

THE BYRONIC HERO IN CHILDE HAROLD'S  
PILGRIMAGE, THE FOUR TURKISH TALES,  
MANFRED, AND DON JUAN

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by  
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342552<sup>1</sup>,

University of Kansas, and often took me there to work. To my beautiful mother, Mrs. Retta Binns, whom I lost in death while I was writing this thesis, I owe more than I can ever repay for her unflagging interest in this effort. Out of her small pittance, she insisted on buying me a pair of reading glasses because I had been having some sight problems. It is to her memory that I should like to dedicate this thesis, not overlooking, by any means, the assistance I have received from the members of the faculty at Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia, Kansas.

Emporia, Kansas

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of the poetry. For details of the poet's life, Professor Leslie Marchand's biography affords the writer with an interpretation of the interweaving of Byron's personal idiosyncrasies with his poetry. For detailed commentary on different aspects of Byron's philosophy, one finds the Keats-Shelley Journal invaluable and representative of the finest current opinions concerning the work of Byron. In a complete and exhaustive study, Robert Gleckner presents the modern trend of thought in Byron and the Ruins of Paradise, and he is successful in separating Byron from his heroes, but the present author is surprised to find that Gleckner considers Don Juan as an immoral poem, after the fine analysis given to his other works. A more cheerful view of Byronism is presented in Elizabeth Boyd's Byron's Don Juan. One could cite many other sources of inspiration for the study of the Byronic hero, and he could cite the many anti-Byronic works if he were concentrating on the personality of Lord Byron, but it is necessary to select the authors who uphold the thesis of separatism that is proffered.

The present author should also like to thank living persons who have contributed assistance in the preparation of this thesis. Mr. Philip Tompkins, Director of Public Relations at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, allowed me to use the fine library on the campus. My niece, Joan Binns, checked books out for my use from the library at the

## PREFACE

When one begins a study of the Byronic hero, he is instantly dismayed by the breadth of the subject and the numerous sources from which Lord Byron borrowed for the creation of his characters. In order to understand fully these sources, one is tempted to interrupt his study and to read Goethe's Faust or The Sorrows of Young Werther; Rousseau's La Nouvelle d'Heloise; MacPherson's Ossian; Scott's Marmion and The Lay of the Last Minstrel; Moore's Zeluco; and abundant other literature of both Italian and English writers of the eighteenth century. Lacking time, however, one relies on commentaries of the critics and a brief review of the works cited, feeling rather dissatisfied at his twentieth century understanding of the works of the authors of two centuries ago. Contemporary criticism of Byron's poetry in the Edinburgh Review, edited by Francis Jeffrey, and the Quarterly Review, edited by Sir Walter Scott, is, unfortunately, incomplete in the scholarly analysis of the intricate background of the Byronic hero.

Modern works to which the present author is much indebted include Rowland E. Prothero's edition of the letters and journals of Lord Byron and Ernest H. Coleridge's edition

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## Chapter I

### CHILDE HAROLD I AND II

Romantic Childe Harold marks the origin of the famous Byronic hero, an epitome of the characteristics of the Gothic villain, the hero of sensibility, the child of nature, Prometheus, the Wandering Jew, Satan, Cain, and the Noble Outlaw.<sup>1</sup> Despite Byron's contention in the Preface to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage that Childe Harold is a ". . . fictitious character . . . the child of the imagination . . ." <sup>2</sup> the public immediately associated Byron with his gloomy hero, and the anachronism of a medieval knight-in-waiting venturing forth on a modern pilgrimage. In an Addition to the Preface, written after the original publication of the poem in 1812, Byron admits that Childe Harold is "unknightly," but he defends his choice of this unchivalrous hero as follows:

I now leave Childe Harold to live his day, such as he is; it had been more agreeable and certainly more easy, to have drawn an amiable character. It had been easy to

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<sup>1</sup>Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Lord Byron, Preface to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, p. 1. Taken from Paul Elmer More, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron. Subsequent references to Byron's poetry are from this text, unless otherwise designated.

varnish over his faults, to make him do more and express less, but he never was intended as an example, further than to show that early perversion of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures and disappointment in new ones, and that even the beauties of nature . . . are lost on a soul so constituted, or rather misdirected. Had I proceeded with this poem, this character would have deepened as he drew to a close; for the outline which I once meant to fill up for him was, with some exceptions, the sketch of a modern Timon, perhaps a poetical Zeluco.<sup>3</sup>

His public was never convinced, however, that Byron and Childe Harold were not one and the same. In a vehement denial contained in a letter to his friend, R. C. Dallas, Byron writes, ". . . I would not be such a fellow as I have made my hero for all the world."<sup>4</sup> An apt consideration, here, is that Lord Byron had written and published Cantos I and II before the time of his greatest disillusionment with English society, and that he had regretted his hastiness in writing English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, the biting satire composed in anger before he took his first journey to the East.<sup>5</sup> Cantos III and IV, written after his supposedly incestuous relationship with Augusta, his disastrous marriage, and his voluntary exile when his political career was ruined, move him much closer to an affinity with his embittered hero, Childe Harold.

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<sup>3</sup>Lord Byron, Addition to the Preface, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), The Works of Lord Byron; Letters and Journals, III, Letter to R. C. Dallas, October 31, 1811, 66.

<sup>5</sup>William Calvert, Romantic Paradox, p. 106.



In his negative response to Nature and in his Satanic pose as one suffering from an unknown sin, Childe Harold resembles a Gothic villain. However, his character is somewhat softened by the weltschmerz theme of Goethe's Werther, a man of sensibility and feeling.<sup>6</sup> Like Werther, Childe Harold is not cruel, and his agony stems from the loss of love and from an inability to adjust to the realities of life. Instead of committing suicide as Werther did, Childe Harold becomes a lonely wanderer, a cursed soul with a sense of his own fatality. Francis Jeffrey, whose opinion of Childe Harold appears in the Edinburgh Review (1812), sums up the qualities of the melancholy hero:

Childe Harold is a sated epicure--sickened with the very fulness of prosperity--oppressed with ennui, and stung with occasional remorse;--his heart hardened by a long course of sensual indulgence, and his opinion of mankind degraded by his acquaintance with the baser part of them. In this state he wanders over the fairest and most interesting parts of Europe, in the vain hope of stimulating his palsied sensibility by novelty, or at least of occasionally forgetting his mental anguish in the toils and perils of his journey. Like Milton's fiend, however, he sees 'undelightful all delight,' and passed on through the great wilderness of the world with a heart shut to all human sympathy--sullenly despising the stir both of its business and its pleasures--but hating and despising himself most of all, for beholding it with so little emotion . . . .<sup>7</sup>

Jeffrey's analysis of Childe Harold is borne out by Byron's other character in the poem, the narrator.

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<sup>6</sup>Ernest Lovell, Record of a Quest, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup>Francis Jeffrey, "Lord Byron's Childe Harold," Edinburgh Review, XIX (March, 1812), 466-477.

In Canto I, Byron introduces the narrator, and because he had virtually no experience in projecting a third person, his hero, his narrator, and Lord Byron himself sometimes intermingle their responses on the sights which they see on the pilgrimage to Portugal, Spain, Albania, and Turkey. The narrator becomes the passive, reflective storyteller who relates the actions and thoughts of Childe Harold, both the active and passive participant on the journey. Strangely enough, Childe Harold seldom speaks, and, except for the lyrics he sings, his character is mainly formed through the impressions of the narrator. Some intimate relationship exists between the two men, judging from the narrator's knowledge of Childe Harold's background as a member of the English nobility, perhaps the last of his line, who has committed some secret sin for which there is no forgiveness. In the section of Albion, the narrator describes Childe Harold as " . . . Disporting there like any other fly . . . ." <sup>8</sup> In a vain endeavor to find oblivion from the shambles of his life, Childe Harold is observed as one who gathers revelers about him, but, more often than not, he withdraws into his loneliness and " . . . Apart he stalk'd in joyless . . . ." (I.vi.52-53) As a profligate and bacchanalian reveler, Childe Harold has become satiated with pleasure and longs for

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<sup>8</sup>Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, I.iii.29, p. 4. Subsequent references in text by canto, verse, and line.

escape to other scenes where he can savor his gloom in solitude, because " . . . With pleasure drugg'd he almost long'd for woe, /And e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below." (I.vi.52-53) Childe Harold cannot love nor be loved because his melancholy introspection, his secret guilt, and his unrequited love, which have hardened his heart, will not allow him to love.

The narrator, disapproving of the hero's revels, feels some sympathy for the unhappy pilgrim who has left his home, mother, sister, and native land without regret to " . . . traverse Paynim shores . . . ." (I.xi.99) In the lyric, "Good Night," Harold indicates his desolate condition when he sings " . . . And now I'm in the world alone, /Upon the wide, wide sea . . . ." (L.xiii.182-183) In the last stanzas of this song, he welcomes the waves of the ocean, the solitude of the deserts and caves of isolation, where he is to wander, alone and friendless, as a stranger and a pilgrim in the atmosphere of darkness and primitivism, away from a society which has alienated him.<sup>9</sup>

When the ship arrives in Lisbon, Childe Harold feels brief delight with the beauty of the land from a distance. However, the sight of some British warships in the harbor remind him of the evils of the Penninsular War with Napoleon, a war which has brought corruption and change to the once proud

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<sup>9</sup>Leslie Marchand, Byron's Poetry, p. 40.

nation of Portugal. Disenchanted in Lisbon, he has little sympathy for the "dingy denizens" who live in dirt and filth as "poor, paltry slaves." He indicates the contrast of the beauty of nature to the corruption of mankind when he asks: ". . . Why, Nature, waste thy wonders on such men? . . ." (L.xv.234) Paradoxically, however, the Childe Harold himself finds little solace in the beauty of Cintra, marred by the ruins of the palace of Beckford and by the sight of the palace where the British, at the Convention of Cintra, had afforded Napoleon's defeated forces a peaceful exit, an act satirized by Byron.<sup>10</sup> Childe Harold, untouched by the scenes of history, or by the landscape, is willing to go his "solitary way," and the narrator describes his restlessness and boredom in these lines:

Sweet was the scene, yet soon he thought to flee,  
 More restless than the swallow in the skies;  
 Though here awhile he learn'd to moralize  
 For meditation fix'd at times on him;  
 And conscious Reason whisper'd to despise  
 His early youth misspent in maddest whim;  
 But as he gaz'd on truth his aching eyes grew dim.  
 (I.xxvii.397-403)

The imperfection of mankind, the hardest reality for the Romantics to face, has discouraged Childe Harold, and he cannot stand to meditate upon Nature or the ruins of history as he relates the downfall of society to his own fall from

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<sup>10</sup>George Roppen and Richard Sommers, Strangers and Pilgrims, p. 209.

grace.<sup>11</sup> Much to the moralizing narrator's disgust, Childe Harold quits the scene of peace, ". . . though soothing to the soul, . . ." (I.xxvii.325), to fly onward to some unknown destination in search of some changing scene which may calm his troubled breast. His perpetual flight from his egocentric self prevents him from feeling any sympathy with the plight of others, past or present, and his journey becomes both an inward and outward one as he searches for some meaning of his own existence.<sup>12</sup>

After a brief visit to Mafra and a journey on horseback across the Sierra Morena Mountains, the pilgrims cross the Caia River to enter Spain. Just as Childe Harold's reactions to Cintra reveal his restless character, the narrator's response to Spain and its romantic past now disclose varying moods which identify his own personality. For example, instead of scorn for the people of Spain, the narrator is sympathetic with the proud peasants and rustic shepherds of the hilly country, but he is perturbed because they seem to live in ignorance to the threat of invasion by Napoleon. The narrator cries out to the Spaniards to awaken from the glory and tradition of the past to defend their country from the oncoming enemy. The scenes of the

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<sup>11</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge (ed.), The Works of Lord Byron, Poetry, II, 49; see Note I.

<sup>12</sup>George Roppen and Richard Sommers, Strangers and Pilgrims, p. 19.

battlefields at Talavera and Albuera awaken feelings of pride because the English won bloody victories there. The narrator, like Childe Harold in this respect, reveals his hatred of tyranny and his sense of the futility of war. In Seville, the narrator admires the beautiful Spanish women, superior in his sight to English women. Typical of Byron's style, at this moment of the narrator's delight with the Andalusian maids, Byron breaks in with an anachronistic address to Mt. Parnassus, the home of Apollo. Apologizing for his interruption of theme, the poet returns to the narrator and Childe Harold in Cadiz, where they watch the bullfights. The narrator describes the sport in realistic detail, but he is sickened to think that a nation, once proud and powerful, had condescended to the empty honor of bullfighting, which ends in the shedding of blood.

Then, Childe Harold, whose " . . . wayward bosom was unmoved, /For not yet had he drunk of Lethe's stream . . ." (I.lxxxii.811-812), draws apart in sinful revels because he realizes that he cannot overcome his fate or find the perfection he seeks. The song, "To Inez," reveals his inconsolable condition when he sings, " . . . Smile on, nor venture to unmask /Man's heart and view the Hell that 's there." (I.lxxiv.871-872) He is doomed to wander earth's

face without finding love or self-knowledge. The narrator, too, begins to realize that imperfection exists in the world, and he is saddened by the fall of Spain to Napoleon. As he moralizes about the ravages of war and the loss of freedom, he feels more charitable towards the disillusioned Childe Harold. Byron realizes the growing bitterness and despondency of the narrator, whose changing views about war and tyranny have merited him the approval of the author as a fit traveling companion for Childe Harold. At the end of Canto I, Byron's remarks are pertinent to this purpose:

Here is one fytte of Harold's pilgrimage;  
 Ye who of him may further seek to know,  
 Shall find some tidings in a future page  
 If he that rhymeth now may scribble moe.  
 Is this too much? stern Critic, say not so:  
 Patience! and ye shall hear what he beheld  
 In other lands, where he was doom'd to go:  
 Lands that contain the monuments of Eld,  
 Ere Greece and Grecian arts by barbarous hands were quell'd.  
(I.xciii.945-953)

This attention which Byron gives to his narrator as a character indicates a growing awareness that he has failed to develop Childe Harold's personality as fully as he had intended. Childe Harold represents the isolated Romantic rebel, who seeks escape from himself and humanity, whereas the narrator typifies the young, realistic, patriotic Englishman who tours the Continent as a part of his education. This separation of narrator and hero continues in Canto II, in the Turkish Tales, and has a different treatment in Canto III of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Eventually, this

hero-narrator technique leads to the successful manipulation of both men in Don Juan.

In Canto II, Childe Harold gloomily wanders through Athens, unimpressed by the sights he sees, but Byron digresses in a lamentation on the past glories of Greece and her heroes. In a kind of dramatic monologue, he invokes Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, and an Oriental Son of the morning to assist him in his search for self-knowledge, the object of his pilgrimage. The skull which he finds that was once " . . . The dome of Thought, the palace of the Soul . . ." (II.vi.49), has moulded into nothingness, but it serves to remind him of the ancient builders of Greece, a country now fallen and forgotten. In addition, the ruins of the Acropolis remind Byron of his own fallen state and of the emptiness of his own soul away from the reality of his own world. He ponders the values of life, realizing its brevity and also discovering that, from the decay of an ancient civilization, mankind has built other societies to be destroyed by tyrants and by war. After fifteen stanzas of such digression, the poet suddenly remembers his hero and says:

But where is Harold? shall I then forget  
 To urge the gloomy wanderer o'er the wave?  
 Little reck'd he of all that men regret;  
 No loved-one now in feign'd lament could rave;  
 No friend the parting hand extended gave,  
 But the cold stranger pass'd to other climes;  
 Hard is his heart when charms may not enslave;  
 But Harold felt not as in other time,  
 And left without a sigh the land of war and crimes.  
 (II.xvi.136-144)



The "cold stranger" and "the gloomy wanderer" again bring the personalities of the narrator and Childe Harold into focus--the narrator considers Harold much too frivolous to appreciate the historical implications of decadent Greece, once the cradle of thought which has influenced the world. Restless and bored, Harold is ready to be "urged over the wave."

Embarked on a British frigate from Cadiz to Albania, Childe Harold again withdraws into his own melancholy thoughts, but the narrator observes the "little warlike world within" the ship, with its guns, its rigid British discipline, and its readiness for war. In the night journey on the ocean, the use of the plural pronoun, "we," indicates that the poet, Byron, is speaking, as he meditates sorrowfully about the past as the darkness deepens around the ship, and the moonlight glances over the waves. The loss of love, the unfaithfulness of friends, and a nostalgia for the happier days of boyhood overwhelm him momentarily, and his melancholy is expressed in his soliloquy on the solacing qualities of the wilder aspects of Nature--on the ocean, on rocks, in deep forests, on mountain tops, where man has never held dominion. In this satisfying companionship with Nature, Byron argues, he does not feel alone, but in the cities in ". . . the crowd, the hum the shock of men,/ . . . To roam along, the world's tired denizen . . ." (II,xxvi.226-229), is to experience real solitude. Perhaps with the wanderings

of Odysseus in mind, for the pilgrims are soon to pass Ithaca's cape, Byron is incorporating the myth of the journey into Harold's travels.<sup>13</sup> The actual sight of land breaks off his musings, and the narrative returns to the narrator.

Childe Harold, who is impervious to the sights of Ithaca, " . . . Where sad Penelope o'erlooked the wave . . ." (II.xxix.343), or past Leucadia's cape, the scene of Sappho's suicidal leap, is chided by the narrator for feeling "no common glow." Obsessed with self, Childe Harold misses the importance of these historical sites because he is recovering from an affair with a lady named Florence. The narrator, who observes the degrading influences of passion on the hero, mocks the frailty of human love. Childe Harold's "seeming marble heart" prevents his capability to love or to emerge from his self introspection. When the ship arrives in Albania, Childe Harold's loneliness, his disregard of religion, and his lack of fear are summed up by the narrator in these lines:

Now Harold felt himself at length alone,  
 And to Christian tongues a long adieu;  
 Now he adventured on a shore unknown,  
 Which all admire but many dread to view:  
 His breast was arm'd 'gainst fate, his wants were few;  
 Peril he sought not, but ne'er shrank to meet:  
 The scene was savage, but the scene was new!  
 This made the ceaseless toil of travel sweet,  
 Beat back keen winter's blast, and welcomed summer's heat.  
 (II.xliii.379-387)

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Gleckner, Byron and the Ruins of Paradise, p. 19.

In the "ceaseless toil of travel" and in the newness of the scene, Childe Harold hopes for self-oblivion, or perhaps to find himself in changing atmospheres. In the next stanza, his scoffing at the red cross or any symbol of religion was equally as bitter as his reaction to Actium, ". . . where once was lost /A world for woman, lovely, harmless thing! . . ." (II.xlvii.418-519) From Prevesa, Childe Harold proceeds on horseback to meet Ali Pacha, the lawless ruler of Albania. Both repelled and attracted by the gentle countenance of Ali Pacha, who has enlarged his domains by bloody rule, Childe Harold soon tires of the luxurious surroundings of the Moslem ruler. With a band of trusty guards, he penetrates the wilder regions of Albania, where he is received as a welcome guest among the savage Suliotes. Surprisingly, Childe Harold discovers that he can still feel joy, but, as always, his joy is transient, and his gloom settles over him consistently. After a feast around the night fires, the Albanians dance, fight, and sing in revelry. Childe Harold's withdrawal from the scene is described:

Childe Harold at a little distance stood,  
 And viewed, but not displeased, the revelrie,  
 Nor hated harmless mirth, however rude:  
 In sooth, it was a vulgar sight to see  
 Their barbarous, yet their not indecent glee, . . .  
 (II.lxii.640-646)

The shrill scream of the savage war song, "Tambourgi," causes Childe Harold to withdraw into his own protective shell against reflections of the human situation, and he exits from

the scene. Byron, always omniscient in the poem, concludes the canto with his reflections of the national humiliation of Greece, whose shrines are "haunted, holy ground," regardless of the present state of this land he loves, and the land which has made him a poet.<sup>14</sup> Returning to England with his completely disillusioned pilgrim, Childe Harold, Byron contemplates the transience of glory and fame and realizes death as his reward for his writing. After he loses his mother and friends in death, the poet emerges fully as melancholy as Childe Harold, who has now become the "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind." (III.iii.20)

Clearly, the outstanding characteristics of Childe Harold are his remorse for unknown sins, his ceaseless search for perfection in a world of reality, his melancholy introspection which prevents him from finding self-knowledge, his defiance of social and moral law, and his irreligion because he rejects the immortality of the soul. Although he is marked with the curse of Cain and the wandering of the fabled Hebrew, he has the admirable qualities of pride, courage, and endurance, and he hates the tyranny of kings and the enslavement of peoples. However, he makes no real contribution to society; and when he is on the verge of self-discovery, he recedes into loneliness and dissipation and

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<sup>14</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, II, 49.

creates his own hell on earth. The narrator, who almost usurps Childe Harold's function as the observer intended to thread together the experiences of the journey, has made the poem more realistic by his more normal and believable responses to the journey, and his alternate condemnation and approval of the hero serve to emphasize the true nature of Childe Harold.

## Chapter II

### CHILDE HAROLD III

In Canto III of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, the hero reappears, but he must still coexist with his fellow traveler, the narrator. Lord Byron, despite his near solution to ego projections in The Corsair, reverts to the dual hero-narrator device that he projects in Cantos I and II. Although the opening lines, spoken in his own voice, dedicate his thoughts to his daughter Ada (whom he was never to see again), Byron welcomes the roll of the stormy ocean waves which carries him away from England. His storm metaphor, here, emphasizes the stormy condition within his own soul, and the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage seem almost prophetic in portraying his own human condition, so similar to that of the earlier Childe Harold. Now the poet feels driven into isolation as he says: ". . . Still must I on; for I am as a weed, /Flung from the rock on Ocean's foam to sail /Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail." (III.ii.17-18) All ties with the past are broken, and the world, where he will almost ceaselessly wander, will be his home, or, in Lord Byron's case, his fate.

Added to his bitterness and melancholy suffering during the intervening four years between the first two cantos and Canto III of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is true guilt and remorse, the result of the incest with his half-sister, Augusta. In the third verse, the poet seizes upon the theme of Childe Harold, "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," the creation of his youth. Doubting whether he can write as he has written before, Byron desires to continue his "dreary strain," to wean him from his grief, ". . . so it fling /Forgetfulness around me . . . it shall seem /To men, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme." (III.iv.31-36) Without affectation, Byron can say that he has ". . . grown aged in this world of woe . . . ," (III.vi.47) Although Byron realizes the change in his own personality as a result of the phantasy and flame of his own dark thoughts, he seeks release from his own suffering when he says: "Something too much of this; but now 'tis past, /And the spell closes with its silent seal . . . ." (III.viii.64-65) E. H. Coleridge interprets these lines to mean that ". . . on the tale or spell of his own tragedy is set the seal of silence; but of Harold, the idealized Byron, he once more takes up the parable."<sup>15</sup>

Confusion marks the reappearance of Childe Harold, however, when Byron endows him with identical qualities of

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<sup>15</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge, Poetic Works, II, 220.

suffering drawn from his own life--e.g., his exile, his hopeless love, and his separation from society as a result of marriage. Coleridge, in the Introduction to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, has remarked that " . . . Byron was not Harold, but Harold was an ideal Byron, the creature and avenger of his pride, which haunted and pursued its presumptuous creator to the bitter end . . . ." <sup>16</sup> The need, then, for another commentator suggests the presence of a narrator other than Byron, perhaps the narrator of the first two cantos. Rutherford proposes that Childe Harold has usurped this role and that there is no difference between the "I" of the narrator and the new Childe Harold in Canto III. <sup>17</sup> Marchand states, " . . . Henceforth Harold was Byron, and his acknowledged alter ego . . . ." <sup>18</sup> Robert Gleckner and Kenneth Bruffee insist on the continuation of three characters, although their interpretations of the three voices differ. Gleckner notes the device of Byron, the narrator of the first two cantos, and Childe Harold, with the eventual absorption of the narrator by Byron. <sup>19</sup> Bruffee intimates that the three distinct voices are those of a reflective narrator, the

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<sup>16</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge, Introduction to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Poetic Works, II, xiv.

<sup>17</sup>Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Leslie Marchand, Byron's Poetry, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Gleckner, Byron and the Ruins of Paradise, p. 240.



Childe, and a merging of the two personalities into an untypical Romantic "synthetic" hero, who moves through the latter section of the poem until the reflective narrator emerges again in the closing apostrophe to Ada.<sup>20</sup>

Out of this welter of opinion, no definitive conclusion emerges as a basis for a total critical agreement about the narrator of the poem, but the greatest weight of evidence converges on the autobiographical nature of Canto III, and the almost overwhelming conviction that Byron was Harold, or Harold was Byron.

Despite Lord Byron's continued protests against the identification of his hero with himself, none of the critics, except Gleckner and Bruffee, attempts to prove the validity of Byron's statements. Since these two men have complementary views about the evolution of a kind of synthetic hero in the poem, they offer solutions to the endless conjectures about Byron's intentions might have been clarified. Although Gleckner insists on the presence of the narrator of the earlier cantos, and Bruffee depicts the speaker as a "reflective narrator," newly created, both men agree that the "I" in the poem is not necessarily Byron and that a narrator creates both Childe Harold and himself. The synthetic hero, a fusion of the narrator with his character, becomes the

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<sup>20</sup>Kenneth Bruffee, "The Synthetic Hero and the Narrative Structure of Childe Harold III," Studies in English Literature, VI, 669-678.

real hero of the poem, although the method of synthesis differs with the two scholars.

In his study, Gleckner sustains the image of Canto III as a continuation of Cantos I and II, and the gradual absorption of the earlier narrator by Byron's poet (which he sees as another created persona) after the description of the ball on the eve of Napoleon's invasion of Brussels, and the fusion of Childe Harold with his poet-persona in the Rhine section of the poem.<sup>21</sup> Bruffee, on the other hand, tends to regard Canto III as a separate poem from the first two cantos, and Bruffee's point of synthesis for the reflective narrator and Childe Harold is not found in the Rhine section, but their unison is in the lightning and thunder of a storm in the Alps.<sup>22</sup> To draw a line between the "reflective narrator" of Bruffee and Gleckner's poet-persona would be to draw a fine line, indeed, but for the sake of simplicity, Bruffee's view is the one with which the present author will work.

This conflict of opinion about Harold's identity is caused by the description of Childe Harold during his four-year sojourn in his native land between his final appearance in Canto II and his reappearance in Canto III. In stanzas

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<sup>21</sup>Robert Gleckner, Byron and the Ruins of Paradise, pp. 237-246.

<sup>22</sup>Kenneth Bruffee, op. cit., p. 672.

eight through fifteen, the narrator recapitulates the woes of Childe Harold during these intervening years, and in this summary, transfers the actual sufferings of Lord Byron to Childe Harold. The hero has altered in age and aspect with the years, and his soul has been embittered by a failure in marriage and by his inability to throw off the chains which fetter him to his past. Seeking escape in a crowd of men of his own kind, and with a fancied security of "guarded coldness," Childe Harold has stood alone, ever searching for reality that he can only find in Nature. With the vain hope that his heart can never grow old, Harold has been whirled on into the vortex of ". . . the giddy circle, chasing Time . . ." (III.xi.99), but neither this pleasure nor his "nobler aim," his writing, has offered the solace he seeks, but some recompense in desolation and the isolation of genius may offer a new life to him. The narrator, however, does not judge Childe Harold, but simply relates the attempt of Childe Harold's vindication of his failure:

But soon he knew himself the most unfit  
 Of men to herd with Man, with whom he held  
 Little in common;--untaught to submit  
 His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd  
 In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,  
 He would not yield dominion of his mind  
 To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;  
 Proud though in desolation; which could find  
 A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.  
(III.xii.100-108)

Mankind, rejected as dull and stupid, cannot understand true genius, a theme Byron will emphasize later at Waterloo,

Clarens, Lausanne, and Ferney, but his only escape from humanity is in Nature--the ocean, the desert, the caverns, and the mountains. From his retreats, Childe Harold has, like the ancient Chaldeans, peopled the stars " . . . with beings bright /As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars, /And human frailties, were forgotten quite . . . ." (III,xiv.119-121) Despite his frequent escapes to Nature, and even beyond Nature in the metaphysics of the astronomy and magic of the ancient Chaldean, Childe Harold cannot sustain himself because " . . . clay will sink /Its spark immortal . . . . (III.xiv.122-123) Childe Harold grows weary of mankind's dwellings and seeks escape from his restlessness in a journey which will introduce him to clay images of Napoleon, Marceau, Rosseau, Voltaire, and Gibbon, all Titan-like heroes who ignominiously fell from fame to clay. Just before Childe Harold's appearance at Waterloo, the narrator almost grudgingly introduces him into the present pilgrimage:

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,  
 With nought 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 his Despair a smilingness assume,  
 Which, though 'T were wild,--as on the plundered wreck  
 When mariners would madly meet their doom  
 With draughts imtemperate on the sinking deck,--  
 Did yet inspire a cheer which he forbore to check.  
(III.xvi.136-144)

Without hope or faith, then, but with less gloom, Childe Harold wanders forth on his journey, determined to enjoy his despair, just as sailors on a sinking ship drink

"draughts intemperate" before dying. (This shipwreck metaphor points towards the use of a more macabre image in Don Juan). In Canto IV, Byron refutes the philosophy of the line "The very knowledge that he lived in vain," as a personal tenet, a point favorable to his concept of the separation of his hero from himself. Another difference between the poet and his hero is discovered in Byron's quest to find "a being more intense" through his creations of the mind, but Childe Harold has no hope "this side the tomb." The lonely traveler theme survives, too, as Childe Harold proceeds alone on his present journey to Waterloo, except for his subjective counterpart, the narrator.

After Childe Harold has, thus, been alienated from "the herd of common men," Byron, as his creator, seems determined to plunge his hero into another vortex of time-- a mingling of the present and the past in the life and death of heroic characters, who, like Childe Harold, have "peopled the earth" with visions. These heroes have disintegrated to clay, the common denominator of all humanity, whether they fall on the battlefields as defending heroes or aspire to the mountain tops and fall ignominiously as tyrants from the heights of fame and glory. This interpretation, enlarged upon somewhat from Bruffee's analysis of Childe Harold's deepening character in heroic situations, in no way negates his views concerning a new type of hero, evolving by a

merging of the themes of heroic virtues in Byron's works.

Bruffee's solution and a key to the poem's divisions are, as follows:

In the course of the poem, the narrator winnows the possibilities and selects a very few carefully defined and limited characteristics as proper and essential to the new hero. The three divisions of the central portion of the poem bear this fact out. The first, the Napoleon section, considers frustration and defeat of heroic character in public and private life. The second, the Rhine section, considers inadequate fulfillment of heroic character in public action and in love. Finally, the Alps section takes up the matter most crucial in solving the poem's problem the possibility of intellecaual and spiritual culmination of heroic character through an experience of the sublime . . . ."23

Childe Harold has been freed from the gloomy Gothic villainy and the Satanic pose of the first two cantos and from the stance of the Noble Outlaws of the Turkish Tales. His indifference to Nature and to history has been replaced by his identification of himself with them and with all suffering humanity, whether a Manfred, a Cain, or a Prometheus. His change of heart begins at Waterloo, in the Napoleon section of the poem.

Just as Harold emerges upon the battlefield at Waterloo, the narrator unceremoniously cries, "Stop,--for thy tread is on an Empire's dust /An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!" (III.xvii.145-146) Childe Harold, thus peremptorily dismissed, remains passive while the narrator describes the ball at Brussels on the eve of Napoleon's

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 674.

invasion. The ensuing fright caused by the cannon's roar, the death of the Brunswick chieftain, the tearful parting of young lovers, and the mobilization of troops who meet the foe bravely but vainly, enforce the narrator's judgment of Napoleon's downfall as "fit retribution" to a tyrant. Because Napoleon has shattered man's dreams of liberty, he has broken the heart of mankind, and the shattered mirror symbolizes the death of both the past hope and the bright future of liberty. In his quest for fame, Napoleon has set himself up as a God, scorning the thoughts of men who have made his conquest possible; and his antithetical nature, his inability to rule himself, has caused his downfall. His aspects of greatness in public life are overshadowed by his pettiness in private life, and the narrator parallels Childe Harold's condition to that of Napoleon, who tried to stand alone in humanity:

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,  
 And there hath been thy bane; there is a fire  
 And motion of the soul which will not dwell  
 In its own narrow being, but aspire  
 Beyond the fitting medium of desire;  
 And, but once, kindled, quenchless evermore,  
 Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire  
 Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,  
 Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

(III.xlii.370-378)

Childe Harold's "fever at the core," and his restless longing for escape are his fatality, and the hell in his own heart bears him onward in his flight, ". . . A storm whereon they ride to sink at last . . ." (III.xliv.389) He can ascend

to the mountain top, but he must be prepared for the hatred of men below if he succeeds. Holding Childe Harold in abeyance in the Napoleon scene is part of the plan of the elegiac romance, which Bruffee proposes as a model of Canto III.<sup>24</sup> Bruffee reviews the structure of this type of romance wherein a narrator shares a similar experience with his hero, and, when this event occurs, the narrator merges with his created alter-ego. Since Childe Harold dislikes anything military, the merger does not take place in the Napoleon section, which remains a framework for the subjective personality of the narrator.

In the Rhine section, however, Childe Harold suddenly becomes the active participant in his delight in the beauty and fruitfulness of the Rhine Valley, his interest in the history of the castles of the robber barons, and his apostrophe to the Rhine River in regret for the battle fought there. The narrator, delighted with this response, begins to move into Harold's sensibility. When Childe Harold takes a leap into the past to remember his love, the narrator remarks with definite approval:

And he had learn'd to love (I know not why,  
For this in such as him seems strange of mood)  
The helpless looks of blooming infancy,  
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,  
To change like this, a mind so far imbued

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<sup>24</sup>Kenneth Bruffee, "Elegiac Romance," College English, XXXIV (January, 1971), 465-476.



With scorn of man, it little boots to know;  
 But thus it was; and though in solitude  
 Samll power the nipp'd affections have to grow,  
 In him this glow'd when all beside had ceased to glow.  
 (III.liv.478-486)

Childe Harold has now betrayed his humanity, and the narrator has almost succumbed to the merging of personalities. After Childe Harold pours out his love in the lyric, "The Castled Drags of Drachenfels," and praises the beauty of the Rhine Valley in verse, the narrator lingers with him as he bids adieu to the scene before him, and in the sublimity of the storm in the Alps, the merger of the two is complete.

In the Alps section, Childe Harold, whose vision has been enlarged by this merging, enjoys the beauty of Lake Lemman, but the stillness reminds him that ". . . There is too much of man here, to look through /With a fit mind the might which I behold . . . ." (III.lxvii.648-649) His loneliness is renewed when he thinks of man, and his flight must be renewed, like that of the wanderer, "Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be . . . ." (III.lxx.670) He must be away from corrupt mankind so that, in the solitude of Nature, he may find total absorption. At Clarens, Childe Harold revives memories of Rousseau, the apostle of love, who had written La Nouvelle d'Heloise in this setting. Childe Harold praises Rousseau for his philosophy of the love of ideal beauty. However, his downfall has been in his enflamed thoughts about liberty, equality, and fraternity, thoughts

that have resulted in the French Revolution, and the Childe dismisses him as "phrensied by disease or woe," which has roused too much wrath, and he has made himself a "fearful monument" because the Revolution has failed to establish a new order, so hoped for by the Romanticists.

At Lausanne and Ferney, where two other Titan-like heroes have established retreats from the world, Childe Harold thinks briefly about Voltaire and Gibbon, literary giants who have also ascended to the mountain tops but who have been dashed down by the fickleness or fieriness of their natures. So in Titan-like heroes, Childe Harold has found no consolation, for in their downfall, he compares them to himself, and his quest for self-renewal has failed. With this sense of desolation in his heart, Childe Harold can no longer tolerate the world that has not afforded any hope, and he can no longer sustain the narrator, who is set free from the hero of the journey. As the narrator's voice, too, fades away, Byron stands alone on the mountain top looking into Italy. He has found some measure of peace in creating Childe Harold because he has learned to control his grief by steeling his mind against the emotions of the heart. It is now Childe Harold who is the lost soul because he cannot accept the reality of the world as it is.

Despite his reversion to the gloom and melancholy at the end of this canto, Childe Harold's character has deepened.

No longer a profligate and a reveler as he was before, he is no longer a portrait of a Gothic Villain or a Noble Outlaw. Momentarily, he has been able to lose his identity in the beauty of Nature, and he has more interest in history and in heroes, but as he investigates the rise and fall of Titan-like men, he compares his own fall to theirs. He is not able to rise above his human condition; consequently, he emerges as a fallen, broken man. All that is learned about Childe Harold in Canto IV is that he has lived out his life near the ocean, where he has found some peace in living.

## Chapter III

### THE FOUR TURKISH TALES

Encouraged by the success of the first two cantos of Childe Harold, Byron continues with his fictitious heroes in The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, and Lara. The writing of these verse tales, set in the authentic locales of Greece, Albania, and Turkey and based partly on events from Byron's travels, serves him as an escape from his entangled emotions and numerous affairs after his return to England. Beginning his narrative tales featuring near-schizophrenic outlaws with The Giaour (1813), Byron explains that his poetry is " . . . the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake . . . ." <sup>25</sup> This flood overflows into the fiery deeds of the Giaour, Selim, Conrad, and Lara, who are men of action involved in open warfare against a society that has exiled them, and their bloody deeds of conquest, murder, and pillage of Turkish despots mark them, partially, as extreme Gothic villains with a strong similarity to Moore's Zeluco, Radcliffe's Schedoni, and Scott's Marmion. <sup>26</sup> Like Childe Harold, the outlaws have an

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<sup>25</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, III, Letter to Annabella, November, 1813, 405.

<sup>26</sup>William Calvert, Byron: Romantic Paradox, p. 113.

inner conflict between good and evil, and they retain the Satanic pose of sinning, isolation, and deep remorse.

Northrop Frye sums up the basic similarities of the early heroes as a mixture of Gothic and legendary figures:

Now if we look into Byron's tales and Childe Harold we usually find as the central character an inscrutable figure with hollow cheeks and blazing eyes, wrapped in a cloud of gloom, full of mysterious and undefined remorse, an outcast from society, a wanderer of the race of Cain. At times he suggests something demonic rather than human, a Miltonic Satan or fallen angel . . . he is always haughty and somber of demeanor; his glance is difficult to meet; he will not brook questioning, although he himself questions all social standards . . . .<sup>27</sup>

Despite their Satanic qualities, however, these pirates retain Childe Harold's sensibility of feeling and emotion, but they are not, like their predecessor, passive sufferers.

Satanism and Prometheanism are similar qualities in Byron's thinking (until he meets Shelley),<sup>28</sup> and even his outlaws can aspire to Promethean greatness, an open defiance of tyranny through an endurance of suffering. Bernard Blackstone explores this possibility as he contrasts Childe Harold and the outlaws:

Childe Harold is a hero on the move, the superficially sophisticated Grand Tourist stripped of his pretenses and pretensions by contact with reality, with ancient cultures--and, in the last two cantos, with personal suffering. The Giaour, the Corsair . . . were unsophisticated adventurers raised to heroic status by courage, by passion, and by suffering again.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 176.

<sup>28</sup>John Buxton, Byron and Shelley, The History of a Friendship, p. 262.

<sup>29</sup>Bernard Blackstone, Byron III, Social Satire, Drama, and Epic, 12.

From these observations in the narrative tales regarding the character of the Byronic hero, several conclusions may be drawn. First, he has the courage to live his alienated life on the outer fringes of society, where, by his own choice, he becomes a law unto himself. Secondly, his tragic flaw is his susceptibility to extreme passion, either in his love for a woman or in his motive for revenge on individuals or on society. Thirdly, his extraordinary passions, whether stemming from illicit, forbidden love or from a desire for revenge, lead to great suffering and death for both the heroines and the heroes. Strangely enough, and most important to the development of this character, it is by his own death or by a death situation that a Byronic hero learns something about himself, and his greatest heroic status becomes evident when he dies unabsolved for his sins. His fall completed, this hero, like Adam, has lost his earthly Paradise, and like Cain, will suffer eternally for his sins.

The Giaour, which Byron refers to as "a snake of a poem, which has been lengthening its rattles each month,"<sup>30</sup> has 407 lines in the first edition, but by its seventh edition, it has 1334 lines.<sup>31</sup> Obviously, Byron keeps adding to the poem, and some loss of coherency is the result of his

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<sup>30</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, II, Letter to Murray, August, 1813, 252.

<sup>31</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge (ed.), Poetic Works, III, "Biographical Note on The Giaour," 78.

efforts. Another cause for confusion in the tale is the presence of four narrators--the ballad singer, the Turkish fisherman, the Monk, and the Giaour (who confesses much about his past in the final scene). The ballad singer sets the scene in Greece and occasionally enters the poem to comment on the action or the state of mind of the hero. The Turkish fisherman, who is both an observer and participant in the action, does not have all the facts, but he reports what he sees and knows in a garbled fashion. In a series of alternate flashbacks and progression in the story, the fisherman reports the appearance of the hated infidel (the Giaour) into a Moslem land; the desolation of Hassan's hall after his death; back to the drowning of Leila in a sack from his own barge (he does not know it is Leila); the murder of Hassan by the infidel; and the return of Hassan's bloody head to his mother. Six years later, the fisherman visits a monastery, where he sees the Giaour, and he relates to the Monk what he knows. In turn, the Monk confides that he fears the brooding, melancholy, irreverent inmate who has hallucinations and talks with ghosts. The Giaour finishes the tale with his confession of love for Leila, and he feels remorse only for her death, not for the murder of Hassan.

The Giaour adds to the accumulating characteristics of the Byronic hero as set forth in the preceding discussion of Childe Harold the qualities of passionate love for one woman,

a greater capacity for suffering and guilt, dauntless courage in battle, a revenge motive which makes him murder his enemy, and utter defiance of religious and civil law. In the Giaour's confession, he describes the nature of his love in four important ways. He compares his love to a lava flood which boils over like a volcano; he only knows to obtain possession of his loved one or die; he admits that his love is imperfect, because love is intended as a light from heaven, and he has loved unlawfully; and he confesses that he is capable of the same act of murder for infidelity that Hassan has committed.<sup>32</sup> The Giaour's fiery guilt and remorse are symbolized in the scorpion image that occurs in the middle of the poem. For example, the hero's guilt may take the same path of destruction that a scorpion exhibits when surrounded by foes or fire and thrusts its poisonous tail into its brain and dies; and the ballad singer compares the mind of the Giaour, rent by remorse, as "Unfit for earth, un-doom'd for heaven, /Darkness above, despair beneath, /Around it flame, within it death!" (TG.436-438) Childe Harold, who feels guilt and remorse, does not have the destructive urge that the Giaour has; moreover, the earlier hero is incapable of such constant emotion or of murder. The Giaour also leads an outlaw band into battle, and Childe Harold is much too passive to take such action. Although Childe Harold breaks

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<sup>32</sup>Lord Byron, The Giaour, 1100-1210, pp. 321-323. Subsequent references referred to by TG and line.



moral laws, it is inconceivable that he is capable of ignoring the customs of the countries which he enters.

The Bride of Abydos, a more straightforward narrative, is written, as Byron says, "All convulsions end with me in rhyme, and to solace my midnights, I have scribbled another Turkish story . . . to wring my thoughts from reality, and take refuge in imaginings, however horrible . . . ." <sup>33</sup> At first, the tale is intended to hinge on a theme of incest, as Zuleika and Selim are supposedly brother and sister. (Later, Byron changes his mind and makes them cousins, probably because this theme came too close to his relationship with Augusta). The opposing tyrant in the tale is the Giaffir, who has promised Zuleika's hand in marriage to an old man, the Bey of Carasman. Selim knows the Giaffir's secret through Haroun, the eunuch who saves Selim from death as a baby when Giaffir poisons Selim's father. Selim seeks revenge, but he loves Zuleika and takes no action until he finds that his love is returned. Realizing that he must become a man of action, Selim promises her that he will save her from her fate of marriage to the Bey if she will meet him at midnight in the grotto. Stealing from her rooms as Selim has instructed, Zuleika is rudely shaken when she enters the cave filled with bloody arms and the spoils of war.

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<sup>33</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, II, Letter to Thomas Moore, November, 1813, 321.

Selim, no longer the effeminate slave of the Giaffir, appears quite frightening in his garb of a pirate:

His robe of price was thrown aside,  
 His brow no high-crown'd turban bore,  
 But in its stead a shawl of red,  
 Wreathed lightly round, his temples wore.  
 That dagger, on whose hilt the gem  
 Were worthy of a diadem,  
 No longer glitter'd at his waist,  
 Where pistols unadorn'd were braced,  
 And from his belt a sabre swung,  
 And from his shoulders loosely hung  
 The cloak of white; the thin capote  
 That decks the wandering Candiote;  
 Beneath, his golden plated vest  
 Clung like a cuirass to his breast;  
 The greaves below his knees that wound  
 With silvery scales were sheathed and bound.<sup>34</sup>

Zuleika, fearful of Selim, thinks he wants to kill her and begs to be his slave. Tenderly, he assures her of his love and informs her of his true parentage, and he tells her that they are free to marry. Zuleika, like Niobe, turns to stone, and, before she can reply, the Giaffir appears and slays Selim in battle. Zuleika dies of heartbreak, and Giaffir is left alone with his tyranny.

Selim, according to Thorslev, is the first fully developed Noble Outlaw as shown through his apology for piracy to Zuleika, his sense of authority, and his position as one robbed of his inheritance by the murder of his father.<sup>35</sup> Only through tyranny can Selim win freedom, and he becomes a

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<sup>34</sup>Lord Byron, The Bride of Abydos, Canto II, ix.131-146; p. 330.

<sup>35</sup>Peter L. Thorselv, Jr., The Byronic Hero, p. 155.

tyrant like the Giaffir, but with much more reason. Although he is committed to action, he dies before his true character can be revealed. As a hero sensibility, he is like Childe Harold; but when he becomes a Noble Outlaw, he changes into a man of action.

It is in The Corsair (1814) that the character of the Byronic hero as a Noble Outlaw deepens. Conrad is the fierce chief of an outlaw band, and his word is obeyed without question. Based on the real life pirates, Jean LaFitte,<sup>36</sup> and Lambro Katzones (the Greek pirate Byron hears about in his travels),<sup>37</sup> Conrad takes on an identity that is more specific than that of the Giaour or Selim. Like Childe Harold, he withdraws into his own brooding thoughts and remains aloof from his men as a "man of loneliness and mystery." He controls his men and himself by the power of his mind, and no one dares question his private thoughts. His psychological portrait is finely drawn from his own inner dark thoughts of hatred for mankind, and this hatred is transferred to the outer aspects of his countenance. His fiery glance, lowered brow, and Satanic smile inspire awe in his men, yet they trust him implicitly. Even his love for Medora, the only human being he loves, cannot sway him from his life of

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<sup>36</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge (ed.), Poetic Works, III; see Note I, The Corsair, pp. 296-297.

<sup>37</sup>William Borst, Lord Byron's First Pilgrimage, p. 78.

hatred and warfare. Conrad has not been born to this life, and his exile drives him forth to war with men, as the narrator explains:

Warped by the world in Disappointment's school,  
 In words too wise--in conduct there a fool;  
 Too firm to yield, and far too proud to stoop,  
 Doomed by his very virtues for a dupe,  
 He cursed those virtues as the cause of ill,  
 And not the traitors who betray'd him still . . . ;  
 Fear'd, shunn'd, belied, ere youth has lost her force,  
 He hated man too much to feel remorse.<sup>38</sup>

His only soft spot is Medora, but he can turn his back on her to enter another battle without a backward glance, and he refuses to let her love unman him. Ironically, it is his love for her that does unman him in the fight against Seyd Pacha. The memory of Medora's sweetness causes him to free the women of Seyd's harem, an act that betrays his humanity. One of the women, Gulnare, frees Conrad at the price of his honor. When Conrad realizes that Gulnare has killed Seyd Pacha in order to free him from the Seyd's order for impalement, Conrad is no longer in control of his mind. He returns to his outlaw band, finally forgives Gulnare with one chaste kiss and finds Medora dead. He disappears from the scene and "left a Corsair's name to other times, /Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes." (TC.III.xxiv.615) Like Cain, he becomes a wanderer trying to forget his past.

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<sup>38</sup>Lord Byron, The Corsair, I.xi.252-259, p. 342. Subsequent references in text cited by canto, verse and line.

Conrad dominates this tale, and he is more vital and intense than Childe Harold ever is. His traits of leadership and the control of his mind in the beginning of the story are evidences of a maturing hero. His hatred for mankind is sincere, not merely a pose as it is with Childe Harold. His breakdown is complete with the death of Medora, and he, too, becomes the "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind."

Lara, Byron says in the advertisement, is a sequel to The Corsair. Abandoning his life as a pirate, Conrad-Lara returns to his home and a place in the decadent aristocracy, perhaps in Spain. The Lara who has left home in boyhood has changed, and his serfs see the furrowed brow that speaks of passion past, pride, coldness of mien, a high demeanour, a fearful glance, and a sarcastic levity of tongue. He mingles with his fellow peers, but does not share their common pleasures. Lara, the narrator says, has tried "Woman, the field the ocean, and all that gave / Promise of gladness, peril of a grave."<sup>39</sup> His only recompense is to curse a " . . . wither'd heart that would not break."

(Lara.1.130)

Far away from his action as a pirate and bold adventurer, Lara becomes the extreme of the Gothic villain. He wanders through his castle at midnight, peering at his

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<sup>39</sup>Lord Byron, Lara, I.xviii.117-118, p. 367. Subsequent references in text cited by canto, verse and line.

ancestors' portraits on the wall and holding imaginary conversations with them. Bored with men, he turns to reading and sometimes withdraws into his library for days. He hates Nature when he walks in his garden on beautiful moonlit nights as it reminds him of former days and former loves. On one dark night of vigil when a ghost appears to him, he falls into a faint. Only Kaled (Gulnare in the disguise of a page) can comfort him, and from his broken words in a foreign tongue, she realizes that he is reliving his life as a pirate and that his desire to kill is still a strong force within him.

In stanzas seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen the narrator attempts to answer the questions posed by those who knew Lara, and, in essence, explains the romantic malady and the nature of the Byronic heroes. Lara has an antithetically mixed nature, and he is alternately loved and feared. He is alternately gay and sad, and his smile often turns to a sneer when he perceives any feeling of sentiment. The narrator tells much about Lara in the following lines:

There was in him a vital scorn of all;  
 As if the worst had fall'n which could befall,  
 He stood a stranger in this breathing world,  
 An erring spirit from another hurl'd;  
 A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped  
 By choice the perils he by chance escaped;  
 But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet  
 His mind would half exult and half regret.

(Lara.I.xviii.313-320)

He has a great capacity for love, but he has wasted his early dreams of good and consumed his powers in fiery passion. He does not blame himself, as "He call'd on Nature's self to share the shame, /And charged all faults upon the fleshly form." (Lara.I.xviii.332-333) The Byronic hero is always trapped in bonds of clay, aspiring to greater things than that of being a mortal. Lara believes in fatality, despite his deeds of his own will. He is selfish but often does some good deed, more out of pride than out of any humanitarian impulses, and this same pride leads him to a life of crime. Longing for death as an escape from his guilt, he realizes that his madness is a conflict between heart and mind which causes the suffering he endures. All of these qualities of Lara apply to each of the early Byronic heroes.

The remaining mystery in the tale is the death of Ezzelin, who appears at a ball and threatens to reveal Lara's true identity. Ezzelin disappears and does not attend a scheduled meeting between Lara and his peers, and Count Otho suspects Lara of spirited the challenger away. However, Kaled-Gulnare is also capable of murder, and the mystery of who killed him is never made quite clear. Lara dies on the battlefield in an attempt to help the serfs escape from bondage, but his motive is partly selfish as a means of revenge against his peers. Gulnare, whose identity as a woman is revealed, dies of madness and heartbreak. Byron is

investigating, in Lara, the rise and fall of a noble individual meant for better things, but he cannot conquer his own false nature. Death is the only outlet for such a man; a confession or absolution is out of the question.

Lara, as an extreme Gothic villain, again rises above the passive Childe Harold, although he is much like him with his noble lineage and his false nature that prevent him from serving humanity. Lara has learned the lesson that mankind cannot live without romantic love in this world and his lost Eden is irretrievable. From his position as a god to the serfs, he learns that one tyrant cannot replace another, even through his actions may bring hope to suffering humanity. As a forerunner to Manfred, therefore, Lara poses an interesting study.

The Four Turkish Tales end with Lara, and Byron has accomplished his escape from reality by creating heroes who live and die in magnificent struggles, even though they have chosen a life of crime. Like Childe Harold, the protagonists are moody, melancholy outcasts, and they retain the dark attitudes typical of the earlier hero's nature, but their demonic acts lead to self-destruction or to the death of their loved ones. The Giaour dies heroically after failing to live in that manner, but he asks no pardon for his sins. Selim, dying with a look of love in his eyes for Zuleika, has little time to learn much about himself. Conrad disappears



to become a wanderer after he realizes that his love for Medora is the only true value of his life. Gulnare flings the cross away from the dying Lara, whose final action is to point to the East where the Christian faith is abhorred. Perhaps, in his final gesture, he wishes for a union with the spirit of Medora.

Despite Byron's posturing heroics in the Turkish Tales, however, Byron leaves on with the mingled emotions of admiration, sorrow, and hope for a better world where men can live in freedom without a constant battle against tyranny. His love of Greece and freedom is a touchstone for all mankind who study the past in order to find a way to a better future.

## Chapter IV

### MANFRED

Manfred, referred to by Byron as a three-act dramatic monologue or drama "of a very wild, inexplicable, and metaphysical kind,"<sup>40</sup> elevates the Byronic hero to his greatest heights by means of a combination of characteristics --Promethean defiance, Gothic remorse, and Faustian knowledge. Although Byron has explored the possibilities of heroic aspiration to Promethean stature in his "antithetically mix'd" historical heroes and in his fictional outlaw heroes of the narrative tales, all have failed in the achievement of utter freedom for themselves or for mankind. Manfred can also be viewed as a key to interpreting the drama as an eclectic theological and philosophic treatment of man's eternal struggle for a "way out" of his human dilemma.<sup>41</sup>

Human frailties, a desire for earthly love, a motivation of revenge on society, or a lust to rule betray most heroes into their own self-destruction, but Manfred has lost

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<sup>40</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, IV, letter to Murray, February 1817, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup>Maria Hogan Butler, "An Examination of Byron's Revision of Manfred, Act III," Studies in Philology, LX (October 1963), 627.

all desire for power and wants only oblivion from his unrelenting remorse. As he struggles with the cosmic forces of the universe in his search for forgetfulness with no desire for the past or the future, he is, as Maria Hogan Butler explains:

. . . interrupted by one genuine "free offer" in Christian humility, the Chamois Hunter's offer of brotherly love and his plea to Manfred to repent and be saved. Manfred, who has shut himself off from humanity, though he is kindly toward the Chamois Hunter, is not able to respond, but pursues his search through his own blind means . . . .<sup>42</sup>

Although Manfred appreciates the simple kindness of the Chamois Hunter, he rejects his offer and continues his search for relief in other worlds.

Manfred has no enemies, no rage against mankind, and has at least thought about using his power to benefit mankind. This metamorphosis of the legendary raging Prometheus into a more beneficent type is a result of Byron's long discussions with the more idealistic Shelley, who shared Byron's interest in the romantic heroes. During his four-months' stay near the Shelleys in Switzerland, Byron had been stimulated by the long evenings of active conversation about ghosts and Gothic villains with Shelley, Mary Godwin, Polidori, and Claire Claremont. In fact, each of them, except Claire, promised to write a Gothic novel, but only Mary ever achieved any lasting success with her novel, Frankenstein.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 629.

<sup>43</sup>John Buxton, Byron and Shelley, The History of a Friendship, p. 14.

Byron's enthusiasm for Coleridge's Christabel, parts of which he recited to the group, had fired his interest in witches and in the supernatural.<sup>44</sup> With this melange of romantic heroes whirling about in his brain, he had written the "Incantation" (later added to the first scene of Manfred) as a separate poem, hinting at the existence of an " . . . unfinished Witch Drama . . . ." <sup>45</sup> Although he is indebted to Gothic tradition from which he borrows freely for his drama, he also has his own personal guilt problem that occasions his desire for relief from his own pent up emotions.<sup>46</sup>

Later, Matthew Lewis, author of the Gothic novel, The Monk, visited Diodati and orally repeated to Byron a translation of Goethe's Faust, which Byron later admits impressed him.<sup>47</sup> All Byron needs is a setting and a purpose for his drama, and the setting he finds in the wild, beautiful scenery of the Alps, which he tours with Hobhouse in September of 1816, after Shelley's return to England. The apparent purpose in Manfred is the outpouring of Lord Byron's own melancholy and bitterness when he discovers that his exile

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>45</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge, Poetic Works, IV, "Introduction to Manfred," p. 79.

<sup>46</sup>Bertrand Evans, "Manfred's Remorse and Dramatic Tradition," PMLA, LXII (September, 1947), 752.

<sup>47</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge, Poetic Works, IV, "Introduction to Manfred," p. 80.

has, perhaps, become permanent, when all attempts at a possible reconciliation with Lady Byron have failed. Out of the depths of his own humiliation and despair, something of Byron's mood when he begins writing is expressed in a letter to Augusta in late September. He has just returned from his tour of the Alps, but as he writes to his sister, his melancholy has increased:

I am a lover of Nature and an admirer of Beauty. I can bear fatigue and welcome privation, and have seen some of the noblest views in the world. But in all this--the recollections of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed on me here; and neither the music of the Shepherd, the crashing of the Avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the Glacier, the Forest, nor the Cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the Glory, around, above, and beneath me . . . .<sup>48</sup>

The first two acts of Manfred are written, as Rutherford notes, while Byron's " . . . interest in the romantic hero was at its height, and while his bitterness and melancholy were still most acute . . . ." <sup>49</sup> Although Manfred bears a resemblance to the dark, gloomy Gothic villain, he is also a courageous hero who refuses to yield his mind to anyone. Without the stabilizing influence of Shelley, whose encouragement and advice had led him to more mature self expression during the summer, Byron returns to his former despondency. Since

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<sup>48</sup>Rowland E. Prothero, Letters and Journals, III, letter to Augusta, September, 1816, pp. 364-365.

<sup>49</sup>Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study, p. 79.

poetry has been to him a purging of self, he is able now, to write a drama that purges his own feelings in those of a hero set apart from himself. Pafford notes:

The nature of Manfred's guilt and his suffering under its burden, while undoubtedly a subject of intrinsic importance and a matter of lurid attractiveness to those intrigued by Byron's relations with Augusta Leigh, have hardly the thematic importance of the abiding interest in the resources, aspirations, and limitations of the human mind . . . .<sup>50</sup>

The conflict of mind and heart, so evident in the battles against self in the lives of his early heroes, has become a reality for Byron himself. Like his heroes, he can either succumb to the devastating effects of his own action, or he can force his mind to overcome his own human condition. Neither the blustering heroics of the physical men of action nor the passive acceptance of fate by Childe Harold can solve the problem of guilt's consequences on the human soul. It only remains for Byron to create a godlike hero in Manfred, who at least by his own standards, does not fail to achieve a solution to his guilty condition. As contrasted to the earlier heroes by Blackstone, only Manfred achieves the complete control of the mind necessary for achieving ultimate Promethean stature by the acceptance of his own guilt instead of by blaming others. As Blackstone says about the hero:

Manfred is the perfected image of the Byronic hero, Sardanapalus is almost an anti-hero. In Manfred the

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<sup>50</sup>Ward Pafford, "Byron and the Mind of Man," Studies in Romanticism, I, (1961-1962), 109.

sombre aspects incarnate in Childe Harold, the Giaour, the Corsair, Lara, receive their apotheosis: beyond these prototypes he is guilt-ridden, darkly handsome, contemptuous, autocratic, passionate, but also generous, intellectual, and courageous . . . Manfred is no tourist and no adventurer. He is a 'Childe' by birth, but a Faust by intellect; he is at home in the wilderness as the pirates were, but dominates and finally rejects it. He accepts, as they do not, the burden of guilt, striving to incorporate it in his own "image . . . ." <sup>51</sup>

The play does not reach Promethean heights, however, in the first two acts, but only in the revision of the third act, which Byron writes in Venice and revises in Rome after he has solved his own problems, accepts his fate, and, in so doing, finds a way out for both himself and for Manfred. <sup>52</sup>

The way to Manfred's solution of his human condition is not a simple one. In the opening monologue of the play, Manfred, alone in his Gothic castle at midnight, states that he has lived in darkness "since that all nameless hour." His sin has brought much sorrow, and sorrow is knowledge:

. . . Grief should be the instructor of the wise;  
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most,  
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,  
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of life . . . . <sup>53</sup>

Death, the only answer to the hero's dilemma, offers a way out, but fear of death makes him seek other alternatives to find oblivion. His knowledge of magic allows him to call up

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<sup>51</sup>Bernard Blackstone, Byron Essay III, Social Satire, Epic, and Drama, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup>Butler, op. cit., p. 630.

<sup>53</sup>Lord Byron, Manfred, I.1.8-12. Subsequent references in text by act, scene, and line.

three different sets of spirits to help him in his quest. The first are those of the elements of the earth, air, ocean, night, mountains, winds, and the star of his own destiny. When he asks them for forgetfulness or oblivion, these spirits reply that they know nothing about death but that they can offer him power and sway over kingdoms. Manfred spurns their offer, and they tell him that he can die. Angered by their mockery, he replies in Promethean defiance:

The mind, the Spirit, the Promethean spark,  
 The Lightning of my being is as bright,  
 Pervading, and far darting as your own,  
 And shall not yeild to yours, though cooped in clay! . . . .  
(I.1.154-157)

Because Manfred has power over the spirits he has created, he hears only the voices as they echo his own words and defies them in their desire to gain control over him. As a final boon, he asks them to appear in some visible form, and the Seventh Spirit appears in a beautiful female figure. When he tries to clasp her, she disappears, and he swoons. The curse of the "Incantation" is now changed over his body, and a vial of poison from his own being is poured over his head, cursing him to live forever.

In the second scene, Manfred has left his Gothic castle, and, on the Mountain of the Jungfrau, he contemplates the inefficacy of his magic, his desire to commit suicide, his fear of death, and his failure to appreciate the visible beauty of the world in which he finds no solace. In the



following lines, he voices the desire of the Byronic heroes to be more than man:

How beautiful is this visible world!  
 But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,  
 Half dust, half deity, alike unfit  
 To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make  
 A conflict of its elements, and breathe  
 The breath of degradation and of pride,  
 Contending with low wants and lofty will,  
 Till our mortality predominates,  
 And men are--what they name not to themselves,  
 And trust not to each other . . . . (II.ii.300-308)

The tragedy of the "bonds of clay" which chain mankind to humanity rather than to being all god, prevents his soaring freely. Despairing, Manfred tries to commit suicide but is saved by the Chamois Hunter, whose human offer of friendship is undesirable to the man of high rank.

The second spirit he calls up is that of the Witch of the Alps, the essence of ideal beauty. From her, Manfred asks only for a release from solitude; and the Witch listens to his story, in which he almost reveals his secret. He only hints that he has loved one who " . . . was like me in lineaments--her eyes, /Her hair, her features . . . ." (II.ii.199-200) He has loved her, and he has destroyed her, he tells the Witch, who asks him if he has slain her with his own hand. Manfred replies, "Not with my hand, but heart--which broke her heart; /It gazed on mine, and wither'd . . . ." (II.ii.212-215) Chained to humanity by his earthly love, Manfred seeks every possible escape; but,

when the Witch of the Alps offers help if he will swear obedience to her will, he refuses, again, to subject himself to another's will.

In the third scene, Manfred decides to call up the evil spirits of Arimanes and the Destinies, who recognize him as a "man of no common order" and his power as great as their own; and when he refuses to kneel to Arimanes, the Destinies know that they cannot enslave him. As a final request, Manfred desires to see the figure of Astarte, and his wish is granted. As he pleads for her forgiveness, Astarte only answers, "Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills. /Farewell!" (II.iv.521-523) Manfred swoons away, and the Spirit says, "He is convulsed--This is to be a mortal /And seek the things beyond mortality . . . ." (II.iv.526-527) Again, asserting his will, Manfred overcomes his torture, composes himself, and prepares for his fateful death, and he has reconciled his fear.

In the final scene of the play, an abbot comes to reason with him to seek repentance and to live for the benefit of mankind because he believes that Manfred is worth redemption. In the first version of the drama, Byron had a dishonest abbot who tried to sell Manfred salvation. He had this abbot spirited away to suffer at the top of the mountain, and he allowed Manfred to die in his burning

castle.<sup>54</sup> But in creating an abbot who is observant of Manfred's finer qualities and a religious figure who is sincerely concerned with the soul of the hero, he causes the drama to end on a Promethean note. Thus, Manfred defies the spirits of good or evil, and, as he dies, he offers his hand in humanity to the abbot, saying, "Old man, 'tis not so difficult to die." (III.iv.411)

Knowledge, the key factor that enables Manfred to accept the blame for his own sins, sets him above the Childe, the Giaour, and Conrad-Lara, whose lives are motivated by revenge on society or on individuals for their own personal dilemmas. Although Manfred retains his basic humanity by means of his love for one woman and by his dream of an earthly Paradise to be achieved through that love, it is his positive acceptance of the burden of his own guilt, rather than the negative motive of revenge, that enables him to win control over the elements and die triumphant in the assertion of his own free will. This tragic triumph of man's mind and will, defiant even to the point of death, is the pervading theme of the poem.

## Chapter V

### DON JUAN

The sixteen completed cantos of Don Juan which Byron began in 1818, were written and published intermittently with his dramas until the time of his death at Missolonghi in 1824; and the fragment of the seventeenth canto, which he actually took to Greece, was kept by John Cam Hobhouse for many years before its publication.<sup>55</sup> After the first two cantos were published (by Murray) anonymously in 1819, Byron admitted that he had no plan for Don Juan, but he later explained that he had intended to extend the poem in the following manner:

. . . I meant to take him the tour of Europe, with a proper mixture of siege, battle, and adventure, and to make him finish as Anarchis Cloots in the French Revolution . . . 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 these 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 . . . .<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Paul Elmer More (ed.), The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron, See note in brackets, p. 996.

<sup>56</sup>Rowland E. Prothero, Letters and Journals, V, letter to Murray, p. 20.

Unfortunately, Byron died before he accomplished Don Juan's entire tour as had been proposed, but the unfinished quality of the poem does not matter, because each episode, except the final one with Don Juan in England, is complete in itself. Of far more importance to Byron is the proof that he can write in the comic vein, creating the Byronic hero anew in an epic satire, which, Hassler notes, juxtaposes the real world and the ideal world of mankind.<sup>57</sup> The comic digressive style of satire and commentary of Fielding, Sterne, the Italian comic epic writers, the ottava rima verse of Pulci, and of John Frere's Whistlecraft have been successfully used in Beppo, Byron's satire of Venetian life, which serves as a model of humor for Don Juan.<sup>58</sup> Byron has already abandoned the artificial rhetoric of his previous works in favor of the aristocratic colloquial tone.<sup>59</sup> He resorts, now, to a more positive statement of attitudes and ideas in contrast to a more negative presentation, such as irony and satire. It has been said that ". . . for highest distinction in satire, he was too emotional and he lacked the subtlety

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<sup>57</sup>Donald M. Hassler, "Marino Faliero, the Byronic Hero, and Don Juan," Keats-Shelley Journal, XIV (Winter, 1965), 61.

<sup>58</sup>E. H. Coleridge, Poetic Works, VI, "Introduction to Don Juan," xvi.

<sup>59</sup>Roland E. Bottrall, "Byron and the Colloquial Tradition," Criterion, X (1929-1939), 204.

of wit and that shine in the eighteenth century masters whom he revered. His feelings sought romantic expression . . . ."60

In the first canto, Byron writes, "I want a hero: an uncommon want, /When every month and year sends forth a new one . . . ."61 This facetious remark immediately sets the tone of a comic epic, and his cynical reasons for not choosing as a subject a great national French or English hero set the stage for his choice of one from the past. Don Juan Tenorio of Seville, a hero of infamous character, was first depicted in Tirso de Molina's El Burlador de Seville, and imitated in Delpini's pantomime, which Byron had seen on the stage.<sup>62</sup> Fascinated by the evil portrayal of Don Juan, Byron borrowed the name for his epic, but he revised the character of the hero and brought him up-to-date in the modern world of 1790. By placing him in the eighteenth century, Byron reverts to the type of natural man discussed by Rousseau, to the type of picaresque heroes of both Fielding and Sterne, and to the hero of Christoph Weiland's Agathon.<sup>63</sup> By a process of selection of more human characteristics, he rejects

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<sup>60</sup>G. R. Elliott, "Byron and the Comic Spirit," PMLA, XXXIX (1924), 900.

<sup>61</sup>Lord Byron, Don Juan, I.1.747. Subsequent references in text by canto verse and line.

<sup>62</sup>Ernest H. Coleridge, Poetic Works, VI, "Introduction to Don Juan," xvi.

<sup>63</sup>Elizabeth Boyd, Byron's Don Juan, p. 60.

the basically evil nature of the real Don Juan and creates, instead, a hero, played upon by fate, or as Guy Steffan describes him:

. . . a natural man, whose illusions and impulses are sound and normal, or because he is an ideal. The mean and sordid things which happen to him are real and in an ordinary physical sense, but they cannot corrupt or destroy his spirit. He participates in many of the vices and abuses of society, and although he is not often an unwilling sinner, he is never a self-tormented one, never defiled or contaminated, and never really guilty . . . .<sup>64</sup>

Since Don Juan is natural, he is stirred, therefore, by human passion, and to his spiritual makeup Byron has added the physical experiences of love, sometimes ideal and sometimes corrupt. Because he faces life squarely in the world as he finds it, always with the wonder and surprise of a neophyte, he has no reason for the feelings of guilt or remorse which characterize the typical Byronic heroes. Although he is a wanderer and an exile like Childe Harold and the outlaw heroes, he travels for experience rather than for an opportunity to escape from society. In fact, he welcomes the companionship of many kinds of men and women, whether in a longboat, in a Turkish harem, or in the courts of royalty. Don Juan's acceptance of his fate and his sense of humor enable him stoically to endure or to laugh at his predicaments, even when his illusions are shattered by reality. Although he escapes the melancholy aspects of the romantic

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<sup>64</sup>Guy Steffan, The Making of a Masterpiece, I, 280.

heroes, he is "Byronized" by the autobiographical events of Byron's own life and experiences in English society, in his love affairs, and in his travels to Spain, Greece, and Italy.

Byron's role in the poem is that of the aging narrator who relates, in his superb conversational tone, Don Juan's epic and interesting adventures in love, tempest, travel, war, and society. Simultaneously, Byron is looking back upon his own life so that his comments and digressions sometimes personalize the narrative of his hero, and he occasionally chastises Don Juan for his actions. It is interesting to note that Don Juan begins his journey in Spain, travels from Greece to Russia and England, and that Byron reverses the order by beginning his observations in Italy, regresses to Greece and Spain, imagines the journey to Russia, and the two men meet in England. Since Byron's digressions from the narrative are primarily used for purposes of satire, the present author will attempt to adhere to the narrative of Don Juan and the developing of heroic qualities.

In Canto I, Don Juan is the victim of two unhappy marriages. His parents, Don Jose and Donna Inez, quarrel and separate when she accuses her husband of infidelity and madness. Conveniently, Don Jose dies, and Donna Inez is made the sole guardian of Don Juan's education. She is determined that Don Juan shall have no knowledge of the reality of the



world, and she has his literature expurgated of any references to sex. To insure further his insularity from the evil ways of life is assured as " . . . half his days were pass'd at church, the other /Between his tutors, his confessor, and mother." (I.xlix.391-392) At sixteen, Don Juan becomes involved in his first love affair with another unhappy wife, Donna Julia, who is married to a man twice her age. Gradually seduced by this older woman, Don Juan is eventually discovered by Alfonso, the jealous husband. Escaping from underneath the covers of Donna Julia's bed, Don Juan runs naked through the night, stripped also of his illusions about the sanctity of marriage and the faithfulness of women. He is sent away from home by his mother on a sea voyage; he swears undying love for Donna Julia; he becomes seasick and purges himself of his romantic feelings.

There is more stripping away of Juan's thoughts of "man the wonderful" in the second Canto when the Trinidad, Juan's ship, founders in a storm. As the masts of the ship are torn away and the men know that death is imminent, only Don Juan remains courageous. With pistols drawn, he challenges the men when they try to invade the spirit room and tells them to die like men. Pedrillo, Juan's tutor, and some of the crew escape in a longboat and a cutter with only a few provisions aboard, but the cutter soon sinks in the stormy ocean. After eight days on the ocean, the men turn

inhuman, eat Don Juan's dog, and cast lots to choose a victim to cannibalize, and Pedrillo draws the unfortunate ballot, torn from a piece of Julia's final letter to Juan. Stoically, Juan refuses to eat his tutor's body as he watches the awful consequences of the crew's hunger:

For they, who were most ravenous in the act,  
 Went raging mad--Lord! how they did blaspheme!  
 And foam and roll, with strange convulsions rack'd,  
 Drinking salt-water like a mountain-stream,  
 Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,  
 And with hyaena-laughter, died despairing.

(II.lxxix.627-632)

Don Juan has now observed mankind pushed to the extremes of reality, and the picture is grim, but Patricia Ball explains the purpose of this scene when she writes:

. . . Byron's recognition of the grotesque element in human behavior as an inescapable characteristic of the breed is the beginning of his advance to the comic vision. At this moment in Don Juan, he removes from human beings the possibility of tragedy, saying in effect that the unflinching self-mastery and self-confidence which tragedy demands is beyond us. We break down, because we feel hungry; where we should be superb, we are grotesque . . . . To denote the tragic in favour of the grotesque in this way is to lift the onus of nobility, thereby conferring a freedom on man even while it denies the human right to pride. Byron takes his discovery as a gift not an insult; this is the crucial factor. And after viewing the spectacle at this naked extreme he is able to write the rest of Don Juan which concerns the 'world exactly as it goes' day by day, as one accepting and exploiting, not rejecting, the compound creation which man is . . . .<sup>65</sup>

Behind the grim humor of the scene, Byron's purpose seems to be the education of Don Juan, who has viewed "man the wonderful"

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<sup>65</sup>Patricia Ball, "Byronic Reorientation," Twentieth Century, XLXVIII (October, 1960), 333.

in reality, as opposed to the romantic dreams of his youth. By his acceptance of the fall from civilized behavior to primitive savagery by his fellow shipmates, Don Juan remains innocent and worthy of survival. Purged of his youthful mistakes by the violence of the shipwreck, Don Juan is ready to meet Haidee.

Washed ashore on a beautiful Aegean island, Don Juan encounters Haidee, the child of nature, who has been shielded by her pirate father, Lambro. Haidee discovers him on the beach, hides him in a cave, nurses, feeds, and clothes him, and falls in love with this young stranger she has befriended. Don Juan is, again, passively seduced when Lambro leaves the island, and Haidee is left to spend her time with her lover. Haidee, who is innocent, ". . . spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows, /Nor offer'd any; she had never heard /Of plight and promises to be a spouse . . . ." (II.1513-1515) Content to love and to be loved, Juan and Haidee consummate their love at twilight when the earth and sky seem to blend together, and they are married with stars acting as nuptial torches and the ocean as their witness. This transcendent quality of their love, as they unite with Nature in the evening when the world seems at peace and harmony with mankind, as Beaty explains, obliterates the individual as in a religious sacrifice and human passion

become the analogue of love for God.<sup>66</sup> Although he is no part of Don Juan's paradisaical dream, Byron's sense of sin inaugurates a long comment on the sinfulness of love after its consummation. Temporarily, Don Juan and Haidee are " . . . happy in the illicit /Indulgence of their innocent desires . . . (III.xiii.87-98), but their love is threatened by the return of Lambro. After Haidee hears a false rumor that Lambro is dead, she continues her idyll with Don Juan in the luxurious palace that her pirate father has built on the island. Lambro returns, and although he is usually tender and gentle with Haidee, he becomes cruel when he discovers that he has been replaced in his home. In the ensuing battle between Lambro and Don Juan, the latter escapes with a wound and is placed on a slave ship bound for Constantinople. Don Juan never discovers that Haidee dies with his unborn child, "a fair and sinless child of sin." As Elizabeth Boyd points out, "The fatal ending of the Haidee episode, brought about by the extravagant passions of all three actors . . . is Byron's comment on the fragility of love in an unnatural world . . . ." <sup>67</sup>

On board the slave ship for Constantinople, Don Juan meets the Englishman, Johnson, who is later to be his

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<sup>66</sup>Frederick L. Beaty, "Byron's Concept of Ideal Love," Keats-Shelley Journal, XII (Winter, 1963), 45.

<sup>67</sup>Elizabeth Boyd, Byron's Don Juan, A Critical Study, p. 67.

companion in the siege of Ismail, but, first, they are taken to the court of the Sultana and Gulbeyaz as slaves. In a farcical scene, Don Juan dresses as a woman when Baba threatens to circumcise him, and he is presented, not to the Sultan, but to Gulbeyaz. Byron's main purpose here, as Steffan notes, is to " . . . let the public peek into the royal boudoir to disenchant the lofty and splendid luxury of power and rank . . . ."<sup>68</sup> The Sultan is a despot who owns his harem of women and has powerful sway in his country, and Gulbeyaz, as his present favorite, is despotic when she tries to force Don Juan's love. The hero defends his rights to bestow his love where he chooses, but he almost weakens when Gulbeyaz cries. After a farcical scene in the harem with Dudu, Don Juan escapes along with Johnson and some of the harem women, although Byron never explains how Baba accomplishes this feat. This episode reveals the sensibility of Don Juan in his pity for Gulbeyaz's tears, but it also adds to his hatred of despotism of any kind, even in matters of love.

After Don Juan has, thus, been exploited by hypocritical love, despotic love, and transcendent love, he emerges on the battlefield in the Siege of Ismail, a war between Russia and Turkey. Byron's specific purpose in this canto, as Cooke explains it, is the following:

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<sup>68</sup>Guy Steffan, The Making of a Masterpiece, I, 279.

But it is left for Don Juan, in the cantos devoted to the Siege of Ismail, to make Byron's most complete and profound statement of counter-heroic principles, specifically deflating the hero of mere power, specifically celebrating the life of courage and virtue . . . .<sup>69</sup>

Suwarrow, the Russian commander of the troops, is the hero in action as he drills, surveys, orders, and jests with his men, obtaining the greatest efforts from them. But he is deflated when Byron describes him: "A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering; /Hero, buffoon, half-demon, half-dirt, . . . ." (VII,lv.435-436) Don Juan is tempted by the glories of war, but, unlike Johnson, he knows little of the virtues of battle; and he does foolhardy things for which he is chastized by Johnson, who is neither a hero or a coward, and he knows when to retreat. In the counter heroism of the Tartar Khan, however, lies the contrast among Suwarrow, Johnson, and soldiers who turn war into glorified murder. The old man, Tartar Khan, represents a struggle for freedom against tyrants like Suwarrow, and Byron approves of true heroism in a battle against despotism. Don Juan displays his waning interest in the war when he sees the old man die. When he rescues Leila, who is left alone and defenseless in the ravages of war, he never realizes that his human impulses are counter to the heroism of war and the intoxication of battle. Byron lances his hero for his part in the battle

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<sup>69</sup>Michael G. Cooke, "The Limits of Skepticism: The Byronic Affirmation," Keats-Shelley Journal, XVII (1968), 102.

and further deflates Suwarrow, who writes a poem to Catherine, informing her of his success in Ismail.

Resplendent in his military uniform and celebrated as a soldier hero, Don Juan dazzles the women of Catherine's court, where he is sent by Suwarrow with his poetic dispatch. The aging Catherine takes Don Juan as her lover, and he enjoys the luxuries and pomp which his position affords him. Eventually sickened by his own corruption and his selfish love, Don Juan becomes ill. The doctor orders him to go to a more agreeable climate, and Catherine reluctantly parts with him and makes him an envoy to England. Taking his adopted orphan girl with him, Don Juan travels in splendor and is accepted into English society. There he meets Lady Adeline and Lord Henry, whose marriage is congenial but cold, and there is a strong hint that Adeline will fall in love with Don Juan. She is jealous of his interest in Aurora Raby, who reminds Don Juan of Haidee in her innocence and youth. In the meantime, Lady Adeline pretends to be a matchmaker and tries to find the hero a suitable wife. Surprisingly enough, Don Juan, now twenty-one, has grown more sophisticated, and he amazes his English peers with his abilities to ride a horse, hunt a fox, dance a graceful waltz, and converse with intelligence. Another dowager, the Duchess Fitz-Fulke, tries to seduce Don Juan by masquerading as a ghost that haunts Norman Abbey, the country home of

Lord Henry. In Canto XVII, one receives the feeling that Don Juan has resisted her advances and perhaps he is maturing in sexual matters as well as in his other social graces.

Although Don Juan is much like Childe Harold in some aspects, he is not a typical romantic hero. He is of noble birth, but his education has been one of limited tutoring in the eighteenth century manner. Don Juan differs from Childe Harold, too, as he is not the brooding solitary who seeks escape from the world, and Don Juan lives in the world as he finds it. Although he commits himself to no life of responsibility, he finds life worth living. Don Juan is natural, sincere, and basically honest; but his worst fault is his lack of self control in sexual matters, and he may be beginning to be wiser in his choices. As Bostetter says, "He is the hero as he might be after successful psychoanalytic treatment . . . ." <sup>70</sup> If he has any faults, Byron tends to blame them on a corrupt society that preys on the innocent, the young, and the good and turns him from the right paths of conduct.

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<sup>70</sup>E. E. Bostetter (ed.), Byron, Selected Poetry and Letters, "Introduction," p. xvii.



## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION

Byron writes at a unique time of both historical and literary significance as he creates his hero and becomes a representative of both the past and the present in his poetry. As Byron interweaves eighteenth century sensibility and reason with the strong emphasis of individualism and personal freedom of the more emotional Romantic Age, he creates a highly original hero. Byron admits that he has borrowed ideas from the novels and poetry of the eighteenth century, and he usually gives credit to the authors he has imitated. In one of the entries in his diary, he notes that he has been compared, either "personally or poetically," to Shakespeare, Goethe, Scott, Young, Rousseau, Alfieri, and Burns, to name a few.<sup>71</sup> That he is well versed in Shakespeare but considers him inferior to Pope is evident in his conversations with Lady Blessington, who has visited him in Italy.<sup>72</sup> Many of the epigraphs of his poetry are taken from Shakespeare's plays, and The Bride of Abydos is weakly

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<sup>71</sup>Rowland, E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, V, "Detached Thoughts," p. 406.

<sup>72</sup>Ernest E. Lovell, Jr. (ed.), Lady Blessington's Conversations of Lord Byron, pp. 203-204.

patterned after Hamlet. Like Goethe and Rousseau, Byron endows his heroes with the emotional responses of the heart which overcomes their judgment and reason, and death often seems the only solution to their woes. Edward Young's melancholy persona who meditates among the tombs, relishing his gloom in "Night Thoughts,"<sup>73</sup> begins what Willie Sypher calls an "inverted sensibility" which leads to the Gothicism of the late eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Scott, Byron's friend and contemporary, has immortalized the Gothic villain and the ballad outlaw heroes in his narrative verse tales, and Byron adapts both the style and characterizations to his early heroes. Alfieri is an Italian poet Byron admires for his satires and tragedies, and Pope, as his master of satire, has been discussed in preceding chapters. Both men are important in the development of the style of Don Juan. Although the Byronic heroes inherit some qualities from Robert Burns's narrative and lyric poetry, they seem to have inherited much from Byron's study of Burns's personality, and after he has read some of the Scottish poet's unpublished letters, Byron writes in his journal:

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<sup>73</sup>Edward Young, "Night Thoughts," as taken from Enlightened England, Willie Sypher (ed.), pp. 590-601.

<sup>74</sup>Willie Sypher (ed.), Enlightened England, "Literary Values," p. 25.

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<sup>73</sup>Edward Young, "Night Thoughts," as taken from Enlightened England, Willie Sypher (ed.), pp. 590-601.

<sup>74</sup>Willie Sypher (ed.), Enlightened England, "Literary Values," p. 25.

. . . What an antithetical mind;--tenderness, roughness--delicacy, coarseness--sentiment, sensuality--soaring and groveling--dirt and deity--all mixed up in that one compound of clay . . . .<sup>75</sup>

This observation compares with Byron's portrayal of Napoleon in Childe Harold, whose antithetical nature causes "the fever at the core" which drives the Byronic hero forward to his destiny.

Byron's heroes live and struggle as fallen men in a fallen world without hope or faith, and their negative responses to God, humanity, and sometimes to Nature reveal the desolation of lives devoid of any creed or belief which offers strength. Childe Harold, the Giaour, Selim, Conrad, Lara, and Manfred withdraw into isolation loneliness, rebellion, or proud disdain rather than face the imperfection they see in the world, and their desperate efforts to survive in a chaotic world of reality or in one of their own making results in more desolation or death. Childe Harold never acquires the self-knowledge he seeks because he finds no escape from himself in the unreality of the past scenes of glory he visits in his travels, and he is a "ruin amidst the ruins." Neither does he find comfort in his investigation of heroism as he excuses his own fall by the failure of Titan-like heroes, such as Napoleon, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Gibbon, who have failed to benefit mankind in its quest

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<sup>75</sup>Rowland E. Prothero (ed.), Letters and Journals, II, (entry in journal), pp. 376-377.

for freedom. His temporary union with Nature ends in a selfish attempt to isolate himself from humanity, and his failure to love mankind leads him to a life as a lonely wanderer who lives out his life in passive reflections and a longing for death; however, he does retain his love for the wilder aspects of Nature, the stormy ocean or the mountains, which reduce the majesty of man.

The Giaour, Selim, Conrad, and Lara escape in the exotic islands of the East in the fallen world of Greece where they rebel against society or individuals with a motive of revenge, and they live out their lives in rage against their human condition. Although they hate tyranny and love freedom, they are motivated by selfishness and greed to establish themselves as Titanic leaders of outlaw bands, oblivious to any laws or codes except their own. As men of action, the outlaw heroes dominate their followers and the women who love them, and they become tyrants in their own right. Despite their deeds of murder, pillage, and conquest, the outlaws have some feeling of sensibility, particularly in their love of a woman, and this sensibility is their undoing. As Bernard Blackstone explains: ". . . In the tales we are in Nietzsche's world, not Spinoza's: here power is law, and the satisfaction of passion brushes every other consideration aside . . . ." <sup>76</sup> In love or war, the Byronic hero

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<sup>76</sup> Bernard Blackstone, Byron Essay I, Lyric and Romance, p. 38.

is passionate, courageous, and vengeful, and he dies as he has lived, asking no quarter from God or man.

Manfred, the most intense Byronic hero, has every reason to take his place in cultivated society. He is wealthy, titled, and intellectual, but he chooses to isolate himself from the herd of lesser men because he cannot tame down his superior nature. He has sought knowledge, both worldly and other-worldly, but as Calvert says: ". . . His is not the intellectual longing of Faust, to know all things for the sake of knowing; he must know to still the serpent in his own breast . . . ."<sup>77</sup> His powers of magic carry him far beyond society's unforgiving attitude towards committing the unpardonable sin of incest, so Manfred seeks oblivion in other spheres of his own creation. He refuses to yield the power of his mind, and he finds no help. Death releases him from his unrelenting remorse, and he dies in full control of his own mind. In writing Manfred, Byron has found release from his own tortured emotions, and he hopes to survive through his art.

Purged of the melancholy romantic hero-type in Manfred, Byron is able to proceed from tragedy to comic humor in Don Juan. Don Juan, thrown into the grim world of reality at the age of sixteen, is scarcely prepared for experience in the world as it is. Particularly inexperienced in understanding

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<sup>77</sup>William Calvert, Byron: Romantic Paradox, p. 142.

his sexual emotions, Don Juan is passive in love, but he is a man of action in other adventures. By the time he reaches twenty-one, Don Juan is skillful in love, and he has tried being a soldier, a Russian diplomat, and an English gentleman. His versatile nature enables him, however, to live contentedly, "In camps, in ships, in cottages, or courts," and he is, in short, "all things to all kinds of people." He no longer has a conflict of heart and mind, as the two now work together. Don Juan, who sees the hypocrisy and cant of English society through a foreigner's eyes, remains sincere and unspoiled and responds to the world naturally.

Despite the flaws of character in the Byronic hero, Byron caught the fancy of the reading public. Bostetter testifies to the popularity of Childe Harold and the Four Turkish Tales, whose heroes live in a contemporary world, and whose remorse, guilt, and disillusion relates to the feelings of the English people who feel that they have betrayed the principles of the underlying reasons for the French Revolution.<sup>78</sup> Although the historical facts and places of Byron's poetry are far removed from the world today, the present reader can draw parallels between the lost generation of Byron's time and the lost generation of World War I, written about by Hemingway. Even the rise and fall

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<sup>78</sup>E. E. Bostetter (ed.), Byron: Selected Poetry and Letters, p. xiii.

of a Hitler creates the same fascination for readers that Napoleon's desire for conquest arouses.

The influence of the Byronic hero in literature has been enormous, not only in Byron's time, but in the continuing years since his death in 1824. Northrop Frye states this premise succinctly when he writes:

. . . on the Continent Byron has been the arch-romantic of modern literature, and European nineteenth-century culture would be as unthinkable without Byron as its history would be without Napoleon. From the painting of Delacroix to the music of Berlioz, the poetry of Pushkin to the philosophy of Nietzsche, the spell of Byron is everywhere. Modern fiction would be miserably impoverished without the Byronic hero: Balzac, Stendahl, Dostoevsky have all used him in crucial roles . . . .<sup>79</sup>

Authors in English literature, too, have used Byron's hero as a source of characterization, Frye continues to say:

An immense amount of imitation and use of Byron, conscious, or unconscious, direct or indirect, has taken place in English literature, too, and nearly all of it is of the Romantic Byron. Melville (whose Ishmael is in the line of Cain), Conrad, Hemingway, A. E. Housman, Thomas Wolfe, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden--all of these writers have little in common except that they all Byronize . . . .<sup>80</sup>

Byron would have been proud to know that his hero continues to be immortalized today, although he was not proud of the sentimental, melancholy heroes he created. Possibly it is time for another Romantic Age in literature and another Byron to cry out against tyranny in the world.

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<sup>79</sup>Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 186.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 186.



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