

In the first of his four cantos Byron presents the most complete descriptive picture of Harold. In the opening stanzas Harold is introduced as a youth who takes no delight in virtue, as one who had spent his days in uncouth riot, who was shameless, as one "given to revel and

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<sup>6</sup>Byron, Works, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

ungodly glee." He enjoyed no earthly things "save concubines and carnal company." (I,ii) His past is immersed in sin, though his name and lineage are of nobility. Perhaps some deep seated, disappointed passion, or the memory of some deadly feud lurked in him; Harold is incapable of loving and of being loved. He has a mother he shuns and a sister he loves but has not seen in some time. Harold, without a sigh, is ready to leave the home of his youth and his blighted past to roam. "He has felt the fulness of satiety." (I,iv) At the moment of departure the pilgrim is bathed in a cloud of mystery; he sails forth not with hope or thought of rebirth but with the same hopelessness and despair that apparently have attended him through his youth.

My greatest grief is that I leave  
No thing that claims a tear.  
(I,xiii)

The silently grieving Harold sails forth alone. With his arrival at Lisbon the travelogue, (the poem is essentially a travelogue) begins, and the ennui of the pilgrim, which is his unchanging expression, gradually emerges. The superb explosive utterances, observations, and sublime poetry of Byron emerge into prominence, while the marvelous commentary of the poet digresses quietly away from the hero. Through the ensuing cantos of the poem the reader is made less and less aware of the gloomy pilgrim's actual presence



though he travels with him through the shrines and ruins of Europe.

Childe Harold lands at Lisbon and rides on horseback across the Peninsula to Seville and then to Cadiz in Spain. The glorious beauty of the landscape, the miserable condition of the priest-ridden people, the traces of the war, recollections of the battles which had already been fought on this soil, the incomparable loveliness of the women of Andalusia, the romantic customs and manners of the passionate children of the south, a grand description of a bull-fight, full of life and color, fill the first canto of the poem. Harold is unchanged; the gloom, the misery, the sadness, and the despair which own that soul and haunt that brow have not been altered by the journey through Portugal and Spain. The romance of travel has brought not a single sign that hints of redemption or self-fulfillment.

Lord Byron had completed fifteen stanzas in the poem's second canto before he restaged Harold:

But where is Harold? Shall I then forget  
To urge the gloomy wanderer o'er the wave?  
(II,xvi)

Harold ascends his ship. The pilgrim loves to breast the waves and to fly across the blue sea: a man may feel lonely in the thronging crowd of a large town, but not in nature. Nature is most glorious company! Nature is most beautiful where her mood is freest and wildest, where she



shows herself in untamed grandeur. Such does nature appear to Harold in the savage mountains of Albania. Harold approaches the coast sailing past the rock-bound shore of Ithaka, where Penelope pined for her husband, and past the steep promontory from which Sappho threw herself into the sea. On land the pilgrim joins hands with the semi-barbarian robbers, the Suliotes, who dominate that shore. From Albania Harold rides across the wild mountains of Hellas past Mount Parnassus towards Athens. Here dreaming on the dreary ruins of a great past, on the field of Marathon, where the Persian despot succumbed to the valour of a free people, the poet is touched to the quick by the hard lot of modern Greece trampled into the dust by the unspeakable Turk. The journey has reached its end, and the pilgrim, unaltered and sad, makes his way home. There is news of death to both family and friend awaiting him upon return.

Would he had ne'er return'd to find fresh  
cause to roam.

(II,xcv)

Harold has been made noticeably less prominent in the second canto. He has been thus far in the poem merely a traveler, an observer, and a critic. Nothing in the long journey has moved Harold away from his ceaseless gloom, his ennui of life.

Four years passed between the appearance of the first two cantos and the third canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. In the third canto the author adopts more distinctly the character of Childe Harold than in the preceding cantos. "Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last," (III,viii) but now he is "Self-exiled Harold:"

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,  
With naught of hope left, but with less of gloom;  
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,  
That all was over on this side the tomb  
Had made Despair a smilingness assume.  
(III,xvi)

Childe Harold is once more upon the ocean; he has grown older, not happier, for he still wears the chain forged by himself. He had tried to live among his fellow-men, but this was not possible; nothing is left to him but nature in her grandeur; the elements are his company. The pilgrim takes the reader from the field of Waterloo, where Harold "stands upon this place of skulls, The grave of France," to the sweet banks of the Rhine. (III,xviii) In Switzerland the great Alpine scenes, Lake Geneva, the Alps, and the Jura hold the unhappy wanderer. Harold communicates with the spirits of Rousseau, Gibbon, and Voltaire. The hero can identify himself with these giant souls who appear to have lost their power over the souls of men. The thunderstorm, and all the wildness and power of nature also appeal to the pilgrim, as does the sublime beauty of the

lake. At the end of the canto the pilgrim again is unchanged: "I have not loved the world, nor the world me." (III,cxiii)

The poem attains its climax in the fourth canto, where the private grief of the poet dissolves into a pathetic lamentation on the vanity of human existence in general. In the last canto there is found less of the pilgrim than in any of the preceding ones.

In the first three cantos of the poem the pilgrim has traveled through Portugal, Spain, Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor; in the fourth canto he tours Italy, especially Venice and Rome. At that time Italy lay prostrate at the feet of foreign and domestic, secular and priestly tyrants. This spectacle of a noble people, bleeding to death in the midst of the grand ruins of ancient power and all the wonders of art and nature, gave the poet a most welcome theme for the expression of his own sorrow. Never have the melancholy beauty of Venice, the heart-melting loveliness of an Italian summer night illumined by the soft rays of the moon, the romantic scenery of the wild Apennines, the sublime grandeur of the Eternal City with its world of ruins and reminiscences, been sung in more passionate and in loftier verses. When one has read the descriptions of the Waterfall of Terni, of the dying gladiator, of the silent glory of the Colosseum sleeping

peacefully in the moonlight with all its associations of blood and crime, one wonders how the poet can find a subject worthy to conclude his song. Yet he succeeds. From the top of the Alban mount the pilgrim beholds the blue sea stretching in boundless expanse around this land of beauty, and now Harold has found his theme: the Sea in its awful power, sublime majesty, and ever-changing beauty in contrast to man and his works and history, is an image of the Eternal. In this finale, this great "Hymn to the Ocean," verses which roll along like majestic waves, the poem comes to its close.

It was a thought worthy of the great spirit of Byron, after exhibiting to us his Pilgrim amidst all the most striking scenes of earthly grandeur and earthly decay,--after teaching us, like him, to sicken over the mutability, and vanity, and emptiness of human greatness, to conduct him and us at last to the borders of "the Great Deep." It is there that we may perceive an image of the awful and unchangeable abyss of eternity, into whose bosom so much has sunk, and all shall one day sink,--of that eternity wherein the scorn and the contempt of man, and the melancholy of great, and the fretting of little minds, shall be at rest for ever. No one, but a true poet of man and of nature, would have dared to frame such a termination for such a Pilgrimage. The image of the wanderer may well be associated, for a time, with the rock of Calpe, the shattered temples of Athens, or the gigantic fragments of Rome; but when we wish to think of this dark personification as of a thing which is, where can we so well imagine him to have his daily haunt as by the roaring of the waves?<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Professor Wilson, in Byron, Works, p. 61, note 3.

The creation of Childe Harold was an addition to the literary world's romantic hero-type which was, in all essentials, already in existence by 1812. The expression of the romantic malady, the French "mal du siecle" or ennui, appears in the personages of Werther, Rene, and Childe Harold. In The Sorrows of Werther the hero of that tale writes that

I am alone the cause of my own woe. . .  
My own bosom contains the source of all  
my sorrow.<sup>9</sup>

In Rene it was:

A mysterious apathy gradually took hold of my body. My aversion for life, which I had felt as a child, was returning with renewed intensity. Soon my heart supplied no more nourishment for my thought, and I was aware of my existence only in a deep sense of weariness.<sup>10</sup>

Byron, in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, best describes his ennui of life as

. . . that settled, ceaseless gloom  
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore:  
That will not look beyond the tomb,  
But cannot hope for rest before.  
(I, lxxxiv, 5)

From the point of view of the romantic hero-type Rene and Harold are greatly similar. Rene and Harold pose in a

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<sup>9</sup>Goethe, The Sorrows of Werther, p. 80.

<sup>10</sup>Puttner, in Francois Rene de Chateaubriand, Rene-Atala, p. 98.

similar fashion amid the ruins of Europe. Many of the basic romantic literary themes of that day are present in each. Both are strangely motivated by the desire to search for the unknown or the unattainable, the ever-retreating vision. The idea of the escape from the evils of civilization into nature is strongly present in each. The dissatisfaction of Rene and Harold seems rooted in a flagrant egoism, and the experience of others means nothing. Their reaction is perpetual retirement--to past civilizations and to the country. There is a refusal on the part of both heroes to engage in "practical" activity which implies an implicit revolt against society. Yet it must be pointed out that Chateaubriand and Byron should not be thought of as true pessimists. Although Rene is killed before he can put into action the plan which would lead to his personal redemption and fulfillment, the author has provided for him a way. With Chateaubriand the way is Christianity and the religious life, and the reader of the narrative is made to realize that the redemption of Rene was entirely possible through a transition into the religious life.

Harold is neither dead at the end of Byron's narrative nor is he offered redemption and personal fulfillment through conversion to the religious life. Into the person of Childe Harold Byron imparts, on the other hand, a new spirit for man. Byron, through Harold, cries out his



protest against the misery of the world and mankind; he voices the radicalism and love of liberty whose prophet he wishes to make himself:

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,  
Streams like the thunder-storm against the wind;  
Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,  
The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;  
Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,  
Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,  
But the sap lasts,--and still the seed we find  
Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;  
So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.  
(IV,xcviii)

In Childe Harold is heard an echo of something grave and solemn, hinting, notwithstanding the general pose of its hero, at a hidden belief in the noble ideals of mankind.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is the noblest panoramic poem in our literature.

Childe Harold spoke of nature and wars and cities and great men and the futility of human history in tones that seemed to readers throughout Europe a very echo of their own hearts; and the passionate protest of Byron's utterances on evil and guilt came home to many on whom Goethe's or Shelley's more philosophic strains were lost.<sup>11</sup>

Byron made his readers feel that he was large enough to stand face to face with his sublime topics--the Alps, Venice, Rome, the Sea--and comment in passionate tones, on them and on himself.

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<sup>11</sup>H. J. C. Grierson, Lord Byron: Arnold and Swinburne, p. 18.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE HEROES OF BYRON'S NARRATIVE TALES

The Turkish Tales of Lord Byron include "The Giaour," 1813; "The Bride of Abydos," 1813; "The Corsair," 1813; "Lara," 1814; "The Siege of Corinth," 1815; and "Parisina," 1816. "The Prisoner of Chillon," 1816; "The Lament of Tasso," 1817; "Mazeppa," 1818; "The Prophecy of Dante," 1820; "The Age of Bronze," 1823; and "The Island," 1823, are included here, although obviously not to be thought of as works assigned to this block of poems known as the Turkish Tales, because their heroes relate closely and significantly to the heroes in the Oriental group and because they are described in the narrative verse style. Hugo and Parisina, Bonnivard, Mazeppa, Christian, Tasso, Dante, Napoleon, Washington, Kosciusko, and Bolivar are, of course, non-fictional personages. Immortal in mankind's history and in the world of literature, these individuals are Byron's personal life-heroes.

With the publication of the Turkish Tales a new world was revealed to the European public: the unknown East with its grand and lovely scenery, its fierce passions, its men of gigantic moral stature, great in their virtues and in their crimes: ambition, greed of power, love, revenge, and despair. However, it was something more than the mere

surface appeal of the subject matter that led Byron to write the Turkish Tales immediately following his return from the East in 1811. The sharp contrasts, the violence, and the melodrama in those tales were in a sense akin to his own nature. He found an emotional outlet in turning his mind to the "land of the cedar and vine."<sup>1</sup>

The public instantly felt that these familiar and adorable puppets had been filled with a new, prodigious vigor and life. The conclusion was as irresistible as it was thrilling: only a Corsair could have written "The Corsair;" only a Lara that dark and awful poem.<sup>2</sup>

Today, however, to many critics and students of Byron's poetry the Turkish Tales appear the least attractive work of the great poet. In The Pilgrim of Eternity John Drinkwater writes that he does not think too highly of the poet's Oriental Tales:

They are good enough to read by the fireside, and forget. The stories are complicated, and not worth unravelling. The involutions of plot defeat me, and I am willingly defeated. There are frequent passages of fine spirit and colour, but I am content to take each effect in isolation as it comes along. The writing for the most part is careless but accomplished.<sup>3</sup>

In creating his heroes for the Oriental Tales, it is possible that Byron fashioned some of them after personal-life-heroes. A possible model for the heroes in the

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<sup>1</sup>William A. Borst, Byron's First Pilgrimage, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup>Desmond MacCarthy, "Byron, Man and Poet," SRL, March 22, 1930.

<sup>3</sup>John Drinkwater, The Pilgrim of Eternity, p. 194.

Oriental Tales was the great Ali Pasha of Janina, who at the time of Byron's first tour of the East, had made himself independent of the Ottoman Porte and was exercising his lawless power with an iron hand.<sup>4</sup> In Byron Andre Maurois points out the importance of Ali Pasha:

Ali Pasha, a Zeluco in real life, was long to remain one of Byron's heroes. Love of power, scorn of moral and social laws, a taste for enwrapping mystery--the whole personality of Ali Pasha moved Byron profoundly. Bandits, corsairs, robber-chiefs--all such beings of the outlawed class appealed to him, through reaction against hypocrisy, and through his appreciation of courage.<sup>5</sup>

The Corsair, Conrad, is said to have been fashioned after the pirate, Jean Laffite;<sup>6</sup> "Lara," a continuation of "The Corsair," contains, however, a matchless self-portrait of Byron.<sup>7</sup>

That there was something of a mood familiar to Byron himself in his Lara and Giaour and Conrad may be admitted, but it was a mood that represented no more than an obscure but shallow dramatization of himself.

Between Byron and the Byronic hero the resemblances were manifest--noble birth, a tender and passionate mind in adolescence, disappointment, and despair. . .

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<sup>4</sup>Byron, Works, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>Andre Maurois, Byron, p. 130.

<sup>6</sup>Lord Jeffrey, in Byron, Works, p. 107, note 1.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Quennell, "Napoleon of Rhyme," SRL, November 23, 1935, p. 2.

But the Byronic hero lived dramas which Byron only dreamed. Conrad was a man of action, a pirate chief; Byron regretted his indolence, but did not act. Conrad was strong, Byron lame; Conrad was swarthy, Byron, pale. Conrad's laugh was terrible--

There was a laughing Devil in his sneer. . .

but Byron's was gay and charming. During his bursts of rage he became Conrad for a moment, but in everyday light Byron and the Byronic hero were hardly made to agree.<sup>8</sup>

If the heroes of these tales are thought of as merely dark and awful prophets of doom and blood, they can have no particular significance or meaningfulness other than to excite the reader. That Byron clearly intended to excite his reader is plain: these tales are magnificent, exciting, colorful, and adventurous. The Giaour, Selim, Conrad, Lara, Alp, and Hugo--these gallant Oriental knights of the tales are each set in what might be termed a "Robin Hood situation;" they are at war with a kind of "sheriff of Nottingham," and the reader does not think of them as bloody infidels, pirates, or renegades. They are filled with a new, prodigious vigor and life! Byron desires to excite his reader into identifying himself with his heroes. The idea that these heroes in the Oriental Tales are noble, instructional, and elevating is not an especially new or modern one. In 1837 Sir E. Brydges wrote:

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<sup>8</sup>Maurois, op. cit., p. 241.

One cannot help suspecting, on longer and more mature consideration, that one has been led to join in ascribing much more force to the objections made against such characters as the Corsair, Lara, the Giaour, Alp, etc., than belongs to them. The incidents, habits, etc., are much too remote from modern and European life to act as mischievous examples to others; while under the given circumstances, the splendour of imagery, beauty and tenderness of sentiment, and extraordinary strength and felicity of language, are applicable to human nature at all times, and in all countries, and convey to the best faculties of the reader's mind an impulse which elevates, refines, instructs, and enchants, with the noblest and purest of all pleasures.<sup>9</sup>

That these heroes are noble is made more apparent when one examines the motivating factors behind the heroes of these tales, which are twofold: the pursuit of love and the pursuit of absolute personal freedom in the presence of existing tyranny and hypocrisy through the expression of noble and heroic courage. Childe Harold, Byron's first hero-type, expresses Byron's ennui of life; Harold's life is one of complete physical inaction. The heroes of the narrative tales represent a dramatic struggle and escape from the ennui of life into the life of complete action. This is the most immediately obvious change in the development of the heroes thus far. Certain other developments in the hero-type are also present.

Harold, who declaims, "Oh Love! no habitant of earth thou art,--" (IV, cxxi) could not have uttered these words

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<sup>9</sup>Sir E. Brydges, in Byron, Works, p. 129, note 6.



of the Giaour:

Yes, Love indeed is light from heaven;  
A spark of that immortal fire  
With angels shared.

(XXV)

The Giaour, or infidel, has dared to love Leila, a slave girl in Hassan's harem:

Leila! each thought was only thine!  
My good, my guilt, my weal, my woe,  
My hope on high--my all below,  
Earth holds no other like to thee.

(XXV)

Hassan, learning of Leila's infidelity, has her slain; the Giaour, in order that he might free himself from overwhelming self-torment, must avenge her death:

Yes, Leila sleeps beneath the wave,  
But his shall be a redder grave.

(XVI)

The Giaour courageously bursts through twenty vassals in Hassan's train and kills the evil Hassan, who symbolizes tyranny through his wicked control over Leila.

To me she gave her heart, that all  
Which tyranny can ne'er enthrall;  
And I, alas! too late to save.

(XXIV)

The infidel stays in this land near the memory and lost love of Leila for six years because

I loved her--love will find its way  
Through paths where wolves would fear to prey.

(XXIV)

Byron has made his Giaour unusually mysterious. From his first appearance upon the scene until his death, the

reader is given no insight into his past. During the unfolding of the narrative this quality adds to the excitement of the tale. He is unknown and mysterious at his end:

He pass'd--nor of his name and race  
Hath left a token or a trace,  
Save what the father must not say  
Who shrived him on his dying day:  
This broken tale was all we knew  
Of her he loved.

(XXVII)

So dies the mysterious Giaour, whose whole life had been devoted to one great passion, that of love, leaving no trace of his identity or origin. His love and devotion, his bravery in action, and his great personal mystery have become expanded into the chief characteristics of the new hero.

Selim is the hero of "The Bride of Abydos." His whole life centers around his love for Zuleika and his desire to be revenged upon her father. He relates to Zuleika how her father, Giaffir, has killed his father:

His death is all I need relate,  
The stern effect of Giaffir's hate;  
And how my birth disclosed to me,  
Whate'er beside it makes, hath made me free.

(XIII)

A repressive upbringing and an unquenchable thirst for liberty make him turn pirate. Giaffir, holding his daughter under guard, appears the tyrant; Selim, the liberator. In this quest, against over-powering odds, the hero fails.



Selim, like the Giaour, is marked by his pursuit of love and his devotion to a noble cause which brings his death.

Conrad in "The Corsair" is a man of loneliness and mystery:

But who that CHIEF? his name on every shore  
Is famed and fear'd--they ask and know no more.  
With these he mingles not but to command.

(II)

Only as a pirate can Conrad be free to wage his war against hypocrisy and tyranny, in this tale symbolized by Sultan Seyd, a rich Moslem merchant. In Conrad is seen a greater capacity for loving than is elsewhere exhibited in the heroes:

Yes, it was love--unchangeable--unchanged,  
Felt but for one from whom he never ranged;  
Though fairest captives daily met his eye.

Yes--it was Love--if thoughts of tenderness,  
Tried in temptation, strengthen'd by distress,  
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,  
And yet--Oh more than all! untired by time;  
Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,  
Could render sullen were she near to smile,  
Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent  
On her one murmur of his discontent;  
Which still would meet with joy, with calmness part,  
Lest that his look of grief should reach her heart;  
Which naught removed, nor menaced to remove--  
If there be love in mortals--this was love!

(XII)

Conrad plans an attack on the stronghold of Seyd. He enters the palace of the Sultan disguised as a dervish, and being allowed within, Conrad is able to give the signal by which his men attack. The attack fails, and Conrad is

imprisoned. During the battle, however, Conrad has shown care and kindness to Gulnare, queen of the Sultan's harem. Again the hero is liberator. Gulnare releases Conrad from prison and follows him back to the Pirate Isle disguised as a page. However, Medora, Conrad's true love, hearing of the disaster and of Conrad's capture, has died of grief. Conrad has been deprived of his motive for continuing to live; he vanishes without a trace:

. . . moons roll on moons away,  
And Conrad comes not--came not since that day.  
He left a Corsair's name to other times.  
(XXIV)

"Lara" may be looked upon as a sequel to and conclusion of "The Corsair." Conrad is now Lara, who has returned to his native land and found it in chains. Lara assumes the mantle of the hero and becomes leader of the cause:

. . . some watchword for the fight  
Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right:  
Religion--freedom--vengeance--what you will,  
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill.  
They waited but a leader, and they found  
One to their cause inseparably bound.  
(VIII)

Lara, now old and outnumbered in the fight, is slain. He has been attended by his page, Kaled, who is at Lara's death revealed to be Gulnare. As the Giaour had remained in the land and near the memory of his love, Gulnare does also, but

This could not last--she lies by him she loved;  
Her tale untold--her truth too dearly proved.

(XXV)

Intense love and devotion, mystery, a struggle for freedom--these appear again as accompanying themes.

The passionate apostate Alp in "The Siege of Corinth" is a continuation in this tradition. Once a Nazarene, now Moslem, Alp wars upon the Doge of Venice, Minotti, who in this poem represents the oppressor. Alp is speaking:

When once again I've quell'd the pride  
Of Venice; and her hated race  
Have felt the arm they would debase  
Scourge, with a whip of scorpions, those  
Whom vice and envy made my foes.

(XXI)

Within Corinth, now under Minotti's cruel and Venetian rule,  
dwells Francesca, Alp's beloved:

Francesca! Oh, my promised bride?  
Must she too perish by thy pride?

(XXVII)

Upon entering the city Alp corners Minotti and hastily  
inquires: "She is safe."--"Where? Where?"--(XXVII)  
Minotti's hateful reply rings a death knell in the heart  
of the hero:

. . . In heaven;  
From whence thy traitor soul is driven--  
Far from thee, and undefiled.  
Grimly then Minotti smiled,  
As he saw Alp staggering bow  
Before his words, as with a blow.

(XXVII)

Alp, stunned to the soul by this news, is incapable of continuing the fight and is soon struck by a bullet which brings his death.

The heroes treated in the foregoing narrative tales have constantly appeared in the presence of great suffering and death. Byron has made violent men of action out of his Giaour, Selim, Conrad, Lara, and Alp, and these heroes have been shown in courageous physical action against oppression. Physical action has been a keynote. In "Parisina," "The Prisoner of Chillon," "Mazeppa," "The Lament of Tasso," "The Prophecy of Dante," and "The Island" the emphasis upon physical action in the face of oppression is reduced, and a new and especial focus is placed upon an almost unbroken portrayal of suffering, spiritual suffering bordering upon insanity and bodily torment. The poet's own "Prometheus" is called to mind. "Parisina," "Prometheus," and "The Prisoner of Chillon" were written in 1816, the latter two in Switzerland two years before Shelley began his great drama, Prometheus Unbound. Human greatness and human suffering seemed to Byron to go hand in hand, and the poet thought and wrote most effectively upon this theme during his short stay in Switzerland in 1816.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Heinrich Straumann, Byron in Switzerland, p. 2.

In "Parisina" the setting is still Eastern. The poet intends that his reader should identify himself with Hugo, the hero and a rival son, who is guilty of a kind of incest. The father, Azo, and the stern law of that time are the symbols of evil in the tale, not the illegitimate son, Hugo. A pure love has motivated Hugo's crime. Azo is guilty of more than this--of ruining the name and life of Hugo's real mother:

Nor are my mother's wrongs forgot,  
 Her slighted love and ruin'd name,  
 Her offspring's heritage of shame;  
 But she is in the grave, where he,  
 Her son, thy rival, soon shall be.  
 Her broken heart--my sever'd head--  
 Shall witness for thee from the dead  
 How trusty and how tender were  
 Thy youthful love--paternal care.

(XIII)

These crimes of Azo's are cleverly held in the background of the tale, yet they serve to motivate the reader against Azo. At Hugo's trial the chiefs and the crowd are made to sympathize with the rival son:

He ceased--and stood with folded arms,  
 On which the circling fetters sounded;  
 And not an ear but felt as wounded,  
 Of all the chiefs that there were rank'd,  
 When those dull chains in meeting clank'd.

(XIV)

The law decrees that Hugo must die. Hugo's last request is that he be given a semblance of personal freedom once before his death:

These hands are chain'd--but let me die  
At least with an unshackled eye.

(XVII)

Hugo approaches his death courageously, heroically:

He died, as erring man should die,  
Without display, without parade;  
Meekly had he bow'd and pray'd  
As not disdaining priestly aid,  
Nor desperate of all hope on high.

(XVII)

It was a "knight" who died that day! (XIX) Unyielding courage, immense personal suffering, and a noble dignity in the face of oppression and death are characteristics developed in this hero.

"The Prisoner of Chillon" is probably the best known and most popular of all the verse-tales. Who in English literature suffers more enduringly, nobly, and courageously than does Bonnivard "in Chillon's dungeons deep and old?" (II) Bonnivard is a crumbling, aging wreck, suffering quietly, tragically through the years as a result of having challenged the existing tyranny of his day. Hence, the superb "Sonnet on Chillon" celebrates the cause of freedom:

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!  
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art  
For there thy habitation is the heart--

The suffering forced upon the prisoner has become so utterly intense and the agonies of his fetters so cruel that his very life and sanity are preserved only by miracles. The



prisoner "learned to love despair." (XIV) only after a Promethean endurance, Bonnivard gains his freedom:

. . . even I  
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.  
(XIV)

The general human experience of suffering through loneliness and becoming reconciled to it as a new value has found here a poetic expression of unusual force.<sup>11</sup> Although Byron was obviously unaware of the true historical facts involved in the case of Bonnivard, his model here was a true historical personage.<sup>12</sup>

Not only does Bonnivard, but the history of mankind, too, furnish proof that no bodily suffering, no adverse circumstances, can extinguish the spirit of imagination. Perhaps there is no instance of this so affecting as the case of Tasso. In "The Lament of Tasso" Byron's hero has been confined for seven years in a dark, horror-striking dungeon-hole at Ferrara under the imputation of madness. In his vault the poet employed himself in finishing and correcting his immortal epic poem, Jerusalem Delivered. "The Lament" consists in the ebbing and flowing of the noble prisoner's soul:

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



. . .--his feelings often come suddenly from afar off,--sometimes gentle airs are breathings, and then all at once arise the storms and tempests,--the gloom, though black as night while it endures, gives way to frequent bursts of radiance,--and when the wild strain is closed, our pity and commiseration are blended with a sustaining and elevating sense of the grandeur and majesty of his character.<sup>13</sup>

The prisoner-poet's unchained imagination gives him a spiritual, soaring freedom even in the dungeon-vault:

. . . I stoop not to despair;  
For I have battled with mine agony,  
And made me wings wherewith to overfly  
The narrow circus of my dungeon wall,  
And freed the Holy Sepulchre from thrall;  
And revell'd among men and things divine,  
And pour'd my spirit over Palestine,  
In honour of the sacred war for Him.  
(I)

A belief in the Supreme Being was an absolute necessity for the tender and warm imagination of Tasso. Tasso's love for the Princess Leonora, sister of the tyrant Alfonso, in whose court Tasso dwelled, and whose court imprisoned the poet is not diminished by Tasso's wretchedness:

Thou wert to me a crystal-girded shrine,  
Worshipp'd at holy distance, and around  
Hallow'd and meekly kiss'd the saintly ground;  
Not for thou wert a princess, but that Love  
Had robed thee with a glory, and array'd  
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismay'd--  
Oh! not dismay'd--but awed, like One above.  
(V)

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<sup>13</sup>Professor Wilson, in Byron, Works, p. 478, note 4.

His love of her sustains him through the long imprisonment:

No power in death can tear our names apart,  
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.  
Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate  
To be entwined for ever--but too late.

(IX)

Lord Byron's "Lament" is a sublime and profound lesson in morality. His hero is able to endure the hardships of imprisonment through his unyielding devotion to love and through a ceaseless mental activity that belongs to a mind which will not be stilled by fetters. In the case of Tasso there was no need for a simple reconciliation with loneliness as was the case with Bonnivard.

In 1819 "self-exiled" Byron surely did not find it difficult to identify himself with another exiled poet, Dante, hero in "The Prophecy of Dante." Dante had suffered unjustly the punishment of exile from his native Florence and great poverty for some fifteen years.

All that a citizen could be I was;  
Raised by thy will, all thine in peace or war,  
And for this thou hast warr'd with me.

(IV)

Banishment cannot dim this mind, and Dante's devotion to his lofty ideals and to his poetry is not undone by the disgrace and ignominy heaped upon his name: "They made an Exile--not a slave of me." (I) From his place of exile he nobly prophesies, pointing out the bitter lessons of history, the future liberation of Italy. In his "prophecy"

Dante would be "the new Prometheus of new men," (IV) and with spirit and pride he calls out to those who have wronged him that an hour will come when the people of Florence will demand the return of his ashes and his tomb:

Florence! when this lone spirit shall return  
To kindred spirits, thou wilt feel my worth,  
And seek to honour with an empty urn  
The ashes thou shall ne'er obtain.

(IV)

To Byron Dante was the true poet of liberty. Neither persecution, exile, nor the dread of a foreign grave could shake Dante's principles.

Bonnivard, Tasso, and Dante have not succumbed to the terrors of imprisonment or exile. Rather their willingness to bear suffering and their eventual triumph over those hardships which were meant to subdue them serve to kindle a strong hope for the oppressed and the wretched. Freedom is gained by these heroes only at the cost of great physical and mental suffering and unwaiving devotion to noble ideals. Byron saw Bonnivard, Tasso, and Dante as great Promethean spirits who would not yield to the rigors of political tyranny, torture, or time. These heroes are true and "eternal spirits of the chainless mind."

In his political satire against the reactionary regulations of the Congress of Verona, "The Age of Bronze," Byron deals directly with historical heroes--heroes who have been great liberators and leaders against political

tyranny and corruption. In a striking passage in the beginning of the poem he pays tribute to the mighty dead, contrasting, by implication, the leaders of the Congress of Verona with the departed heroes: Pitt and Fox, buried side by side in Westminster Abbey; and Napoleon, "who born no king, made monarchs draw his car." (III) The summary which Byron presents of Napoleon's career is full of admiration for the fallen emperor's genius. The reference to these giants of the past leads Byron naturally to a glorification of such liberators as Kosciuszko, Washington, and Bolivar, and to a joyful heralding of revolutions in Chili, Spain, and Greece. Byron's personal life-heroes in "The Age of Bronze" are immortal today because their lives of action and heroic self-dedication to the highest ideals of mankind brought political liberation and personal freedom to the oppressed citizens of Poland, America, and South America.

The exciting narrative tale, "Mazeppa," too, is based upon an historical personage, Ivan Mazeppa, (1664-1709), a famous Cossack hetman.<sup>14</sup> The physical agony forced upon the hero is even more intensified than the physical agonies born by Bonnivard. The page, Mazeppa, in

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<sup>14</sup>Byron, Works, p. 154.

the court of the King of Poland, meets Theresia, the young wife of a count, and falls in love with her. Mazeppa cannot restrain his passion:

But all men are not born to reign,  
Or o'er their passions. . .

(VII)

Mazeppa is taken, lashed to a wild horse, and turned adrift. The physical torture of the ride is best described by Byron:

. . . he who dies  
Can die no more than then I died.

(XIII)

The horse drops dead somewhere in the Ukraine,

. . . and there we lay  
The dying on the dead!  
I little deem'd another day  
Would see my houseless, helpless head.

(XVII)

Mazeppa soon becomes the leader of the Cossacks who find him and restore him to health. Later he gains revenge upon the court which maltreated him. In Mazeppa the intensification of personal suffering and endurance under unbelievable physical hardship are developed into the chief characteristics of the hero. The narrative, begun by its narrator in medias res, introduces one of Byron's oldest heroes. Mazeppa, beginning to unfold his tale, is seventy years of age. (IV)

"The Island," written only a year before Byron's death, was to be the last long narrative poem. It serves to suggest that the poet's interest in sharp and clear

narrative outline had softened. The poem is full of digressions which lead away from the narrative. Christian, the famous mutineer, and Neuha and Torquil, two island lovers, are the chief characters in "The Island." Actually, Neuha might well be called the dominant figure in the poem and the tale's heroine; however, it is Christian who bears the trappings of the romantic hero:

Stern, and aloof a little from the rest,  
 Stood Christian, with his arms across his chest,  
 (III,iv)

and

. . . my lot is what I sought; to be  
 In life or death, the fearless and the free.  
 (III,vi)

Although he appears in this poem the least completely outlined and the most unfinished of all of the heroes of the narrative tales, Christian is seen to be in the role of the other narrative heroes: wreaking the anguish of his burning heart in danger and daring. In one scene Christian exemplifies compassion and a sensitivity that have not frequently been delineated in the other heroes. Christian, coming upon Torquil, who has been wounded in the skirmish,

. . . strode to where young Torquil stood,  
 Yet dabbled with his lately flowing blood;  
 Seized his hand wistfully, but did not press,  
 And shrunk as fearful of his own caress;  
 Inquired into his state; and when he heard  
 The wound was slighter than he deem'd or fear'd  
 A moment's brightness pass'd along his brow.  
 (III,vi)



Later, attempting to flee his pursuers, Christian puts up an heroic struggle, but he is overcome by the weight of the enemy.

The heroes of the narrative tales have been shining exemplars of men of action. They signify a dramatic struggle and escape from the ennui of life, and thus suggest a definite development in the hero-type as created by Lord Byron.

These heroes in the tales have conveyed an impulse which has elevated, refined, and instructed. Through their unending pursuit of love and the pursuit of absolute personal freedom in the presence of existing oppression, the heroes of the narrative tales have been examples of the life of courage, heroic dignity, and purposeful dedication to the highest ideals of mankind.

Byron has woven majestically into the fabric of these adventurous tales his eternal theme: the infinite worth of love and courage and endurance. The typical hero as created by Byron in the foregoing poems is seen as a mystic symbol, which ultimately is meant to represent our inmost self.



## CHAPTER V

### THE HEROES OF THE VERSE SATIRES

The versatile genius of Lord Byron is many sided. There is, for instance, the author of felicitous lyrics like "She walks in beauty" from the Hebrew Melodies; then there is the creator of the Byronic hero; the narrative Byron; the Byron of the dramas, and (a being who frequently appears to have no connection whatever with any of the others!) the Byron of the letters. There is, however, another Byron who does not seem to have received much attention from lovers of poetry until the present century--the satiric Byron. Byron, the last of the great verse satirists, began and ended his writing in the satirical mode. Throughout Byron's poetry, however, there are three main currents of feeling:

. . . the romance of the dilettante, the indignation of the satirist, and the lyrical utterances of the man himself.<sup>1</sup>

The verse satires of Lord Byron include "Beppo," 1817; "The Vision of Judgment," 1821; and Don Juan, 1818-1823. The most conspicuous feature of Byron's satire, as

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<sup>1</sup>Claude M. Fuess, Lord Byron As A Satirist In Verse, p. 6.

indeed of most of his other poetry, is the underlying personality of the author, too powerful and aggressive to be obscured or hidden. One can read scarcely a page without recognizing the potency of the personality that produced it.

Just as in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage the hero usually represents Byron himself in some of the phases of his complex individuality; just as the Lara and the Corsair of his Oriental Tales and the Cain and Manfred of his dramas are reflections of the misanthropical, theatrical, and skeptical poet; so, in the satires, no matter what method he used, it is always Byron who criticizes and assails.<sup>2</sup>

In Don Juan and its attendant satellites, "Beppo" and "The Vision of Judgment," Byron wrote the epic of modern Europe, rendering the very spirit of the world of kings and politicians. He was able to do this because he had found

. . . the proper medium for that blend of gravity and gaiety which he contemplated when he began to write Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, a measure in which he could write as he talked, orally and in correspondence, could express all his keen sense of human life, with consummate ease, and naturalness, in buoyant and moving verse.<sup>3</sup>

"Beppo" is by far the best of Byron's verse tales, though the poet's art as a story-teller was always improving. To write well Byron had to draw from his own experiences, and "Beppo" is the record, vivid, dramatic, humorous, of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>H. J. C. Grierson, Lord Byron: Arnold and Swinburne, p. 20.

his Venetian experiences.

Byron found in Italy and its literature an inspiration which affected him even more profoundly than it had Goethe only a few decades before.<sup>4</sup> The results of this influence, shown to some extent in his dramas though more decidedly in his satires, justify terming the years from 1817 until his death Byron's "Italian period." The "Italian spirit" which Byron captured, developed, and sustained during these last and most mature of his literary years is

. . . characterized by a kind of playfulness, half gayety and half mockery, often tinged with irony and reflecting a cynical tolerance; it adopts a style informal and colloquial, in which the satirist unbends to his readers and feigns to let them into his confidence. The bare outlining of these features alone proves how far Byron departed from the usually serious dignified, and formal satire of Pope and Gifford.<sup>5</sup>

"Beppo" is the first work of Byron which may be said to be completely representative of this new Italian spirit because the discursive style is not common in the poet's work before "Beppo." "Beppo" is the first work to utilize completely the discursive technique, and after that, at least in his satires, it comes to be conspicuous. The satiric

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<sup>4</sup>Fuess, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

element in "Beppo" is brought out chiefly through digressions in which the author gives free vent to his personality:

## LXXV

One hates an author that's all author, fellows  
 In foolscap uniforms turn'd up with ink,  
 So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous,  
 One don't know what to say to them, or think,  
 Unless to puff them with a pair of bellows;  
 Of coxcombry's worst coxcombs e'en the pink  
 Are preferable to these shreds of paper,  
 These unquench'd snuffings of the midnight taper.

## LXXVI

Of these same we see several, and of others,  
 Men of the world, who know the world like men,  
 Scott, Rogers, Moore, and all the better brothers,  
 Who think of something else besides the pen,  
 But for the children of the "mighty mother's,"  
 The would-be wits and can't-be gentlemen,  
 I leave them to their daily "tea is ready,"  
 Smug coterie, and literary lady.

Some traces of this method had appeared even in the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage; and to some degree, it had been utilized in several of Byron's short verse epistles to friends.

In "Beppo" Byron constantly wanders from the tale to pursue varied lines of thought, returning to the plot more from a sense of duty than from desire:

## LXIII

To turn,--and to return;--the devil take it!  
 This story slips for ever through my fingers,  
 Because, just as the stanza likes to make it,  
 It needs must be--and so it rather lingers;  
 This form of verse began, I can't well break it,

But must keep time and tune like public singers;  
 But if I once get through my present measure,  
 I'll take another when I'm next at leisure.

Only thirty-six of the ninety-nine stanzas in "Beppo" are devoted entirely to the plot. The greater portion of the poem is occupied with digressions upon many subjects, containing some personal satire, some comment on political and literary topics, and much discursive chat upon social life and morals. In "Beppo" Byron most particularly concerns himself with the Italian institution of the "Cavalier Servente." In one of his letters of 1817 Byron writes:

The general state of morals here is much the same as in the Doges' time; a woman is virtuous (according to the code) who limits herself to her husband and one lover; those who have two, three, or more, are a little wild; but it is only those who are indiscriminately diffuse, and form a low connection, who are considered as overstepping the modesty of marriage. There is no convincing a woman here, that she is in the smallest degree deviating from the rule of right or the fitness of things, in having an amoroso. The great sin seems to lie in concealing it, or having more than one; that is, unless such an extension of the prerogative is understood and approved of by the prior claimant.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously the poet was personally concerned with this aspect of the Venetian moral code, and he uses the cavalier servente theme for his plot in the satire:

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<sup>6</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 147.

I can't tell who first brought the custom in,  
 But "Cavalier Serventes" are quite common,  
 And no one notices, nor cares a pin;  
 And we may call this (not to say the worst)  
 A second marriage which corrupts the first.  
 (XXXVI)

In the introduction to "Beppo" Byron suggests that his intention is to show that he can "write cheerfully, and repel the charge of monotony and mannerism."<sup>7</sup> The spirit of the satire is indeed cheerful, and it is in such a light that Giuseppe, called more briefly, Beppo, Byron's first "comic" hero, emerges:

He was a man as dusky as a Spaniard,  
 Sunburnt with travel, yet a portly figure.  
 (XXVI)

Byron treats the circumstances of Beppo's departure from and return to Venice with humor. Beppo, a seaman, has been absent from Venice several years, and

Some people thought the ship was lost, and some  
 -That he had somehow blunder'd into debt  
 And did not like the thoughts of steering home.  
 (XXVII)

The portly Beppo is absent from Venice some six years before his unnoticed return. During this interim, his wife, "deem'd a woman of the strictist principle;" (XXVI) accepts the affections of a certain Count who becomes her cavalier servente:

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 143.



The Count and Laura made their new arrangement,  
Which lasted, as arrangements sometimes do,  
For half a dozen years without estrangement.

(LIII)

After six years, Beppo returns to Venice during Carnival; the hero, however, appears in the garb of a Mussulman or Turk, and he is wearing a beard of amazing growth. Naturally, Beppo chances to bump into his wife and her cavalier servente, the Count. Confronting the couple, Beppo informs the Count that "That Lady is my wife!" (LXXXIX) With little questioning and delay Beppo is reunited with his lady. Laura demands only that Beppo remove his Turkish garb and his unruly beard. In the closing stanzas of the tale Beppo's story is revealed:

XCIV

He was cast away  
About where Troy stood once, and nothing stands;  
Became a slave of course, and for his pay  
Had bread and bastinadoes, till some bands  
Of pirates landing in a neighbouring bay,  
He join'd the rogues and prosper'd, and became  
A renegado of indifferent fame.

XCV

But he grew rich, and with his riches grew so  
Keen the desire to see his home again.

Beppo, at home in Venice after his long absence, was  
received by his wife, and

## XCVIII

. . . the patriarch re-baptized him,  
 (He made the church a present, by the way);  
 He then threw off the garments which disguised him,  
 And borrow'd the Count's small clothes for a day:  
 His friends the more for his long absence prized him,  
 Finding he'd wherewithal to make them gay,  
 With dinners, where he oft became the laugh of them,  
 For stores--but I don't believe the half of them.

The circumstances surrounding the absence of Beppo suggest that the heroes of the Turkish Tales were not yet completely by-passed nor forgotten, but Beppo cannot justifiably be compared with any of the heroes of the Oriental Tales. The plot in "Beppo" serves only as a frame for the satire, and the hero is not the most important aspect of the work. Beppo, whose very name is humorous, is the first of Byron's heroes to appear in the role of comic dimensions. To the stern English eye Laura has obviously made a cuckold of Beppo, yet in the Venetian code such personal arrangements as taking a cavalier servente pass unnoticed. While Beppo reveals certain aspects of the Venetian social and moral life, he is also meant to satirize that which appeared to Byron as English moral primness and hypocrisy.

"The Vision of Judgment," 1822, was Byron's only attempt at genuine travesty. The travesty, in the narrow sense of the term,

. . . is a humorous imitation of another work, the subject matter remaining substantially the same, being made ridiculous, however, by a grotesque treatment and a less imaginative style. A serious theme is thus deliberately degraded and debased. The commonest subjects of travesty have been derived, as one might expect, from mythology or from the great epic poems.<sup>8</sup>

Byron had at least four objects for his satire in his

"Vision of Judgment:"

He wished to ridicule Southey's poem by burlesquing many of its absurd elements; he aimed to proceed more directly against Southey by exposing the weak points in his character and career; he desired to present a true picture of George III, in contrast to Southey's idealized portrait; and he intended to make a general indictment of all illiberal government and particularly of the policy then being pursued by the English Tory party.<sup>9</sup>

Saint Peter, George III of England, the archangel Michael, Satan, and Southey appear as speaking characters in Byron's poetic satire. Satan and George III are the two dominant figures in the poem. The Demon is made to appear as somewhat humorous in Byron's travesty. Lucifer, discussing with Michael the arrival of George III in Hell, informs the archangel Michael that

I can have fifty better souls than this  
With far less trouble than we have gone through  
Already; . . .  
I've kings enough below, God knows!  
(LXIV)

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<sup>8</sup>Fuess, op. cit., p.189.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

Although Lucifer plays one of the leading roles in the poetic satire, it cannot be said that the work possesses a truly defined hero-type. It is the imposing and biting invective of Byron's pen which appears in this work as the single dominant force. It is Byron who is obviously speaking out directly against individuals, institutions, and society in general. The characters in "The Vision of Judgment," as in "Beppo," sustain the narrative framework. In "Beppo" and "The Vision of Judgment" the most conspicuous feature is the underlying personality of the author, too powerful and aggressive to be obscured or hidden.

This, too, is the case in Don Juan, 1818-1823, the long and magnificent verse satire upon which Byron's literary immortality may someday entirely rest. The plot of Don Juan, dealing with a series of adventures in the life of a wandering hero, and interrupted constantly by the comments of the author, has little real unity. Considered as a satire, however, the poem becomes unified through the personality behind the stanzas. Byron censures himself in a jocular way for letting the tale slip forever through his fingers, and confesses with mock humility,

. . . I must own  
If I have any fault, it is digression--  
Leaving my people to proceed alone,  
While I soliloquize beyond expression.  
(III,xcvi)

In Don Juan, as the poem lengthens into the later cantos, Byron tended more and more to neglect the plot and to reveal himself as a commentator on life. The hero appears in less than half of the poem's two thousand two hundred stanzas.

The importance of the asides and digressions in Don Juan cannot be overestimated because the satiric element in the poem is brought out chiefly through Byron's discursive style. The digressions in the poem are used for two purposes: to satirize directly people, institutions, or theories; and to gossip about the writer himself.

The catalogue of individuals satirized in Don Juan is indeed impressive, for the poet makes satiric reference to over thirty individuals. The most important of the individuals satirized are: Robert Southey, Catherine of Russia, Castlereagh (Lord Londonderry), William Wordsworth, The Duke of Wellington (Wellesley), Lady Byron, King George IV, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Napoleon, John Keats, Izaak Walton, Beau Brummell, William Pitt, and John Murray are also dealt with by the poet. Byron's contempt for Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge prompts these harsh words:

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;  
 Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;  
 Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,  
 The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy.  
 (I, ccv)

Against the military ruthlessness of Catherine of Russia Byron writes:

Don Juan, who had shone in the late slaughter,  
 Was left upon his way with the despatch,  
 Where blood was talked of as we would of water;  
 And carcasses that lay as thick as thatch  
 O'er silenced cities, merely served to flatter  
 Fair Catherine's pastime--who look'd on the match  
 Between these nations as a main of cocks,  
 Wherein she liked her own to stand like rocks.  
 (IX,xxix)

Castlereagh, whose name is inseparably linked with "Taxes"  
 and "Debt," (VIII,cxxv) is called:

. . . cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant!  
 Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore . . .  
 ("Dedication," xii)

Byron despised the Duke of Wellington as the embodiment of  
 the war spirit. The poet is taking a satiric fling at  
 Wellington in the following:

As these new cantos touch on warlike feats,  
 To you the unflattering Muse designs to inscribe  
 Truths, that you will not read in the Gazettes,  
 But which 'tis time to teach the hireling tribe  
 Who fatten on their country's gore, and debts  
 Must be recited--and without a bribe.  
 You did great things: but not being great in mind,  
 Have left undone the greatest--and mankind.  
 (IX,x)

Byron's major objectives, or emphases, in his satire  
 of individuals are tyranny and oppression, militarism,  
 political conservatism, and moral hypocrisy. The  
 eight individuals to whom Byron devotes the greater  
 part of his satiric attention are, with the possible  
 exception of Lady Byron, persons whom Byron associates  
 with these defects in society. With the exception of  
 the satire of literary foibles and the satire motivated  
 by personal grievance, Byron's satire of individuals  
 has, then, two major objectives: the ridicule of all



insincerity and the denunciation of all that obstructs individual and national freedom.<sup>10</sup>

To the poet England is

. . . the shore  
Of white cliffs, white necks, blue eyes, bluer stockings,  
Tithes, taxes, duns, and doors with double knockings.  
(XII, lxvii)

Byron is thoroughgoing and severe in his condemnation of England and things English:

He inveighs against the manifold abuses in English government, politics, and economy. He ridicules the much-vaunted English freedom and morality. He satirizes English clergy, poets, lawyers, doctors, statesmen, "placemen," and country gentlemen, and derides the hypocrisy of English "high society." The predominant motive behind his satire of England and things English is detestation of insincerity and oppression.<sup>11</sup>

Don Juan, the poem's hero, newly arrived in England, stands on Shooter's Hill, overlooking London Town:

A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping  
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye  
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping  
In sight, then lost amidst the forestry  
Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping  
On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy;  
A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown  
On a fool's head--and there is London Town.  
(X, lxxxii)

The chief institutions which Byron satirizes in his Don Juan are war, despotism, and marriage:

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<sup>10</sup>Paul G. Trueblood, The Flowering of Byron's Genius, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-28.

For I will teach, if possible, the stones  
To rise against earth's tyrants.

(VIII, cxxxv)

Cantos VII and VIII of Don Juan contain Byron's most complete satiric treatment of war. Byron epitomizes in a single line the thoroughgoing destruction wrought by war: "For war cuts up not only branch, but root." (VII, xli) Byron portrays the sheer, brutal horror, and ugliness of war, complete in every bloody detail:

Thus on they wallow'd in the bloody mire  
Of dead and dying thousands,--sometimes gaining  
A yard or two of ground, which brought them nigher  
To some odd angle for which all were straining;  
At other times, repulsed by the close fire,  
Which really poured as if all hell were raining  
Instead of heaven, they stumbled backwards o'er  
A wounded comrade, sprawling in his gore.

(VIII, xx)

The following stanza represents Byron's war cry against all oppression and despotism:

And I will war, at least in words (and--should  
My chance so happen--deeds), with all who war  
With Thought;--and of Thought's foes by far most rude,  
Tyrants and sycophants have been and are.  
I know not who may conquer: if I could  
Have such a prescience, it should be no bar  
To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation  
Of every despotism in every nation.

(IX, xxiv)

In Don Juan Byron satirizes directly individuals, England and things English, theories, and the institutions of war, despotism, and marriage. Lord Byron, the last of the great verse satirists, reaches the zenith of his own creative genius in Don Juan. The poet

. . . joins mockery with invective, raillery with contempt, so that Don Juan in retaining certain qualities of the old Popean satire, seems to have tempered and qualified the acrimony of "English Bards." The inevitable result of this development was to make Don Juan a reflection of Byron's personality such as no other of his works had been. Don Juan is Byron; and in this fact lies the explanation of its strength.<sup>12</sup>

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Don Juan are constructed on the same plan. Both are travel-epics in which the traveler's experiences are made the occasion for the author's reflections on men and things. In Childe Harold's Pilgrimage the journey lies through the scenery of nature and the sites of history. In Don Juan the journey passes over the continent of life in society. Social situations take the place of historic scenes, and the moralization of the Pilgrimage takes the form of satire in Don Juan. Byron's immediate purpose in Don Juan was

. . . to remove the cloke, which the manners and maxims of society throw over their secret sins, and shew them to the world as they really are. You have not been so much in high and noble life as I have been; but if you had fully entered into it, and seen what was going on, you would have felt convinced that it was time to unmask the specious hypocrisy, and shew it in its native colors.<sup>13</sup>

This purpose is fulfilled by the poem.

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<sup>12</sup>Fuess, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>13</sup>Trueblood, op. cit., p. 100.

"I want a hero," Byron calls out in the first line of the first canto of Don Juan. The poet, of course, had decided to further immortalize the already legendary tale of Don Juan Tenorio, son of a leading family of Seville in the fourteenth century, later the hero of many plays and poems. Mozart, Moliere, Corneille, and other creative artists have so worked the Don Juan theme that today the name of Don Juan has become a synonym for a rake, roué, or an aristocratic libertine. In the original tale Don Juan killed the commandant of Ulloa after seducing his daughter. To put an end to his debaucheries, the Franciscan monks enticed Juan to their monastery and killed him, telling the people that Juan had been carried off to hell by the statue of the commandant, which was in the grounds. Byron's Don Juan, however, is not the legendary character except in name and in the fact that he is a young Spanish aristocrat.

As in the case of Childe Harold, Byron presents in the first canto of Don Juan his fullest portrait of his new hero. It will be remembered that the background details for Harold were indeed shadowy, thus adding to the mystery and gloom of the moody pilgrim. Byron's portrait of the young Juan affords the most generous of all introductory and background sketches describing any of the poet's many heroes.

Don Juan is the son of a noble hidalgo of Seville,  
Don Jose, and of his wife Donna Inez. An early sketch of  
the hero describes Juan as

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,  
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;  
His parents ne'er agreed except in doting  
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth.  
(I,xxv)

While Don Jose and Donna Inez were still wrangling, Don  
Jose died leaving the education of his son to his widow.  
Donna Inez resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon:

He learned the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery  
And how to scale a fortress or a nunnery.  
(I,xxxviii)

Juan's mother, further, desired that Juan's breeding  
should be strictly moral. Juan was to study languages, the  
arts, and the sciences. "In all these he was much and  
deeply read." (I,xl) In his social manner and in the matter  
of appearances

Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace;  
At six a charming child, and at eleven  
With all the promise of as fine a face  
As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:  
He studied steadily, and grew apace.  
(I,xlix)

At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy. At sixteen he was  
tall, handsome, slender, but well knit. "Everybody but his  
mother deem'd him almost man." (I,liv)

After the presentation of the youthful hero, Byron  
describes at length Juan's first love adventures with

Donna Julia. Here begins the first episode in the career of poetry's greatest lover. Juan's love for the married Donna Julia is, of course, unwise, but it is also an expression of great personal tenderness and attachment. Juan does not regard his love for Julia as a trifling thing; rather, this first love is one of great value and meaningfulness to the hero because it has affected his heart, mind, and soul. Juan's very being is shaken and altered by the power of love:

He, Juan, (and not Wordsworth) so pursued  
 His self-communion with his own high soul,  
 Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,  
 Had mitigated part, though not the whole  
 Of its disease; he did the best he could  
 With things not very subject to control,  
 And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,  
 Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.  
 (I,xc1)

The love of Don Juan and Donna Julia is discovered and is ended. Julia retires to a convent; Donna Inez sends Don Juan on his travels. Juan is to proceed to Cadiz; there he is to take passage and travel to Leghorn in Italy, thence

. . . through  
 All European climes, by land or sea,  
 To mend his former morals, and get new.  
 (I,xc1)

Juan's farewell to Julia is sincere and moving:



Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,  
 Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,  
 Than I resign thine image, oh, my fair!  
 Or think of any thing excepting thee.  
 (II,xix)

The young Juan wept upon departing from his native Spain.  
 "'Twas for a voyage that the young man was meant." (II,viii)  
 He was to travel some four springs.

Here follows a splendid description of a storm and shipwreck in which Juan's tutor and servants perish. The hero's last shipboard act was to save his tutor and Juan's dog, a small old spaniel. On the fifth day, still becalmed in the blue Mediterranean

Juan's spaniel, spite of his entreating,  
 Was kill'd and portion'd out for present eating.  
 (II,lxx)

Pedrillo, Juan's tutor, on the hapless seventh day at sea drew an unlucky lot and was made food for the raving crew:

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,  
 Who were not quite so fond of animal food;  
 To these was added Juan, who before  
 Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could  
 Feel now his appetite increased much more.  
 (II,lxxviii)

After having endured dreadful privations in an open boat, Juan is cast, the sole survivor, upon an island in the Aegean.

At the close of the second canto of Juan, the hero has been made to suffer an unfortunate love affair in Spain, has been sent to sea and shipwrecked, has nearly

died of starvation, and has been washed up on the shore of a lonely Greek island, where Haidee finds him. A point has been reached where it is practicable to frame some generalizations as to the extent and nature of Juan's indebtedness to some of the poet's earlier heroes. In the tradition of the heroes of the Turkish Tales, Juan's dominant characteristics emerge: a consuming and overpowering drive to love and a Promethean ability to withstand and endure great personal suffering. However, Juan's loving and his suffering emerge from situations which appear as probable and somewhat commonplace, and the stamp of the highly contrived and melodramatic situation is markedly absent. Juan emerges from the first two cantos as a recognizable human being. At this early point in the long poem it is evident that Byron in 1818 had begun the creation of a hero whom he wished to develop and portray as completely human. Juan resembles the hero-type found in the narrative tales only in so far as he is gallant, fearless, a ready fighter, and a great lover; but these qualities are now interpreted through the medium of the man of fashion of the poet's own day.

The ensuing third and fourth cantos of Don Juan present one of the great love affairs to be found in the wide world of poetry: that of Juan and Haidee. Juan has been cast alone and senseless on the rocky coast of one of

the Cyclades off Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. Here he is found apparently dead by a lovely Grecian maid, Haidee, daughter of the wild and lawless pirate-chieftan Lambruco. While her father is away from home on one of his expeditions, Haidee is sole mistress of his palace and of the lovely isle. On a report that her father has died while absent on a piratical expedition, Haidee with Juan assumes the leadership of the island.

How she finds Juan, restores him to life, nurses him in his recovery; how these two beings, young and beautiful and solitary, love each other though they do not at first know each other's language; how they live in a kind of trance in their paradise on the shore of the blue Mediterranean; and how this idyl is suddenly turned into a fearful tragedy when Lembruco returns and finds this foreign adventurer master of his house and of his daughter; how Don Juan fights desperately, but is severely wounded and put half-dead on board ship to be sold into slavery, while Haidee dies in madness: all this is told with a power, a tenderness, a passion such as of all poets Byron alone can command.

The loves of Juan and Haidee are pure and innocent embracing a tender and delicate passion. Haidee is Byron's most sublime female creation:

Over this charming creature the poet has thrown a beauty and a fascination, which were never, we think, surpassed. In this, as in the former cantos, he pours out a singular mixture of pathos, doggerel, wit, and satire; taking a strange and almost malignant delight in dashing the laughter he has raised with tears, and crossing his finest and most affecting passages with burlesque ideas, against which no gravity is proof.<sup>14</sup>

Juan is to experience much more of love, but he is never again to be in so magnificent a setting for love nor involved with a creature so heavenly. The circumstances framing this love affair suggest that here Byron was attempting to portray an idyllic, naive and simple, natural love. Indeed, it may be said that the Juan and Haidee episode is composed to present a primal innocence, counter-acting the fall of man in the Garden of Eden:

They were alone, but not alone as they  
 Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;  
 The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,  
 The twilight glow, which momentarily grew less,  
 The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay  
 Around them, made them to each other press,  
 As if there were no life beneath the sky  
 Save theirs, and that their life could never die.  
 (II, clxxxviii)

Haidee, the first-love of the hero's wanderings, remains Juan's great soul-love. The hero's future display of turbulent physical strength and his very will and heart seem to have taken their energies from this spiritual union.

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Campbell, in Byron, Works, p. 647.

Juan's love of Haidee appears a sustaining force as the hero proceeds through the many episodes in the long poem. It is in the love affair with Haidee that Juan learns for the first time of the divinity of love. Byron's Don Juan becomes the first of his many heroes to experience the sensation and the supreme essence of earthly love which borders upon the divine. Juan and Haidee may be said the greatest of lovers to appear in poetry after Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet!

Don Juan is sold in the slave market at Constantinople. He is purchased by the Sultana, Gyalbez, who has fallen in love with him and introduces him, disguised as a woman, into the seraglio. Enraged at his rejection of her, and at a subsequent escapade with one of the women of the seraglio, she orders Juan to be drowned.

Thou ask'st if I can love? be this the proof  
 How much I have loved--that I love not thee!  
 In this vile garb, the distaff, web, and woof,  
 Were fitter for me: Love is for the free!  
 (V,cxxvii)

Juan's mind is still overflowing with the memory of Haidee's isle and of Haidee's soft Ionian face.

Juan, now Juanna, is aided in his escape by a young damsel, and together they stage a dramatic flight from their luxurious but unbearable prison. Thus Juan's love adventures in and hairbreadth escape from the seraglio with a very amusing description of Turkish manners form the

subject of two cantos.

Juan is found next at the storming of the Turkish fortress of Ismail by the Russians under Suwaroff, which gives Byron an opportunity of revelling in the horrors of war. Juan distinguishes himself in the battle fighting with the Russians against the Turks:

So Juan, following honour and his nose,  
Rush'd where the thickest fire announced most foes.  
(VIII,xxxii)

The hero on the field of battle turns aside to rescue a little Turkish girl, Leila, from two brutal Cossacks. The incident is lovingly handled and the little girl exquisitely realized

A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,  
Like to a lighted alabaster vase.  
(VIII,xcvi)

A valiant fighter in the field, the hero is also shown to possess a sensitivity that borders upon the paternal. At the end of the eighth canto Don Juan has been directed through scenes of love, tempest, travel, and war.

Cantos VII and VIII of Don Juan contain Byron's most complete satiric treatment of war. Although the poet's hero has become unavoidably involved in the battle and proves able and brave under fire, Don Juan's predicament and his action are not meant to glorify nor celebrate valor, but rather they are meant to emphasize the ridiculous awkwardness and the absurdity of war. The plot in these two cantos



obviously concerns the revealing of the horrors of war, its callousness and heartlessness, and the hero's activity and his observations intensify and make more severe the awful realities of war:

Juan and Johnson join'd a certain corps,  
 And fought away with might and main, not knowing  
 The way which they had never tried before,  
 And still less guessing where they might be going;  
 But on they march'd, dead bodies trampling o'er,  
 Firing, and thrusting, slashing, sweating, glowing,  
 But fighting thoughtlessly enough to win,  
 To their two selves, one whole bright bulletin.

From the fight at Ismail Juan is transferred to the court of the notorious Empress Catherine at St. Petersburg in Russia. Catherine of Russia honors the handsome and fascinating young Spanish hero with her special favor. Leila, the Moslem orphan of ten, is still in the entourage of Don Juan, and Juan, having made a vow to shield her, allows her to accompany him into the celebrated court.

When Don Juan arrived at the court of Catherine of Russia,

Her majesty look'd down, the youth look'd up--  
 And so they fell in love;--she with his face,  
 His grace, his God-knows-what.

(IX, lxvii)

Juan, cutting a dashing figure at court, gains much favor and wealth. Rich in rubles, diamonds, cash, and credit, Juan, the reigning favorite, is dispatched by Catherine on a special diplomatic mission to England:

So Catherine, who had a handsome way  
 Of fitting out her favourites, conferr'd  
 This secret charge on Juan, to display  
 At once her royal splendour, and reward  
 His services. He kiss'd hands the next day,  
 Received instructions how to play his card,  
 Was laden with all kinds of gifts and honours,  
 Which show'd what great discernment was the donor's.  
 (X,xlvi)

Juan, with Leila, passes out of Russia into Poland, Prussia, Germany, and from Holland into England. Although no new episodes are developed as Byron's hero traverses the continent, the poet at one time did have a special "European" sequence outlined for the beautiful Juan; for he says:

I meant to have made him a Cavalier Servente in Italy, and a cause for a divorce in England, and a sentimental 'Werther-faced man' in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries, and to have displayed him gradually gate and blase as he grew older, as is natural. But I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage; not knowing which would be the severest: the Spanish tradition says hell: but it is probably only an allegory of the other state.<sup>15</sup>

Juan is in London, and now the poet launches the arrows of his clever and amusing satire at English society. The keen and merciless wit with which he takes his revenge upon his countrymen, justifies the fear and the hate which he inspired in those who felt the truth of the picture.

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<sup>15</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 652.

Byron takes a satiric fling at the inhospitable and crime-ridden city of London by immediately directing his hero into the hands of lurking robbers. In self-defense Juan is forced to shoot one of his assailants. The hero, attempting to administer bandages and comfort to his dying victim, muses:

"Perhaps," thought he, "it is the country's wont  
To welcome foreigners in this way."  
(XI,xv)

The poet proceeds to introduce the reader to a group of English aristocrats at a country house, where Juan is a guest. In the following stanza he ridicules the selfish conceit of the socially elite:

Don Juan saw that microcosm on stilts,  
Yclept the Great World; for it is the least,  
Although the highest: but as swords have hilts  
By which their power of mischief is increased,  
When man in battle or in quarrel tilts,  
Thus the low world, north, south, or west, or east,  
Must still obey the high--which is their handle,  
Their moon, their sun, their gas, their farthing candle.  
(XII,lvi)

In Canto XI Byron allows his hero to fall into the hands of the "Blues";

The Blues, that tender tribe, who sigh o'er sonnets,  
And with the pages of the last Review  
Line the interior of their heads or bonnets,  
Advanced in all their azure's highest hue:  
They talk'd bad French or Spanish, and upon its  
Late authors ask'd him for a hint or two;  
And which was softest, Russian or Castilian?  
And whether in his travels he saw Ilion?  
(XI,1)

But fortunately, Juan emerges unscathed from his "deadly peril amongst live poets and blue ladies." (XI, lxiv)

Juan, entering this little world of English high society, finds (XI, xlv) that he, as a "patrician," is "well received by persons of condition." Fair virgins and wedded dames, both of which "commodities" dwell by the Thames, "blush'd upon him," and "pious mothers inquired his income" (XI, xlviii). In fact, Juan finds himself (XII, xxxii-xxxvi) not only a spectator but an unwilling participant in the London marriage mart with its sophistry, gossip, backbiting, bargaining, perjury, and pronounced commercial character.

Escaping from the clutches of virgins, mothers, and married dames, Juan finds himself (XIII, lxxxv, lxxxvi) a house guest of Lord Henry Amundeville, a typical male example of English social aristocracy.<sup>16</sup>

Don Juan next becomes much sought after by Lady Adeline Amundeville. Lady Adeline, failing to win Juan's complete attention, introduces the hero to the lovely Aurora Raby, Juan's last love. Don Juan is most attracted to Aurora, whom the hero immediately compares to his lost Haidee:

Juan knew not of such a character--  
 High, yet resembling not his lost Haidee;  
 Yet each was radiant in her proper sphere:  
 The island girl, bred up by the lone sea,  
 More warm, as lovely, and not less sincere,  
 Was Nature's all: Aurora could not be,  
 Nor would be thus:--the difference in them  
 Was such as lies between a flower and gem.  
 (XV, lviii)

The long poem ends in the midst of another amatory adventure, in which the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke, masquerading as the

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<sup>16</sup>Trueblood, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

ghost of a friar, seeks a midnight interview with the hero. Here in the middle of his hero's adventures Byron breaks off, leaving the second great poem of his life as fragmentary as the first. Don Juan has obviously been used to satirize English society and its social and moral corruptions, especially the highly complicated and genuinely insincere and hypocritical marriage institution as well as the conventional English concept of love.

When the name of Don Juan is mentioned today, it is too frequently thought of as representative of lust, vice, and vile sensuality. Byron's hero was not meant to be such an exemplar:

Don Juan will be known, by and by, for what it is intended--a satire on abuses in the present states of society, and not an eulogy of vice. It may be now and then voluptuous:--I can't help that. Ariosto is worse. Smollett, ten times worse; and Fielding no better. No girl will ever be seduced by reading Don Juan:--No, no; she will go to Little's Poems, and Rousseau's Romans for that, or even to the immaculate De Stael. They will encourage her, and not the Don, who laughs at that, and --and--most other things.<sup>17</sup>

The hero does not represent debauchery nor defend vice, nor is he portrayed in an attempt to degrade morals:

What encouragement of vice can be discovered in Julia's lifelong misery and Haidée's horrible death? Juan, his hero, is not a selfish debaucher but an impressive, generous, affectionate youth, "more sinned

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<sup>17</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 650.

against than sinning," who shows himself an admirer of innocence as much as of beauty. This is shown by his rescue of the little Turkish girl, his devotion to her, and his zeal for her welfare. It is also shown by his preference for the sweet, gentle, and virtuous Aurora Raby, who shone like a "star" among the feminine celebrities at Lady Adeline's house party. Furthermore, Byron represents Haidee as an example of simple, naive, natural love, and Don Juan is true to her memory when assailed by the Sultan's favorite. Likewise, Byron's statement is borne out by his consistent ridicule of conventional love, on the one hand, and his idyllic pictures of true love, on the other. As one critic has rightly said, "Indeed, the mere mention of true love between man and woman is generally enough to harmonise his verse and raise it toward sublimity."<sup>18</sup>

Don Juan is obviously a more mature hero than the monotonous original hero, Childe Harold. Juan is the outcome of a longer experience of the disappointments and unsatisfactoriness of life. Don Juan is the average sensual man, raised considerably above the average by his natural gifts and his superabundant opportunities for their exercise. Don Juan resembles the hero-type developed in the many narrative tales in so far as he is gallant, fearless, a ready fighter, and a great lover; but these qualities are now interpreted through the medium of the man of fashion of the poet's own day. Byron did not err when he asserted that in Juan, for all his recklessness and ribaldry, he had at last drawn something human.<sup>19</sup> Don Juan is the supreme

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<sup>18</sup>Trueblood, op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>19</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 578.



creation of the poet's maturing years.

To believe that Don Juan represents a cynical existence which finds nothing sacred or enduring is to misread completely the intentions of Lord Byron. Essentially it is to make the same error a century of biased and sometimes unintelligent literary criticism has made--a century of criticism which has been more concerned with how great a "cad" Byron was and not how great a poet he is! Don Juan, also, is a measure of the infinite worth of love and courage and endurance. As a hero in the poetry of Lord Byron, Don Juan most closely relates to those many heroes of the poet's narrative tales.

Ulysses, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, and Don Juan are only a few of the basic human types the literary world is continuously producing, and these heroes attain transcendental proportions when they happen to appear at the right time. Appearing at the correct moment in time, they may embody the mood of an age, its aspirations, its illusions, and its crises. Don Juan does capture the essence of early nineteenth century romanticism as perhaps no other single creation of the great romantic poets does. A Shelley or a Wordsworth could inflame the intellectuals of that age, but Byron's Don Juan was of such scope and magnitude that its success resounded through all levels of society. Don Juan is, without exception, the greatest of

Lord Byron's works. It is by far the most original in point of conception. It is by far the most original in tone. It contains the finest specimens of serious poetry to appear in the works of Lord Byron.

The future immortality of this great English poet may come to rest upon the critical evaluations rendered Don Juan by the literary scholars of the twentieth century. Several excellent evaluations of Don Juan have appeared already.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that by the end of the twentieth century Don Juan may be looked upon as the supreme single literary creation of the romantic movement in English letters.

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<sup>20</sup>Claude M. Fuess, Lord Byron As A Satirist In Verse; Elizabeth F. Boyd, Byron's Don Juan; G. Wilson Knight, Lord Byron Christian Virtues; Paul G. Trueblood, The Flowering of Byron's Genius.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HEROES OF THE POETICAL DRAMAS

The complaint that the poetry of Lord Byron has not been completely and critically evaluated to this day is best supported by pointing to that large portion of Byron's work which seems to have been overlooked by successive generations of literary scholars: the area of the poetic dramas. Manfred and Cain may be excluded from this group of plays inasmuch as they have received considerable attention. Perhaps this portion of the poet's work has been overlooked because the plays were generally unsuccessful upon the stage. Yet Byron did not intend his dramas for the stage, and though the attempt has been repeatedly made to perform them, they have never become popular. Byron's plays did not become popular during his own age because the early nineteenth century stage was monopolized by burlesque, melodrama, operetta, and other lighter forms of theatrical fare. Byron and Shelley and other romantic poets, however, did attempt to provide more worthy dramas for their contemporary stage: they attempted to preserve the tradition of the literary drama. "Closet drama" is the term applied to these plays today: plays not intended to be played. It is not strange, then, though it is ironic, that instead one of the great poet's dramas, "Mazeppa," one of the

adventurous narrative tales, being dramatized in the nineteenth century theatre's melodramatic tradition, became Byron's most celebrated contribution to the stage of his day. The nineteenth century stagings of Mazeppa were ornate and lavish. Horses, ladies of the court in their splendid costumes, gallant knights, banquets, tournaments, and gorgeous scenery were all staged in such manner to produce a bold and imposing spectacle.<sup>1</sup>

The dramas show a considerable progress in the delineation of character and in the construction of plot. It is one of the inconsistencies in the character of Byron that though he delighted in being at war against the established beliefs and institutions of his time, he clung in the theory of his art to the worn-out ideals of the neo-classical age, considered Pope the greatest of English poets, and upheld the unities of the French drama. Though he was somewhat hampered by these in the structure of the plots of his historical dramas, the power and truth of the feelings and passions represented, the deep and brilliant thoughts, the bold and beautiful images scattered at random, strike and dazzle the reader and justify the opinion that

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<sup>1</sup>Walter A. Briscoe, Byron, The Poet, p. 176.

Byron surpasses also in dramatic power all English poets since the days of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup>

Byron's dramas may be classified as historical, religious or biblical, and mystical. The historical dramas include Marino Faliero, 1820; The Two Foscari, 1821; Sardanapalus, 1821; and Werner, 1822. The tragedies on Venetian subjects, Marino Faliero and The Two Foscari, show the author's intimate knowledge of the history of Venice and his hatred of that oligarchy which trampled on the rights of the people and exercised a jealous control over the executive represented by the doge.

The theme of Byron's greatest political work, Marino Faliero, was revolution, and Marino Faliero, the oldest of Byron's heroes, is a kind of revolutionary aristocrat. The eighty-year-old hero is the first of the more mature "political heroes" delineated in the historical dramas of Byron.

The fiery Doge of Venice is best described as:

. . . noble,  
Brave and generous; rich in all the qualities  
Of soldier, citizen, and friend.  
(II, i)

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<sup>2</sup>Albert Hamann, A Short Sketch of the Life and Works of Byron, p. 31.

Faliero has grown old in the service of the state. He has successfully defended his country against foreign aggression and has added to the Venetian territory by a succession of brilliant victories. After his election as doge, he sees himself distrusted and surrounded by spies. Still he fulfills his duties conscientiously. At last his enemies discover a weak point in his armor. At a very advanced age the doge had married a noble young lady, Angiolina, daughter of a departed friend. Faliero wished to give the poor and unprotected orphan the shelter and the honor of his name and to leave her his wealth. The lady Angiolina cherishes and honors her worthy husband with gratitude and devotion. Michel Steno, a patrician, a member of the senate, insults the honor of the dogaressa by placing a malicious libel against her fidelity. Steno is discovered and brought before the judges, who are, like himself, members of the senate. Doge Faliero falls into a rage when he hears that the patrician who dared to stain the honor of his wife is let off with only one month's imprisonment. Angry, provoked beyond endurance, Marino Faliero allows himself to be persuaded to join a conspiracy which aims at abolishing, by a revolution, the privileges of the aristocracy, by giving equal rights to all the citizens and by raising the authority of the doge. At this point in the play the personal weaknesses of the doge assert themselves:



His faults are those that dwell in the high bosoms  
 Of men who have commanded; too much pride,  
 And the deep passions fiercely foster'd by  
 The uses of patricians, and a life  
 Spent in the storms of state and war; and also  
 From the quick sense of honour, which becomes  
 A duty to a certain sign, a vice  
 When overstrain'd, and this I fear in him.  
 (II,1)

The conspiracy is betrayed, and at the order of the Council of the Ten the doge is arrested at the very moment he expects the announcement of the success of the revolt. He is brought to trial and has the mortification to see the defamer of his honor seated among his judges. The doge is sentenced to immediate execution in spite of his wife's and his own eloquent defense. The order of execution is carried out while the helpless citizens outside the iron gates of the palace are vainly wailing against their tyrants.

Marino Faliero, frequently compared with Otway's Venice Preserved, was produced on the stage of the Drury Lane Theatre early in 1821, and it was produced again with the famous Macready in the title role, May, 1842. At that time the play was very badly enacted, managed, and staged; its theatrical record has been one of failure.<sup>3</sup> The following extract from a letter of January, 1821, will show the author's own estimate of the play thus criticized:

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<sup>3</sup>Briscoe, op. cit., p. 168.

It is too regular--the time, twenty-four hours--the change of place not frequent--nothing melodramatic--no surprises--no starts, nor trapdoors, nor opportunities 'for tossing their heads and kicking their heels' --and no love. I think that love is not the principal passion for tragedy (and yet most of ours turn upon it), you will not find me a popular writer. Unless it is love furious, criminal, and hapless, it ought not to make a tragic subject. When it is melting and maudlin, it does, but it ought not to do; it is then for the gallery and second-price boxes.<sup>4</sup>

Marino Faliero is a drama

. . . without love or hatred--misanthropy or pity--containing nothing voluptuous and nothing terrific--but depending, for its grandeur, on the anger of a very old and irritable man; and, for its attraction, on the elaborate representation of conjugal dignity and domestic honor,--the sober and austere triumphs of cold and untempted chastity, and the noble propriety of a pure and disciplined understanding. These, we think, are not the most promising themes for any writer whose business is to raise powerful emotions.<sup>5</sup>

The theme of Marino Faliero is revolution, not love. Byron's appeal in this play is to what may be termed a kind of "political intellectualism" pointed toward republicanism and against any form of political tyranny; the theme in this play does not attempt to express the emotionalism of personal love. The marriage of the doge and Angiolina is bathed in a kind of puritanism which enobles this strange union of age and youthful beauty, yet the play itself is

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<sup>4</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 194.

<sup>5</sup>Reginald Heber, in Byron, Works, p. 193, note 1.

devoted more completely to Faliero's republicanism. Faliero, a sovereign bent on aligning himself with a plebeian revolution against the aristocracy, envisages the perfectly balanced state:

Condensing in a fair free commonwealth  
Not rash equality but equal rights,  
Proportioned like the columns to the temple,  
Giving and taking strength reciprocal.  
(III,ii)

Marino Faliero, heroic and brave in the presence of his own death, as so many of Byron's other heroes have been portrayed, likewise represents those elevating and characterizing qualities of the heroes of the tales: protection, courage, meditation, and magnanimity. Marino Faliero represents, unmistakably, the most significant development in the hero-types portrayed by Byron. It is to be recalled that the heroes of the tales were dedicated to the cause of freedom and sworn against tyranny; they, however, espoused no system of political belief. Faliero emerges as the first of the more mature of Byron's heroes; he belongs to a new hero-type which may be designated as "the political hero." Marino Faliero is dedicated to an established political doctrine, and in his desire to free Venice from a hideous and overbearing oligarchy, he bravely surrenders his life. In this first of Byron's historical dramas it can be recognized that

. . . his poetic interest in historical exactitude and realism was growing steadily stronger, his poetry was becoming more thoroughly an expression of his whole self--the heroes of Childe Harold and the Tales were aspects only--till we find him asserting that he (Byron) would have acted exactly as did the doge in Marino Faliero.<sup>6</sup>

As the first of Lord Byron's mature political heroes, Marino Faliero combines into a brilliant and noble expression the life of action with the life of reason: the force of action here is motivated for the first time in the heroes by belief in and dedication to specific intellectual and political doctrines.

Marino Faliero sprang into his final and fatal action through the passion of an outraged pride; in The Two Foscari, however, Byron wished to show "suppressed passion." Both the older and the younger Foscari are tormented patriot-lovers of Venice, and The Two Foscari strikingly portrays their patriotism and suffering amid the political intrigues of Venice. Again Lord Byron's theme is the tyranny exercised by the Venetian aristocracy and its all-powerful oligarchy, the Council of Ten.

The drama represents a twofold conflict. Young Foscari, son of the doge of the same name, has offended the laws of the state and has been banished to Candia. Unable

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<sup>6</sup>G. Wilson Knight, Lord Byron, Christian Virtues, p. 183.

to live far from his native country, which he adores though he suffers through its evil laws, he writes a treasonable letter to the Duke of Milan, in order to force the government to order him to Venice for trial. In Venice Young Foscari experiences the horrors of prison, but he gains permission to see his wife from time to time. The tortures of "the Ten" cannot wring a confession from him, for he is innocent; but when he hears that he is to be exiled again, his spirit breaks, and he dies with his eyes fixed on Venice:

BARBARIGO: But the poor wretch has suffer'd beyond  
nature's  
Most stoical endurance.

LOREDANO: Without owning  
His crime.

BARBARIGO: Perhaps without committing any.  
(I,1)

The second dramatic conflict is that which rages in the soul of Old Foscari, who in his position as doge, has to look on impassive and unmoved while his son is cruelly tortured. To show his feelings would be unbecoming in the supreme judge. When the Young Foscari dies, the father in Old Foscari proves stronger than the judge; his passion bursts forth, and he fiercely insists on having and burying the body of his son:

DOGE: Inform the signory from me, The Doge,  
They have no further power upon those ashes:  
While he lived, he was theirs, as fits a subject--  
Now he is mine--my broken-hearted boy!  
(IV,1)

Old Foscari's enemies now demand his abdication; a new doge is chosen, and while the great bell of St. Mark is telling for the election of his successor, Old Foscari collapses while descending the steps of the doge's palace with the body of his son and his son's wife Marina; Old Foscari dies with a curse for Venice upon his lips.

Francis Foscari, Doge of Venice, and his son Jacopo Foscari emerge as heroes in The Two Foscari. Each represents a high degree of patriotism, duty, and "state-love" heretofore unportrayed in the poetry of Byron. There is something extremely touching in that love of home which draws Jacopo Foscari back to captivity and death in Venice. The heroes face death bravely, and they endure the tyrannies of "the Ten" with Stoic strength. Byron has shown through his doge, Francis Foscari, that although revolution is deplorable, it is also unavoidable.

In Marino Faliero Byron sought to show the passion of outraged pride, and in The Two Foscari he has presented suppressed passion. In Sardanapalus he portrays the quality of voluptuousness. His hero, Sardanapalus, is effeminate and gentle and appears a kind of "sensualist-hero." In this exquisite play all past themes of Byron's life and poetry are beautifully and exactly harmonized. The hero, an enlightened emperor, refuses to conform to current standards of blood-sports and imperial conquest, just as Lord



Byron protested vigorously against blood-sports and imperial conquest during the whole of his life.<sup>7</sup>

Sardanapalus, the last king of the great line of Assyrian rulers, is very unlike his ancestors: he has a soft and kind heart averse to war and tyranny. He loves pleasure: luxurious music, overflowing cups, fair women, but he likes his people to share his pleasures. It is his greatest pride that his reign has been peaceful and prosperous. His error lies in his not knowing or wishing to know men. Sardanapalus does not suggest an iron-willed nature, and the ruler of a state built up by conquest should be strong and stern; he should be more respected and feared than loved. His leniency encourages rebellion, and Arbaces, the Median general, and Beleses, the Chaldean high-priest, conspire to overthrow the amiable but weak prince. Salamenes, brother-in-law to Sardanapalus, warns the king against them, yet when he arrests the conspirators, at the exact moment they are poised to strike the king down, Sardanapalus refuses to bring them to justice, but merely banishes them from the court. Leaving the palace, Arbaces and Beleses assemble their forces and return to attack Nineveh. Then at last, but too late to save his empire, the king's innate greatness of soul asserts itself. He

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

rises from luxury and sloth and rushes forth to meet the rebels in the open field. Sardanapalus is overwhelmed by fearful odds, and Salamenes has been killed. Nature joins the enemy ranks, and the river rises during the night and destroys a great part of the castle-wall. Seeing that all is lost, Sardanapalus determines to die the death of a hero. The king commands his friends to leave him, and they make their escape down the same river that has doomed the palace. Sardanapalus prepares a funeral pyre of costly furniture and hoarded treasures of the kings of Assyria. At the signal of a trumpet-blast from the river announcing to him the safe departure of his friends, Sardanapalus fires the pile. Myrrha, his favorite concubine, and the drama's spirited Grecian heroine, goes to her death with her sovereign. The advancing foe find the palace of Nineveh a sea of flames into which the last king of Assyria has disappeared.

The tragedy of Sardanapalus seems more fitted for the theatre than any other of Byron's plays, and it appears to have the Shakespearean touch throughout. The character of Sardanapalus has been compared to that of Hamlet:

. . .--yet contrast: The Assyrian monarch, like the Prince of Denmark, is highly endowed, capable of the greatest undertakings; he is yet softened by a philosophical indolence of nature that makes him undervalue the enterprises of ambition, and all those objects in the attainment of which so much of glory is supposed to

consist. They are both alike incapable of rousing themselves from the fond reveries of moral theory, even when the strongest motives are presented to them. Hamlet hesitates to act, though his father's spirit hath come from death to incite him; Sardanapalus derides the achievements that had raised his ancestors to an equality with the gods. Sardanapalus' contemplations are inspiring:

They would have me go  
Forth as a conqueror. By all the stars  
Which the Chaldeans read! the restless slaves  
Deserve that I should curse them with their wishes  
And lead them forth to glory.

The majesty of his lines when his slaves murmur,  
Because I have not shed their blood;  
and his patriotic sentiment:

Enough  
For me, if I can make my subjects feel  
The weight of human misery less. . .

are examples of the character's kingly greatness and national pride.<sup>8</sup>

Although Byron suggested that his Sardanapalus was "almost a comic character--as was Richard the Third,"<sup>9</sup> it must be observed here that the hero appears to be something more than a mere comic character. Indeed Sardanapalus is one of Byron's most complex, most mature, and most completely developed heroes:

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<sup>8</sup>Briscoe, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>9</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 244, note 1.

He had, indeed, the scorn of war, and glory, and priestcraft, and regular morality, which distinguishes the rest of his lordship's favourites; but he has no misanthropy, and very little pride--and may be regarded, on the whole, as one of the most truly good-humoured, amiable, and respectable voluptuaries to whom we have ever been presented. His Sardanapalus is not an effeminate, worn-out debauchee, with shattered nerves and exhausted senses, the slave of indolence and vicious habits; but a sanguine votary of pleasure, a princely epicure. He goes forth from the banquet to the battle, as to a dance or measure, attired by the Graces, and with youth, joy, and love for his guides. Whether in prosperous or adverse circumstances, his soul smiles out superior to evil.<sup>10</sup>

The heroic and noble actions of Sardanapalus must be enumerated:

We find Sardanapalus, when roused by the approach of danger, conducting his armies with courage and skill. We see him providing for the safety of his wife, his children, and his capital city, with all the calmness and prudence of an experienced captain. We see him at length, subdued, not by man, but by Heaven and the elements, and seeking his death with a mixture of heroism and ferocity which little accords with our notions of a weak or utterly degraded character. Such a character,--luxurious, energetic,--affords, beyond a doubt, no common advantages to the work of poetic delineation; and it is precisely the character which Lord Byron most delights to draw, and which he has succeeded best in drawing.<sup>11</sup>

Might Sardanapalus possibly be Byron's apologia for his life at Venice? The hero offers a remarkable self-portrait of the poet; he also represents an exceptional assemblage of rare qualities which meet for the first time

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<sup>10</sup>Lord Jeffrey, in Byron, Works, p. 254, note 2.

<sup>11</sup>Reginald Heber, in Byron, Works, p. 276, note 4.

in one hero. The Assyrian prince, obviously a more mature human being than the gloomy Harold, at once appears more complex than Don Juan or any of the melodramatic heroes of the Oriental Tales. Sardanapalus and Juan are alike only in that these final and mature heroes are gentle and half-feminine types. Yet in Sardanapalus Byron combines a great and noble personal sensitivity with the quality of superb personal and physical strength, a royal personage reduces himself to a commonplace station through lack of assertion, a long history of ancestral imperialism is reduced to pacifism and benevolence, and in his last action this same princely voluptuary becomes a warrior and leader of men. These powers are made to co-exist within one single hero.

Sardanapalus should hold rank near Harold and Juan. That the dramas of Byron were theatrical failures and that the dramas to this day have gone unnoticed in literary criticism seem to explain why Sardanapalus is a Byronic creation which is little known.

One of Byron's historical dramas did meet with some little success upon the stage of the nineteenth-century theatre. Macready's favorite role was Werner, and Prof. Nichol considers Werner to be Byron's sole success on the British stage.<sup>12</sup> However, Byron borrowed the plot and the

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<sup>12</sup>Briscoe, op. cit., p. 174.

characters for his Werner directly from Sophia and Harriet Lee's Canterbury Tales in which appeared the tragedy of Kruitzner, or The German's Tale. There is not one incident in Byron's play, not even the most trivial, that is not to be found in the novel.<sup>13</sup> Werner is not an original Byronic creation, and therefore he should not be treated here as one of the poet's hero-types. Nevertheless, Werner appears to suffer in the tradition of Byron's previously treated historical heroes Dante and Tasso. Great injustice has been done Werner in the matter of his legal and political inheritance, yet he manages to survive a series of humiliating blows and the loss of his son. His rightful inheritance is restored to him only after he has weathered great personal suffering and hardship. He is recognizable as a Byronic figure in such capacity.

The religious or biblical dramas of Lord Byron include Manfred, 1816; Cain, 1821; and Heaven and Earth, 1821. Cain and Heaven and Earth are specifically based upon Old Testament themes and are not questionable in their placement here. Manfred, the poet's first drama, has been placed in this category because it does present a challenge to religious doctrine in that it questions the orthodox

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<sup>13</sup>Lord Jeffrey, in Byron, Works, p. 341, note 1.



conception of sin.

Manfred, as was Byron's "Prometheus," is a product of the year of 1816. "Self-exiled" Byron had departed from England forever, and the full force of his personal torment is powerfully expressed in Manfred's desperate and futile attempt to escape into oblivion. Manfred has often been referred to as a tragedy of remorse, but this is perhaps too easy and obvious a way of describing its central aspects. Byron's Manfred is the expression of the misery of a man suffering from a basic rupture in his whole being. Yet this drama also expresses through exalted poetry the soothing effects of nature, the problems of human greatness and suffering, Byron's defiance of the orthodox conception of sin, and his views on death.

Manfred, the hero, exists under the spell of an ill-starred love! He lives, a lonely dreamer, in a solitary castle in the Alps. The few characters who surround him there are the Chamois Hunter, who saves his life when Manfred is about to throw himself from a cliff into a fearful abyss, his servants, and the Abbot of St. Maurice, who wishes to reconcile him to the church and to life. Manfred buries himself in the forbidden arts of magic, and spirits appear at his command. He would have them help remove some tragic blot in his past--some unnatural passion felt for a sister, Astarte, the only being he ever loved--

a passion which brought about her death. The Witch of the Alps hears Manfred's incoherent confession:

If I had never lived, that which I love  
 Had still been living; had I never loved,  
 That which I love would still be beautiful--  
 Happy and giving happiness. What is she?  
 What is she now?--a sufferer for my sins.  
 (II,ii)

In the Hall of Arimanes Manfred meets and defies the Evil Principle, and the evil spirits there bring to the hero the phantom of Astarte; Astarte prophesies that Manfred's earthly ills will end on the morrow. At the appointed time the spirits come for him, but he dismisses them and dies.

The interest and beauty of this drama lie particularly in the powerful representation of Manfred's passion; his repentance, his despair, his wild melancholy expressed in words of fire; secondly, in the exalted description of Alpine scenery. This landscape with its terrors, its grandeur, and its sublime beauty is a fit setting for such a soul to move in; Manfred's spirit and genius seem to hover over these Alpine peaks like a wounded mountain eagle. In the play nature is in sympathy with man; man's passions are reflected in the storm that rages about the peaks of the mountains, in the thundering cataract, and the haughty waves lashing the shore of the blue Alpine Lake.

A century of literary criticism has pronounced the character of Manfred both Satanic and Promethean in concept

and meaning. Indeed the only other imaginary being resembling Prometheus in any degree is Satan. Both are characterized by courage and majesty and a firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force. The essential difference between Prometheus and Satan is that the Greek-immortal is not motivated by drives of ambition, envy, or revenge; in Prometheus there is no need for personal aggrandisement. Satan is the opposite of Prometheus in these. In the presence of Manfred's great sense of moral responsibility, the spirit of "'tis better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" is immediately alien.

In Manfred Byron's tortured mind found something craggy to break upon. This is the nerve and sinew of Manfred. A mind that will not be stilled, a courage that outfaces Arimanes on his throne, and a passionate sense of individuality are voiced in the defiance of Manfred. Byron's Manfred has assumed personal responsibility for his sin; this is a Christian action and virtue. In Manfred's defiance in the face of the Evil Principle represented by Arimanes on his Fiery Throne, the suggestion and image of Prometheus emerge.

Although it is not feasible to think of Manfred as a Satanic figure, there is something equally unfeasible in likening the hero to a Promethean figure. There are too many references in the drama to the unexplained background

of Manfred and his love of Astarte, which must remove Manfred from the Satanic-Promethean concept:

We have in Manfred such phrases as 'I am not of thine order', 'This man is of no common order', 'The order which thine own would rise above', 'there is an order of mortals on the earth' (II,i; II,ii; II,iv; III,i). Manfred's passions and 'powers' make him a stranger among men with little in common with 'breathing flesh' (II,ii). In contact with human beings, he says,

I felt myself degraded back to them  
And was all clay again. (II,ii) <sup>14</sup>

When Manfred is in the presence of Arimanes and the Phantom of Astarte nears, Nemesis, a Spirit in The Hall of Arimanes, speaks:

. . . Silent still!  
She is not of our order, but belongs  
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,  
And we are baffled.  
(II,iv)

Astarte, too, is made to appear "something unearthly." When ordered to bow in the presence of Arimanes, Manfred refuses, demanding:

Bid him (Arimanes) bow down to that which is above him,  
The overruling Infinite--the Maker  
Who made him not for worship--let him kneel,  
And we will kneel together.  
(II,iv)

Manfred does acknowledge a Supreme Power. It is suggested that the superhuman energies and the magical powers as well

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<sup>14</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 280.

as the deep-seated remorse of Manfred have their common origin in the realm of this same Supreme Being--that the many references to "another order" present sufficient evidence to declare that Manfred is a species of "fallen angel":

'Fallen angel' exactly corroborates the statement of Manfred, suggesting an identity of excellence with disaster.<sup>15</sup>

The fallen-angel-hero evinces a deep sense of moral responsibility and duty to humanity in that he would be "The enlightener of nations" "And champion human fears." (III,1; II,11) Yet he suffers from an agony of remorse, a dark sense of loneliness and evil, and the bitterness of failure because:

I could not tame my nature down; for he  
Must serve who fain would sway; and soothe, and sue;  
And watch all time, and pry into all place,  
And be a living lie, who would become  
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such  
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with  
A herd, though to be a leader--and of wolves.  
The lion is alone, and so am I.  
(III,1)

This is an insight as to why Manfred

. . . appears simultaneously greater and inferior, better or worse than other men; one who is known for "deeds of good and ill," extreme in both' (II,11).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

In Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Byron referred to himself as "something unearthly," and in Manfred he saw himself as "lightning." (IV, cxxxvii; I, i) It is possible that Byron did think of himself as a fallen angel. The following lines from Childe Harold's Pilgrimage strengthen the possibility:

I look upon the peopled desert past,  
As on a place of agony and strife,  
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,  
To act and suffer, but remount at last  
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,  
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast  
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,  
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being  
cling.

(III, lxxiii)

Not only does this passage corroborate the 'fallen angel' image, but it also expresses the very spirit and fire of Manfred. Consider, too, the following evidence:

From his boyhood Byron always believed that there was a blood-curse on him. In this manner Manfred suffers from some 'half-maddening sin' associated with the shedding of blood (II, i, ii). Byron's early Calvinist up-bringing helped to inculcate a sense of guilt and predestined damnation. Manfred is a lonely soul, a thing apart (II, ii). Byron's poetic being appears to have felt itself opposed not merely by the Tories and London society, but by Providence. The darker poetry drives to the limit an implanted tendency; and it is dramatized in Manfred, where the hero is both greater and inferior in relation to what Nietzsche called 'the herd'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 247.



The complexities of Manfred's character and the depth of the struggle between his greatness and his remorse--these turbulent expressions evidence the poet's deep self-evaluation and spiritual predicament as he attempted to reconstruct his disrupted being amid the Alps in Switzerland in 1816. Manfred must be ranked with Childe Harold's Pilgrimage as foremost among the poet's works which are rich and heavy in Byronic self-revelation. Manfred emerges in this drama as the supreme expression of Byronic guilt. The hero as a courageous challenger and questioner after the meaning of sin and death presents an obvious foreshadowing of Cain. In the matter of the final moral and meaning of Manfred, the poet's own explanation should be cited:

"Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die"--those were Manfred's last words to the Abbott; and in them, as Byron wrote to Augusta, lay the whole moral of the poem.<sup>18</sup>

Manfred, Don Juan, and Cain appeared "Devilish" at the moment of their first printing, but time has brought them approval and acceptance. Among English literary masterpieces which have been based on biblical themes, only Milton's Paradise Lost can be compared to Byron's Cain in greatness of conception and beauty of execution.

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<sup>18</sup>Andre Maurois, Byron, p. 385.

Though Cain has been indicted time and again as Byron's greatest single expression of skepticism and disbelief, the poem must not be taken as a clear-cut statement of belief or disbelief. It is rather a portrayal of the emotional and intellectual confusion which Byron had experienced, and of which he never completely rid himself. In Cain there is no question that Byron assumed the existence of Divine Will:

The little shining fire-fly in its flight,  
And the immortal star in its great course,  
Must both be guided . . .

(II,1)

and

. . . all  
Rests upon thee; and good and evil seem  
To have no power themselves, save in thy will.

(III,1)

Except for Sardanapalus the dramas are not fatalistic.

If Sardanapalus were Byron the voluptuary, then Cain was Byron declaring war on Calvinism. The poet's Cain is a kind of "intellectualist-hero" in that his main aim appears to gain knowledge from Lucifer of God and of God's creation. Lucifer appears in the play as the chief arbiter of knowledge, for Byron does not introduce The Deity into Cain. The hero, always aware of the insignificance of man, vainly attempts to learn the secrets of death, of original sin and earthly sin, of immortality, of both Heaven and Hell, and of the cosmos.

Cain cannot understand why he must appear guilty  
in the sight of God for crimes he did not commit:

. . . what have we  
Done, that we must be victims for a deed  
Before our birth, or need have victims to  
Atone for this mysterious, nameless sin--  
If it be such a sin to seek for knowledge?  
(III,1)

Here the hero attacks the very pillars of Calvinism,  
especially in its denial of free will and its idea of the  
total depravity of mankind as a result of Adam's fall.  
Cain powerfully questions, also, the scriptural orthodoxy  
of Evangelical Christianity and the Augustinian doctrine  
of original sin.

In Cain the drama is elucidated in terms of the Old Testament myth, with the hero indeed guilty, but guilty by reason of his loving gentleness to the animal kingdom, and so condemned. In this drama, which is the poet's final statement of revolt against the religious and social traditions of Europe, Byron specifically levels his indictment in terms of animal slaughter.<sup>19</sup> The action, moreover, revolves around the theme of animal slaughter. Abel slaughters the firstlings of his flock, the poor innocent lambs; Cain offers the flowers and fruits of the field. They pray. Abel's prayer is in the orthodox and generally

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<sup>19</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 15.

accepted form: he kneels. Cain stands and prays. Abel's sacrifice is accepted; a storm scatters the offering of Cain. Cain rises in wrath, challenging Abel and his blood offering;

Abel (opposing him): Thou shalt not:--add not  
 impious works to impious  
 Words! let that altar stand--'tis hallow'd now  
 By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,  
 In his acceptance of the victims.

Cain: His!  
His pleasure! what was his high pleasure in  
The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood,  
To the pain of the bleating mothers, which  
Still yearn for their dead offspring? or the pangs  
Of the sad ignorant victims underneath  
Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record  
Shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!  
(III,1)

Abel opposes him; they struggle; Cain snatches up a brand and strikes his brother on the temple; Abel falls dead imploring the Lord to forgive his brother. The spectre of death which had haunted the imagination of Cain is now in the world. Yet it is clear that Cain did not kill Abel as a result of premeditation or envy. In the prior scene Cain had spent considerable time with Lucifer touring the universe. During that interview, it had been Lucifer's object to

... depress him (Cain) still further in his own estimation than he was before, by showing him infinite things and his own abasement, till he falls into the frame of mind that leads to the catastrophe, from mere internal irritation, not premeditation, or envy of Abel (which would have made him contemptible), but from rage

and fury against the inadequacy of his state of his conceptions, and which discharges itself rather against life, and the Author of life, than the mere living. His subsequent remorse is the natural effect of looking on his sudden deed. Had the deed been premeditated, his repentance would have been tardier.<sup>20</sup>

In sober and calm moments of mind Cain in his defense of the slaughtered animals gives witness to the doctrine of "reverence for life," a doctrine which is beginning to make something of an advance into our twentieth century moral thought. (III,1)

Cain, constantly rejecting the doctrine of damnation throughout the drama, presents a strong moral lesson:

The acts of guilt and folly into which Cain is hurried are not treated as accidental, or as occasioned by passing causes, but as springing from an internal fury, a morbid state akin to phrensy, a mind dissatisfied with itself and all things, and haunted by an insatiable, stubborn longing after knowledge rather than happiness, and a fatal proneness to dwell on the evil side of things rather than the good. We here see the dreadful consequences of not curbing this disposition (which is, after all, perhaps, the sin that most easily besets humanity,) exemplified in a striking point of view; and we so far think, that the moral to be derived from a perusal of this Mystery is a valuable one.<sup>21</sup>

Byron's hero in this sublime drama emerges as a challenger and a questioner of the validity of orthodox religious doctrines and ideals, and may therefore be

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<sup>20</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 329, note 2.

<sup>21</sup>Lord Jeffrey, in Byron, Works, p. 333, note 2.

designated an intellectualist-hero. In Cain's desire to be free of death and to free men, a sense of the "duty of humanity" may be said to appear emerging into a central place. In this manner Cain is meant to suggest the spirit of Christ. Although the hero solves no specific issues, he symbolizes that inquiring kind of intelligence which will not still itself in the presence of those eternal tyrants which seem forever blocking man's intellectual and spiritual advancement: dogma and myth. Cain also symbolizes the "eternal spirit of the chainless mind."

Byron was preoccupied with biblical themes in 1821, and closely following Cain came the poet's second drama, based upon the legend of the flood in the Old Testament, Genesis VI, 2, and entitled Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth expresses the mood of Cain. This is made most obvious in that the action and power of Heaven and Earth express Byron's extraordinary realization of the flood's impact on animals and bird.<sup>22</sup>

In this drama no single actor dominates, yet it is apparent that Noah's son Japhet is also a continuation of the spirit of Cain. Japhet, in love with Anah, one of the daughters of Cain, questions and stands in awe of Divine

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<sup>22</sup>Knight, op. cit., p. 14.



Justice that seals the doom of the beautiful children of  
Cain:

. . . would  
His power were greater of redemption! or  
That by exchanging my own life for hers,  
Who could alone have made mine happy, she,  
The last and loveliest of Cain's race, could share  
The ark which shall receive a remnant of  
The seed of Seth!

(I,iii)

The race of Cain must lift their eyes to Adam's God in  
vain. The flood cleanses the world of Cain's sinful off-  
spring, while Japhet wails his own survival:

. . . to die! in youth to die!  
And happier in that doom,  
Than to behold the universal tomb  
Which I  
Am thus condemn'd to weep above in vain.  
Why, when all perish, why must I remain?

(I,iii)

Japhet, Cain-like in his reaction to Divine Justice and  
apparent damnation, is the hero, although, as has been  
stated, no single personage dominates in this play. Byron  
obviously did not intend to introduce and develop another  
new hero-type in Heaven and Earth.

The Deformed Transformed, a Faust-like drama utterly  
dissimilar to Manfred in this respect, was begun at Pisa in  
1821, yet this unfinished and fragmentary work was not  
published until 1824. Perhaps, at least to the world of  
literary criticism, its chief distinction rests in its having  
been the most completely by-passed of all of Byron's

generally overlooked dramas. In what appears to be the finest example of contemporary literary criticism and evaluation in the field of Byron, G. Wilson Knight's Lord Byron, Christian Virtues grants The Deformed Transformed a position of decided importance. In this recent work Knight defines Byron

. . . as the next Promethean man in Western history after Christ . . . no one else fills the conditions. The great men of the Christian tradition cannot be said to add anything to the life of Christ; the men of action are not poets, and the poets not--at least in the sense that Byron was--men of action. In Byron you get something new, in which poetry and action, aristocracy and revolution, Christianity and statecraft, each raised to a high autonomous power, co-exist within one single human, yet magical personality. This is exactly what, in the Renaissance world, should constitute 'the new Prometheus of new men'; for finally Byron's greatness is less a greatness, his goodness less a goodness, of selection than of inclusion.<sup>23</sup>

In arriving at this estimation Knight has leaned heavily on what he adduces as the most highly significant internal evidence in the last of Byron's dramas, the mystical and unfinished The Deformed Transformed.

There are many facets of unusual interest in The Deformed Transformed. First, Byron expresses in it what a man of highly wrought mind might feel when brooding over a deformity of body, and this subject was directly linked to Byron's own life. The hero, the hunchback Arnold, sells

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

his soul to the Stranger, a kind of Mephistopheles, for healing his deformity and for making him like other men and capable of being loved. A second point of great interest occurs in the first line of the play: "Out, hunchback!" (I,i) Arnold replies, "I was born so, mother. (I,i) This retort is reportedly authentic:

Lord Byron's own mother, when in ill humor with him, used to make the deformity in his foot the subject of taunts and reproaches. She would pass from passionate caresses to the repulsion of actual disgust; then devour him with kisses again, and swear his eyes were as beautiful as his father's.<sup>24</sup>

A third facet worthy of mention is that The Deformed Transformed adds richly to the numerous works of Byron which celebrate his hatred of war. The witty and humorous remarks of Caesar turn the sub-plot of the drama into a superb light satire on war. Lastly, a curious note appended to the unfinished third act of the drama suggesting that Arnold was jealous of the intellectual force which originally had been his and is now lost to him in the shape of Achilles, proves that Byron was pondering the problems of personality, and that no one was more conscious than he of the successive existences of several Byrons.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Thomas Moore, in Byron, Works, p. 300, note 4.

<sup>25</sup>Byron, in Byron, Works, p. 304, note 2.

These "several Byron" may be explained in The Deformed Transformed at that point in the action where Arnold, the hero, is offered by the Stranger--a kind of Mephistopheles--the chance of changing his form. (I,1) Arnold may choose to take the form of Julius Caesar, Alcibades, Socrates, Antony, Demetrius Poliorcetes, or Achilles. (I,1) Julius Caesar may be said to represent Byron's Napoleonic ambitions; Alcibades, perhaps, is meant to symbolize the personal charm and magnetism of someone like Beau Brummell; Socrates, is, of course, meant to symbolize the seer or the philosopher or wisdom; Antony, the lover, may be said to represent the amorous side of Byron's personality; and Demetrius Poliorcetes, the Macedonian conqueror welcomed by Athens as a liberator and accorded divine honors, may be said to symbolize the "super-man." Of Poliorcetes Arnold, the hunchback, asks, "who was this glory of mankind?" (I,1) Achilles is meant to symbolize the spirit and beauty of ancient Greece, and further, it may be said that Achilles is meant to represent all of the poet's more gentle and idealistic qualities.<sup>26</sup> As the rejected shape of Poliorcetes vanishes, the Stranger speaks to Arnold:

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<sup>26</sup>knight, op. cit., p. 272.

I'll fit you still,  
 Fear not, my hunchback: if the shadows of  
 That which existed please not your nice taste,  
 I'll animate the ideal marble, till  
 Your soul be reconciled to her new garment.  
 (I,1)

To "animate the ideal marble" is meant, obviously, to revive the ancient beauty of Greece, and Arnold, watching the form of Achilles emerge in his presence, makes his choice:

ARNOLD: Content! I will fix here.

STRANGER: I must commend  
 Your choice.  
 (I,1)

Arnold chooses to take the form and body of the great Achilles, who is meant to symbolize the spirit, the dignity, and the beauty of ancient Greece. As Greece was Byron's earliest and latest love among the nations, Arnold's selection of Achilles is not altogether unexpected. It is significant, however, that the deformed hunchback purposely rejects the form of the "superman," Demetrius Poliorcetes.  
 (I,1)

The hunchback Arnold who becomes Achilles is the last hero-type to appear in the poetry of Lord Byron. The Arnold-Achilles-hero-type represents a perfect blending and expression of all the many complex aspects of Byron's own physical, mental, and spiritual framework. Shadows of this same blending of the Arnold-Achilles-hero-type appear

in the magnificent and last poem of Lord Byron, "On This Day I Complete My Thirty Sixth Year." It is the heart and soul of the unloved and deformed Arnold which set the mood in the first verse of that poem:

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,  
 Since others it hath ceased to move:  
 Yet, though I cannot be beloved,  
 Still let me love!

(1)

The image and spirit of the great Achilles are unmistakably clear in:

The sword, the banner, and the field,  
 Glory and Greece, around me see!  
 The Spartan, borne upon his shield,  
 Was not more free.

(6)

Seek out--less often sought than found--  
 A soldier's grave, for thee the best;  
 Then look around, and choose thy ground,  
 And take thy rest.

(10)

This, too, was Byron's farewell, and the poet's attempt to identify himself with the strong image of the youthful and classical Greek hero is obvious. Just as most of his heroes found themselves in a foreign field laboring for the cause of freedom and against tyranny, so Byron found himself fighting for the cause of liberty and freedom in Greece in 1824. Byron was dead just two months after "On This Day I Complete My Thirty Sixth Year" was written. Few poems in the language suggest so close a relationship between the



biographical facts of a poet's life and the poem itself.

Byron emerges here at the end of his life in poetry as his own hero. Few men in the brief history of the world have given so much of their life's blood in terms of action and sacrifice and in the same lifetime given the world of art so much to embrace, endear, and remember. In his article, "Byron, Poet of the United Nations," Giuseppe Mazzini pays great tribute to Byron:

I know of no more beautiful symbol of the future destiny and mission of art than the death of Byron in Greece. The holy alliance of poetry with the cause of the peoples; the union--still so rare--of thought and action--which alone completes the human Word, and is destined to emancipate the world; the grand solidarity of all nations in the conquest of the rights ordained by God for all his children and in the accomplishment of that mission for which alone such rights exist--all that is now the religion and the hope of the party of progress, is gloriously typified in this image, which we, barbarians that we are, have already forgotten.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Giuseppe Mazzini, "Byron, Poet of the United Nations," SRL, July 25, 1942.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The heroes in Lord Byron's poetry constitute one of the poet's outstanding contributions to world literature. This study is not meant, however, to suggest that the heroes of Byron constitute his greatest contribution to the world of poetry. The most conspicuous feature of Byron's poetry, it seems, is the underlying personality of the author, too powerful and aggressive to be obscured or hidden. In almost all of his poetry, especially in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Don Juan, and the verse satires, the poems become unified through the personality behind the stanzas. Further, it may be said that Byron is one of the few figures in modern literature whose extraordinary power over the minds of men seems to exist less in his work than in himself.

From the emergence of the first hero-type in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage until the presentation of the last one in "On This Day I Complete My Thirty Sixth Year," Byron was greatly concerned with the portrayal of the heroic figure. This study attempts to explain that these hero-types follow what may be termed a developmental theme. This theme can best be realized by keeping in mind the image of Byron in his personal, mental, spiritual, and creative development

from the period of the first London successes of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage until his death at the age of thirty-seven in Greece. The hero-types seem in their development and meaning to coincide with Byron's growth as a social personality. This point may be strengthened by remembering that in order to write well Byron had always to draw from his own experiences.

Childe Harold was pictured as a reflection of Byron's youthful inaction or ennui of life, while the heroes of the tales symbolized a dramatic struggle and escape from this ennui into the life of complete physical action. This was suggested as the first definite development in Byron's hero-types. Excepting Byron's personal-life-heroes appearing in the historical narrative tales, most of these early and shadowy heroes were obviously tin and tinsel creations and mechanically melodramatic types. It was Don Juan, the most significant hero of the verse satires, who first reflected Byron's ability to draw "something human." This symbol of the Byronic beau monde resembles the Oriental hero-type only in so far as he is gallant, fearless, a ready fighter, and a great lover; but these qualities are now interpreted through the medium of the man of fashion of the poet's own day.

As a group, the most mature of the poet's hero-types are to be found in the poetic dramas. In the

historical or political dramas the heroes Marino Faliero and the two Foscari combined into a brilliant and noble expression the life of action with the life of reason: the force of action was motivated for the first time in the heroes by belief in and dedication to specific intellectual and political doctrines. Sardanapalus was the most complex and mature of the heroes in these dramas. Frequently considered the poet's most mature self-portrait, Sardanapalus combines a great and noble sensitivity with the quality of superb personal and physical strength, reduces a long history of ancestral imperialism to pacifism and benevolence, directs a royal personage to a commonplace station through lack of assertion, and transforms a princely voluptuary into a warrior and leader of men. These powers were made to co-exist in one hero-type.

Manfred and Cain were the heroes of most importance in the religious or biblical plays. They were labeled intellectualist-heroes because of the passionate questioning and the defiant challenges they hurled at orthodox religious conceptions and biblical myth and dogma.

The hunchback Arnold who chooses to become Achilles represents the last hero-type. Achilles symbolizes all of Byron's gentler and more idealistic qualities together with the spirit of Greece, the poet's earliest and latest love among the nations. In this manner the hero-types of

Byron have been systematically developed, suggesting that in their developmental order they closely coincide with the personal growth, development, and maturity of Lord Byron's self and his creative powers. The heroes of Byron weave majestically into the fabric of the many poems and plays his eternal theme: the infinite worth of love and courage and endurance. The typical hero, as created by Byron, is seen as a mystic symbol, which ultimately is meant to represent our inmost self.

Throughout this study the commonplace and too-frequently-used term, "Byronic hero," has been purposely avoided. In the light of this inquiry "Byronic hero" appears to be a term which is highly specialized in its meaning and implication, and, consequently, generally misleading, non-inclusive, and limiting. The implication in "Byronic hero" is that the term infers a state of inclusiveness--that all of the heroes in Byron's poetry are represented or meant to be included in the phrase. This meaning at once appears narrow and confining in the presence of the dynamic creative power and the voluminous output of the poet. In that vast library of criticism devoted to Byron and his poetry, work after work presented evidence to support the statement that the "Byronic hero" was meant to represent Childe Harold, Don Juan, Manfred, Cain, and the heroes of the Turkish Tales. This obviously

excludes the many heroes of the historical narrative tales, the other heroes in the verse satires, and the heroes in the poetic dramas. As defined, the term "Byronic hero" excludes many of the most mature and sublime of the poet's hero-types. It has been the purpose of this paper to investigate all of Lord Byron's poetry in order to gain a more complete picture of the many heroes appearing in his canon. In reporting this attempt it was thought feasible to employ the more simple and less restrictive terms, "hero-type" and hero. No central objection is voiced here against the term "Byronic hero," but it is suggested that in the light of the findings of this study the term has limitations and causes a general misrepresentation.

The many heroes of Byron suggest something of the "superman." Considering again that strong statement of Knight's which defined Lord Byron "as the next Promethean man in Western history after Christ,"<sup>1</sup> it becomes somewhat easier to gain an over-all understanding and picture of the meaning of the many noble heroes who have come from the pen of Byron. Each hero might be said to represent a noteworthy element in the erecting of such a glorious and spiritual personality. In English literature, at least, the

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson Knight, Lord Byron, Christian Virtues, p. 281.



heroes of Byron must be given consideration and stature somewhere in the close vicinity of those immortal creations of Shakespeare and Milton.

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