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BYRON AMONG THE CLASSICS

A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSICAL POETRY ON THE WORK OF LORD
BYRON

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Durham

1994

This study begins by defining epic to determine if Byron's claims, regarding *Don Juan*, to be writing an epic, are justified, concluding that though most epics preserve the form of earlier epics, substituting a different "message" or heroic ethos, Byron, in defiance of this tradition, attempts to preserve the essence of Homeric epic, particularly its new heroic ethos, but in a new form. This is where Byron and Vergil's imitations of Homer differ, Byron rejecting both Vergil's manner of imitation and his heroic ethos. In a series of imitations, Byron parodies Vergil, borrowing his imagery to suggest the unnatural and the sterile. Differences are exposed in their respective treatments of war, Byron advocating the self-justifying act of love rather than the consolations of duty and fame offered by Vergil, which rely on a perception of cosmic order lacking in Byron's view, a view which links him to Homer and the Attic tragedians. The Greek view of the darkness and confusion of the cosmos Byron finds congenial, appreciating the opportunities it affords for open-endedness, though aware that this open-endedness is always subsumed by larger closure due to different levels of perspective (actors, chorus, and gods). In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron attempts to emulate this multilevelledness as a means to distance himself from the cycles of Nature from which he is painfully excluded due to his mixed body and spirit nature, finally breaking out to channel these cycles of Nature productively through art. In Byron's dramas, too, there are cycles of evil whose origins lie in Attic tragedy. Ever present in Byron, as in classical tragedy, is the Promethean dilemma between submission, and defiance leading to inevitable defeat. In his later poetry, Byron is more reconciled to the cycles of life, though continuing his Promethean quest in the fields of love and literature.

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LORD BYRON

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INTRODUCTION

Despite all the ink that has been spilled in defence, in attack, or simply in explanation of Lord Byron and his works, there remains one of Byron's most intriguing characteristics which has never been adequately investigated. This is outlined by M.K. Joseph in his 1964 observation that

It is difficult to think of any other writer so characteristic of his age, so influential in it, who yet rejects so completely all that gives that age expression.¹

Some work has been done on Byron's links with English neo-Classical writers, centring mainly on the easily-apprehensible strictures of the *Hints from Horace* and the Bowles controversy. But while in his criticism Byron defended the neo-Classical tradition, his practice differed drastically from what he preached, for although he wrote extensively in heroic couplets, most notably in the *Hints from Horace* (which Byron regarded as one of the best things he wrote), these poems are not now seen as his best works. A typical view is that voiced by J.A.K. Thomson in *The Classical Background to English Literature*: "the impersonal character of classical art makes it the antithesis of everything that people like or dislike in Byron",² a sentiment echoed by E.T. Helmick: "his characteristic style, flexible and colloquial, was hardly the medium for any kind of classical expression".³ The departure of the style that made him popular from the style advocated in his criticism (something Byron himself ruefully admitted⁴) would seem necessarily to undermine his arguments in favour of a return to neo-Classical values, and lead to doubts of his sincerity. This may partly explain the neglect of Byron's classical side. Ironically, so high was Byron's regard for the importance of *Hints from Horace*, and such was his respect for Horace that in obedience to Horace's advice that a man should wait ten years before publishing a poem to see if it was in fact worthy of publication, Byron did not publish it until 1821. Had he published it sooner, at the height of his fame, his opinions might have had a wider and a more sympathetic audience, but as it was, it came out after the



exoticism of the Tales and the boisterousness of *Don Juan*. It is a typically Byronic paradox that Byron's allegiance to the classics should be neglected out of a respect for Horace.

Horace is also implicated in another source of misunderstanding in relation to Byron's attitude towards the classics; the famous reference to "the drill'd dull lesson" of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV,lxxv. Here we have "straight from the horse's mouth" Byron grandly bidding farewell to the most staid and middle-aged of classical poets; shaking off the shackles of an education which had fed him the classics as a "daily drug", to respond to Nature untrammelled, a true Romantic. This fits with the popular, or at least popular contemporary image of Byron, the dashing, tempestuous traveller of wild, exotic places. Alongside the bravado of shaking off the dust of schoolroom and library (it was ever one of Byron's foibles to play down his intellectual interests), there is regret, however:

...though Time hath taught
My mind to meditate what then it learn'd,
Yet such the fix'd inveteracy wrought
By the impatience of my early thought,
That with the freshness wearing out before
My mind could relish what it might have sought,
If free to choose, I cannot now restore
Its health; but what it then detested, still abhor.

Then farewell, Horace; whom I hated so,
Not for thy faults, but mine; it is a curse
To understand, not feel thy lyric flow,
To comprehend, but never love thy verse...(CHP IV,lxxvi-lxxvii)

The respect Byron had for Horace is borne out by the frequent use of Horatian mottoes for his poems and of course by his criticism. And yet it is the alliterative sound-bite of "the drill'd dull lesson" that has come down to us as the summary of his views, not just of Horace, but of the entire classical canon.

While part of Byron's achievement (in distinction to other more bookish poets who had written on classical scenes) lies in his bringing the reader into the scene to feel the excitement of being there on the spot with him, such scenes and their descriptions are nevertheless infused by the associations of the place. There is excitement in finally seeing for oneself the beauty of Soracte "Not in the fabled landscape of a lay/But soaring snow-clad through thy native sky" (*CHP* I,lx), but the excitement is clearly heightened by its classical literary pedigree which sets Byron musing on his schoolboy encounters with Horace. Similarly, when the position of Troy was questioned, Byron brushed aside such academic quibbling to state that if Troy were not there, he would not have felt as he did in walking over the spot.⁵ As Byron himself records in a letter to Bowles in 1821,

It is the art, the columns, the temples, the wrecked vessel, which gives them their antique and their modern poetry, and not the spots themselves.⁶

As T.J.B. Spencer observes in "Byron and the Greek Tradition", what we encounter in Byron, in comparison with other topographical poets, is a shift in emphasis:

Because of his intense receptiveness to what he himself actually saw and experienced in Greece, Byron provided a new reality for much of the old-fashioned poetic diction of a classifying kind, by giving it a local habitation with which he was familiar.⁷

The same author elaborates on this in *Fair Greece! Sad Relic*:

Byron knew the charm of being in places celebrated by ancient history and poetry without being fussily engaged in identifying everything and wasting his energies and impressions upon anxious interpretations of ancient texts and elucidations of geography and topography.⁸

Though Byron's descriptions were known for their vividness and directness, since this was what distinguished them from those of other writers writing on similar subjects, this should not be a reason to forget the classical associations that had contributed so much to Byron's feelings for these scenes. And yet we find Gilbert Highet, one of the comparatively few classicists who have written on Lord Byron (again indicative of the neglect of this side of his work), while conceding that Byron quotes "aptly and sincerely" in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and in his travel journal, claims that he was moved more by modern Greece, with its concrete and visible relics, than by books.⁹

This tradition of misunderstanding began shortly after Byron's death (though in his lifetime, Byron's own posing, as suggested above, sowed the seeds), fostered by Byron's poet friend and biographer, Thomas Moore. It was he perhaps more than anyone who promulgated the belief that it was not mouldy volumes of The Classics, but the strong impressions made on him by his travels that made a poet out of Byron. However, it seems that Moore had here an axe to grind, seeing in Byron, either through genuine ignorance or wilful blindness, a vindication of his belief, in reaction to poetic practice of the recent past, that classical learning exercised a deadening influence on native poetic ability.¹⁰

Throwing his weight (which, as a good friend of the poet, and his first biographer, was considerable) firmly behind the "drill'd dull lesson", he claimed that Byron's classical knowledge was poor on account of the boring methods of teaching to which he was exposed and that it was in spite of this that Byron became the poet he did. He cites the clumsy, interlined translations of the most simple Greek words in Byron's schoolbooks as proof of Byron's poor knowledge of the language. In *Byron in Perspective* (1924), however, J.D. Symon bravely suggests that Moore protests too much, since such

translations are common schoolboy practice (and there remains some doubt as to whether these marks are Byron's and not the work of a later pupil to whom the book had been handed down¹¹). Symon also observes that:

Moore...himself quoted the Greek words without troubling to put on the accents -- the absence of which is always the mark of a slovenly scholar.¹²

However, no sooner does Symon refute one fallacy as regards Byron's classicism (a refutation which in any case passed apparently unnoticed) than he subscribes to another, concluding that "his knowledge never urged him towards any restoration of the essential spirit of Greek poetry".¹³

Likewise J.A.K. Thomson, though finding in Byron many classical quotations and allusions, regards them as "purely accessory".¹⁴ Lloyd N. Jeffrey, another classicist, writing in 1971, is somewhat more charitable, listing many "Homeric echoes" in *Don Juan* and stating that:

The foregoing Homeric elements in Byron's poem show beyond question that he had plied *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with more than ordinary diligence and interest. Yet [he concludes], these elements, entertaining as they are -- contribute to the effect of the work mainly in an additive and decorative way.¹⁵

This would seem to accord with Claude Rawson's recent (1990) comment on *Don Juan* that "as far as any real relationship to epic might be concerned, it is no more than a debonair flourish".¹⁶ As regards the Dramas, where Byron makes explicit his imitative intentions, there have been sporadic references to classical qualities in his writing but these seem stated timidly, as similarities rather than as influences, and not explored for their larger implications. Paul West, writing in 1960, notes that the "incurious quality of Byron's imagery" makes it very suitable for drama and narrative,¹⁷ where an immediate impression must be made, and finds (quoting a specific example) that "this has the shallowness of classical Greek poetry, and reminds in particular of the boasting at the Phaeacian games in *The Odyssey*."¹⁸ Similar (though more helpful, as it pinpoints the very important Promethean issue of the will and its limitations) is Jerome J. McGann's 1968 observation that:

As in Aeschylus, Byron's characters are often the pawns of the poetry in which they are involved. Like Agamemnon or Clytemnestra, they perform acts of their free will, but the continuum in which these acts are caught up is not subject to human manipulation.¹⁹

This quotation is from *Fiery Dust*, a general study of Byron which, for all its insights, has not the scope to allow a full investigation of their implications. E.T. Helmick, quoted

earlier, in a joint study of "Hellenism in Byron and Keats", praises Keats as "the most Greek of English Poets"²⁰ in that he absorbed the spirit of Greece, something which, by implication, he feels Byron failed to do. This tends to be Helmick's approach throughout the essay, using Keats as a stick to beat Byron; while both Keats and Byron talk of Greece's past glories, he claims, Keats' "main concern...was to make it meaningful in the present".²¹

Byron gives his own opinion of Keats' achievements in this respect in *Don Juan* when Juan in his love-sickness runs the gamut of Romantic folly: "He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers/And how the goddesses came down to men" (I,xciv), thereby losing his dinner. For Byron was himself engaged in making the Greek spirit "meaningful in the present". This is the proposal of K. Solomou in his 1984 Ph.D thesis, "Byron and Greek Poetry", and it is a radical proposal, for Solomou was the first person to make Byron's classical side the focus of a sustained argument, showing that, despite the form of Byron's writing, and the apparent casualness with which he treats his classical knowledge, it had extensive influences on his works. Solomou began (without apparent knowledge of Symons' discoveries mentioned earlier) by refuting Moore's contention that Byron had only a poor knowledge of the classics and developed an antipathy to them due to boring methods of teaching. Solomou found that, although involving a considerable amount of rote learning, particularly of *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*, Byron's teaching at Harrow was fairly enlightened for its time and that this was acknowledged by Byron in his fondness for the headmaster, Dr. Dury, a fondness reflected in his telling observation that "there is no pedantry about him".²²

This classical grounding Solomou showed to have been put to good use in the Haidee episode of *Don Juan* (a work, according to Medwin, regarded by Byron as "an epic as much in the spirit of our day as *The Odyssey* was in Homer's"²) which contains sustained parallels to the episodes of Odysseus' shipwreck on Scheria and to his final homecoming, from *The Odyssey*. Solomou also found Byron eager to show his affinity with the Homer of *The Iliad* in his gruesome accounts of battles in *Don Juan*. He was however less helpful in his treatment of the Prometheus myth in Byron's work, and did not look at the classicism of Byron's dramas. At least partly this would seem to be from lack of time and space, since in the second part of his thesis, Solomou set out to examine the influence of contemporary Romaic poetry on Byron.

My work is based on the foundations laid by Solomou as outlined above, and addresses all of the areas mentioned, including the dramatic works neglected by Solomou. Like Solomou, I aim to show that despite the form of his work, Byron was substantially influenced by the classics and indeed engaged in an attempt to convey their spirit to his age. It is my proposal that Byron's use of Homer is more extensive than Solomou realized and I have expanded on his account of the Haidee/*Odyssey* parallels and brought in

Byron's use of Book IV of *The Aeneid*. This involves an examination of the differences in Byron's adaptations of Vergil and of Homer, consideration of what constitutes an epic and differences of interpretation of Homeric epic by Byron and Vergil. These differences are particularly apparent in relation to the treatment of war, an investigation of which leads on to considerations of modes of heroism, which in turn are related to world view. Byron's view of the workings of the cosmos has a distinctly Greek cast, as is also reflected in his adaptations of Greek tragedy, particularly in relation to the Prometheus myth and the Furies, which interest Byron as an expression of the fundamental cyclicity of the Greek cosmos. In *Fiery Dust*, Jerome J. McGann has already referred to the importance of the Furies in the Venetian tragedies as an expression of the reality in Byron's dramatic universe that evil begets more evil, and this has also been usefully treated by Martyn Corbett in *Byron and Tragedy* (1988), but I aim to demonstrate how these influences have more far-reaching implications in Byron's work, most notably in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Here, as his allusions show, Byron finds in Greek literature a solution to his own artistic problems and to the related problem of finding a proper relationship with Nature, a solution which sets Byron apart from other Romantics and shows him to be infused with the true spirit of Greece.

My approach I have endeavoured to keep as flexible as possible in order to adapt to the various forms taken by Byron's adaptations of the classics. Thus sections such as the Haidee episode of *Don Juan*, where Byron's classical imitation is very dense, require fairly close textual criticism, with lengthy quotations, whereas other sections, demonstrating the influence of concepts, are less closely tied to the text, though hopefully with such references as support my theories. Such methods would seem to reflect Byron's own approach, at times using detailed and very apt imitation and at others using allusions to classical texts only sporadically, like signposts back to the source of his ideas.

One of the things this study shows is that in declaring his allegiance to a classical tradition, albeit on his own terms, Byron differs radically from his major contemporaries (a difference sometimes forcefully asserted, as in his attacks on the "narrowness" of The Lakers). At the same time, inevitably, he shares many of their preoccupations, but in having recourse to the classics, and in his interest in preserving their wisdom for his own age, Byron shows himself to be, in the terms of the Eighteenth century controversy dramatised in Swift's *Battle of the Books*, a "classic"; a classic in an age of "moderns". While other "Romantics" turned their backs on their recent antecedents in their search for a new poetic, Byron fiercely defends Pope and Dryden, fellow "classics" who also built their poetry on firm classical precedent and berated the bad taste of their own times. This study is by no means intended to be exhaustive, but, I hope that, as a survey of the main strains of classical influence, it will shed light on a hitherto much-neglected side of Lord Byron's work.

BYRONIC EPIC

Near the beginning of *Don Juan*, Byron claims

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
 Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
 With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
 A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
 New characters; the episodes are three:
 A panoramic view of hell's in training,
 After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
 So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

All these things will be specified in time,
 With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
 The *Vade Mecum* of the true sublime...(I,cc - cci)

But just how seriously are we to take this claim? Byron's typically flippant language and his own practice in writing a poem whose digressive and self-revelatory nature, not to mention the informal, chatty style, seems to stand in direct contravention of the strict formalism and objectivity normally regarded as hallmarks of Greek art, and certainly of Greek epic. Yet Byron uses many allusions to earlier epics and both in the poem itself and in his correspondence, repeatedly mentions his epic aspirations: according to Medwin, Byron seriously regarded *Don Juan* as "an epic as much in the spirit of our day as *The Iliad* was in Homer's¹".

Perhaps it is wise to pause here to ask exactly what constitutes "epic", for this is by no means as clear as it may seem. Even those two great pillars of the genre, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, are radically different, as Aristotle, cited by Byron above as an authority, notes in his *Ars Poetica*, classifying one as "simple", the other as "complex".² The *Ars Poetica*, however, is theory, and more significant in the development of epic seems to be practice;³ rather than following the edicts of an independently-developed theory, epic poets tend continually to be "looking over their shoulders" at the work of their epic predecessors, anxious to reproduce not only features of style such as the "epic simile", but also entire set pieces, such as The Grand Battle, or The Descent Into The Underworld.

Indeed, as Brian Wilkie notes in *Romantic Poets and the Epic Tradition*, this form of "compulsive imitativeness"⁴ is one of the few definitive features of epic. Perhaps, then, epic is best described as a tradition,⁵ but still it is a peculiar one because, as Wilkie observes, "the great paradox of epic lies in the fact that the partial repudiation of earlier epic tradition is itself traditional".⁶ "No great poet has ever written an epic without radically transforming it or giving it new dimensions and often that intention is explicitly declared"⁷ as in Milton's intention to "soar above" his predecessors.

To illustrate the paradoxical nature of this imitation/repudiation pattern, Wilkie gives us the analogy of putting new wine in old bottles,⁸ ie. the old epic style and situations are carefully reproduced but the content is changed. The epic poet, Wilkie claims, demonstrates the superiority of his theme by indicating that his poem is moving into the position formerly occupied by the works of a predecessor, to show that the predecessor has been "beaten on his own ground".⁹ Thus Milton's claim for *Paradise Lost's* greatness rests on the superiority of his Christian theme to anything known by pagan writers, a claim supported by conveying his new theme in an old vehicle, a process which, by keeping the form constant, draws attention to the novelty of the content.

Wilkie's model fits perfectly too in the case of Vergil. Of him Wilkie says: "into meticulously careful reproductions of the Homeric moulds he poured moral and political messages that are quite simply incompatible with Homeric objectivity".¹⁰ This he did with the express purpose of becoming the "Roman Homer",¹¹ substituting a Roman ideal of conduct for the Greek one expounded in the Homeric poems, which was deemed culturally inappropriate for a contemporary Roman setting. But where does Byron's *Don Juan* fit into this pattern? Wilkie's answer is to link *Don Juan* with Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* as "mock epic" in which, he claims, epic elements are used "not to place the book in a long and honourable tradition but to reject that tradition as outmoded"¹². Fielding, he suggests, does not, after the fashion outlined above, use epic's stylistic features to assert the superiority of his subject, but rejects the epic form and with it the approach to human conduct which epic enshrines; "where epic exalts our imaginations", he claims, "Fielding brings them down to earth".¹³

Yet is not this down-to-earth quality, alongside the sublime passions of his larger-than-life heroes, one of the marks of Homer's greatness and one reason for Byron's identification of Fielding as "the prose Homer of human nature". K. Solomou, in his Ph.D. thesis, "Byron and Greek Poetry", records that "Byron regarded Fielding's work as a genuine and modern emanation of that [Homeric] tradition".¹⁴ Looking at the Ismail cantos of *Don Juan*, Solomou concludes that through the savagery of his portrayal of war and through frequent allusions to Homer's work, Byron is willing us to compare his treatment of war with Homer's, and to see from the comparison that what we encounter in *Don Juan* is "genuine epic tradition freed from the trappings of degenerate imitation";¹⁵

the spirit of Homer, not the mere surface of his text. Homer Byron salutes, as he does Fielding, as a fellow realist, a poet who knows he does not detract from the poetry of his work by including the comic or the "low". Though often seen as a romanticizer of war, Homer does not shirk from showing us the ugliest, goriest detail of the battlefield, and is fully alive to war's pathos, a pathos which extends to the entire human condition. Alongside the grand passion of Achilles, we see Ajax compared to a stubbornly noble donkey, and great heroes receiving a faceful of dung at the funeral games. *Don Juan* has been termed "a huge, baggy monster",¹⁶ and accused of cynicism in its rapid shifts between comedy and seriousness¹⁷ yet Byron rejoiced "but it's life, damme, it's life", something he likely felt also about Homer's work, and this is why we can talk of Byron freeing "genuine epic tradition...from the trappings of degenerate imitation". It may be that in this mission to rescue Homer, we have one of the underlying reasons why *Don Juan*, the only poem in which Byron makes the claim for epic status, has this "holdall" character.

Certainly, the possibility of such a mission is something Wilkie rather overlooks. This omission is the more remarkable when, to illustrate his claim that "the great paradox of the epic tradition lies in the fact that the partial repudiation of earlier epic tradition is itself traditional", he turns¹⁸ to Wordsworth's analogy of "poets even as prophets", each with

his own peculiar dower, a sense
By which he is enabled to perceive
Something unseen before. (1805 *Prelude* XII 301-5)

Wilkie explains that the Hebrew prophets delivered God's revelations "in opposition to the corrupt beliefs and practices of their times",¹⁹ threatening the status quo and risking persecution. The analogy and Wilkie's explanation of it would fit perfectly with the analysis of Byron's adaptation given above. But Wilkie then goes on to shift the emphasis onto the novelty of the poet/prophet's contribution, whereas in the original analogy, the emphasis was on the renewal of an older message obscured by accretions and corruptions. Though of course not precluding novelty, a prophet's message could be novel only in the sense that it revealed more of the truth; there could be no question of the repudiation of God's law, a law which could not be legitimately repudiated, since it is never-changing. Each prophet might be granted a clearer insight into the truth and thereby might be able to add to a previous prophecy, but the only legitimate "repudiation" could be that of corruptions which had grown up around earlier revelations.

Much of *Don Juan* is an attempt to purify the Homeric essence of such corruptions and misinterpretations. Byron is not concerned so much to produce a new message as to "polish up" Homer's message and present it to his age. To do this, he uses a new form, not a new content. Wilkie's theory is not really designed to fit this approach and so he concludes that Byron is parodying epic. Such a view stems partly it seems from Byron's

characteristic flippancy, easily mistaken for disrespect (even his best friend, Hobhouse found this too much at times), partly from the failure to apply the Hebrew prophet analogy properly. I can certainly find no evidence of Byron's parodying Homer, though he does parody other poets of the the epic tradition. This is the essential difference between Byron's adaptations of Homer and Vergil. Wilkie's problem here is that, failing to distinguish adequately between Homer and the later "Epic Tradition", he views Byron as parodying all epic while in reality Byron is on Homer's side, defending his "corner" against the falsifications and corruptions of epic tradition, much as a prophet seeks to defend the purity of Revelation. Byron is highly imitative of Homer, but this is to show his affinity with Homer, not to parody him. This is something Wilkie's model cannot cope with; for him, "poets observe the fine print in the letter of the law as markedly as they vaunt their independence in the greater matters of subject and theme".²⁰ My argument stands Wilkie's quotation on its head: Byron vaunts his independence of the fine print of the law while observing the greater matters of subject and theme. Following this interpretation, one can say that Byron invokes Aristotle and "The Rules" only ironically, stressing that he is mischievously flouting them to stress in turn how close he remains to the spirit of Homer.

Such an interest in the content rather than the form of classical poetry manifested itself as early as Byron's schooldays. It has been a long-standing critical fallacy (one perhaps promulgated by Thomas Moore as a vindication of his belief that classical learning exercised a deadening influence on natural poetic ability)²¹ that Byron's classical knowledge was poor on account of the boring methods of teaching to which he was exposed. Solomou does sterling service in refuting this fallacy by referring to the curricula and methodology of Byron's schools. This research reveals a striking amount of repetition and rote learning aimed at giving a complete familiarity with texts, including the memorization of some pieces, particularly Homer and Vergil. This would seem to conform to Byron's famous memory of "the drill'd dull lesson". However, in the notes to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron elaborates on this: "I wish to explain that we become tired of the task before we can comprehend the beauties".²² Of course, "for Byron to complain of a sense of loss with regard to these, he had to have at least a sense of what he had lost".²³ And despite the repetitiveness of some of the work, Percy M. Thornton, in *Harrow School and its Surroundings*, says of Harrow's headmaster, of whom Byron grew very fond, "Dr. Drury was peculiarly happy in reproducing the beauties of the poetical figure".²⁴ Byron's own comments on his school work seem to have fostered the belief in his dislike of the classics as when he claims scanning "Attic metres" was "enough to beget an antipathy to poetry for the rest of a man's life".²⁵ Yet this, like the quotation above, can be seen as a manifestation of impatience at having to wrestle with the technicalities of poetry before he could fully appreciate the beauties. With the typical Byronic desire to

exaggerate his own wickedness or lack of pedantry, Byron stresses his idleness at school (despite having been top of the fifth form and a monitor in the sixth), yet admits to being capable of "great sudden exertions (such as forty or fifty Greek hexameters, though with such prosody as it pleased God!) but of few continuous drudgeries".²⁶

Looking at Byron's early translations we see a continuation, or a culmination, of this mixture of enthusiasm and impatience with regard to the Classics. Here, incidentally, may lie the roots of Byron's extreme reaction to Brougham's comments in *The Edinburgh Review* on *Hours of Idleness*. Brougham writes, "viewing them as school exercises, they may pass", and protests, "why call the thing on page 79 a translation, where two words...of the original are expanded into four lines".²⁷ This was to miss the point entirely, as Solomou suggests, finding Byron anxious to

render the meaning as he sensitively responds to it rather than merely produce a strictly literal translation, a task in which Byron is certainly uninterested.²⁸

This statement Solomou backs up by a study of Byron's translation from the *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus, where he finds Byron apparently enjoying altering the versification, changing the rhythm and stanza length, and adding rhyme. In his translation from the *Medea*, Byron is even freer, making four stanzas into seven, the first four stanzas taking their ideas from the first two stanzas of the original and expanding on the themes of the original two stanzas "taking them as a whole rather than employing a straightforward one-to-one correspondence".²⁹ Byron continues in this vein throughout his translations, leading Solomou to the conclusion that "Byron draws inspiration from the poetical ideas, but departs from the original, recreating it as a poem of his own".³⁰ This approach to translation we find reflected in Byron's opinions on producing original works. One of his abiding opinions was that while it was sound policy for the modern poet to base his work on the firm foundation laid by classical predecessors, he must adapt it to his own age. Thus great drama could only be the product of

Writing naturally and regularly and producing regular tragedies like the Greeks; but not in imitation, merely the outline of their conduct adapted to our own times and circumstances.³¹

And in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Walter Rodwell Wright is praised for his ability to "rend the veil of ages long gone by".³² This is the ethos underlying Byron's claims to be writing an epic for his times; he is proclaiming, like a Hebrew prophet, the true Homeric essence, freed from the "veil" of later adaptations.

* * *

It is typical of Byron that he should carry the weight of his (considerable) classical learning lightly. Byron's education seems to have been partly designed to give the sort of easy familiarity with the classics that was a hallmark of gentlemanly conversation in the eighteenth Century.³³ The results of this we see in Byron's letters, liberally sprinkled with witty and apposite quotations from a huge variety of sources, and, of course, in his work, particularly in *Don Juan*, where the loose style gave free rein to this type of creativity.

Sometimes only a few words suffice, eg. when, at *D.J.* VIII, liv, we are told that Juan dashed on "like a spurr'd blood horse in a race", we may recall the incident in *The Iliad* when Achilles and Hector chase round the walls of Troy "like powerful race horses round the turning point" (p.49). Earlier, Achilles is described as running with "The speed and easy action of the winning horse in a chariot race when he puts on a spurt and finishes the course" (p.397). Significant is the fact that though it greatly enriches our appreciation of the work, if we lack a knowledge of the classics this does not detract from our appreciation since the simile stands quite happily without its classical heritage. Similar in operation is the simile in *Don Juan* when Lady Adeline takes up her harp to sing to Juan "Graceful as Dian when she draws her bow" (*D.J.* XVI, xxxviii). This recalls the episode in *The Odyssey* (p.326) when Odysseus reveals his superiority to the suitors by being the only one able to string his great bow, a process likened to a bard stringing his lyre. Byron turns the simile around, but the echo is still there, and highly appropriate since in both cases, the bow/harp/lyre is being used as a test: here Lady Adeline is using it to test how much Juan knows of the Black Friar. *Don Juan* is full of such instances. Byron's touch is always light in these matters, but often he displays a depth of understanding which belies his off-hand manner of delivery; he almost invariably, even in the shortest allusions, demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity to the setting and connotations of his source material.

Despite his painstaking recreation of the surface texture of Homeric epic, as per Wilkie's model, that most famous of Homeric imitators, Vergil, often lacks such sensitivity towards his source. Many of these surface features had evolved, as C.M. Bowra observes in *From Vergil to Milton*,³⁴ from the exigencies of oral composition, yet Vergil, somewhat decadently attempts to reproduce these features in literary epic (a genre or tradition, as Bowra notes, significantly different from oral epic) when the conditions which made such devices necessary no longer apply. Such features remain in Vergil's texts like facades left after the buildings behind them have been demolished. This description may be applied with some aptness to Vergil's use of formulae. Albin Lesky notes that in Homer we find:

In the perpetual flux of epic language, new formulae were being invented even at a late date, and old formulae were still being pressed into the poet's service. In this way epic language developed its peculiar richness: much that was old remained amid the inrush of the new, and forms of widely diverse age and origin were used side by side.³⁵

Though each poet might create his own formulae, the skill of the epic poet of Homer's time lay less in the coining of new formulae than in the skilful combining of formulae inherited from his predecessors. C.A. Trypanis concludes in *The Homeric Epics* that "the phrasal unit of epic poetry is not the word, but the formula";³⁶ in Vergil, as a poet of written epic, it is the word. The paratactic, formulaic style of oral epic developed as a means of coping with the difficulties presented by oral recitation. Formulae may vary in length from a few syllables to several lines, helping the poet to meet the demands of hexameter and to expand and elaborate at will a basic episode.³⁷ Sometimes, indeed, formulae seem redundant except as "padding" in this way, eg. formulae such as "the wine dark sea" or "rosy-fingered dawn" which can be slotted in wherever there is a gap of that number of syllables in a line. Because they carry little meaning, they provide convenient resting places, staging posts, as it were, where the audience may "reculer pour mieux sauter" for when it is required to apply its attention to more demanding sections. Even when not used as mere padding, formulae do put less strain on the audience's powers of comprehension because, having been familiar with the formulae from the works of earlier poets, the audience is able to absorb each formula as a concept, en bloc, without breaking it down into its constituent elements and deciphering the grammar or the meanings of individual words, as one would have to do with more original word combinations. With such formulae, C.H. Whitman notes in *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, "the ear no longer distinguishes the words so much as accepts the phrase whole".³⁸ Whitman also observes how students are frequently able to translate a formulae correctly despite having forgotten exactly what word means what.³⁹ Since formulae would also be remembered in this way by the poet, this would lessen the demands made on his memory resources.

Vergil does use formulae, but only of the shortest type, eg. "pius Aeneas" and "fiery Dido". Such "perpetual epithets" are a very specialised subset of formulae, but even these are not justified to the extent that they are in Homer, since Vergil is not having to cope with the exigencies of oral composition. As Bowra puts it,

even when he follows Homer in using the oral device of repetition Vergil goes his own way and makes variations on a given form. For him the artifices of oral poetry are valuable for their archaic elegance; their beauty is no longer functional.⁴⁰

This blind reproduction of the surface features of Homer's poetry without regard to the spirit which should inform them is again evident in a simile borrowed by Vergil from *The Odyssey*. In Homer, this simile could, incidentally, be termed a formula, one of the lengthier examples of the species, because it appears twice, the same wording being used in each case. The simile concerns Odysseus' beautification by Athene, first for his

appearance, newly-washed, before Nausicaa, and again before he makes himself known to Penelope. The simile is as follows:

Just as a craftsman trained by Hephaestus and herself in the secrets of his art takes pains to put a graceful finish to his work by overlaying silver-ware with gold, she finished now by adorning his head with added beauty. (p.109)

Vergil imitates the simile for the occasion when Venus makes Aeneas more attractive for his first meeting with Dido just as he leaves the cloud in which she has enveloped him in order that he might reach the temple unseen. Vergil's version reads thus:

His mother had imparted a grace to his hair, she had shed on him a rich glow of youth, and set a gay sparkle in his eyes; like the shine which art can give to ivory, or like silver or marble inlaid in yellow gold. (p.45)

On the surface, this would seem to be perfectly satisfactory, and fully in accordance with Wilkie's paradigm, reproducing features of his Homeric model, albeit for his own specific purpose. And Vergil does have his own purpose here since Venus' beautification of Aeneas is part of her larger plan to safeguard him against the malevolent plotting of Juno by ensuring that Dido is disposed to be hospitable to Aeneas' storm-wearied men. The next step in this plan is to send Cupid, in the guise of Ascanius, to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas completely. Because it is so well integrated into the plot, one might argue that the simile is even more justified than in its model in *The Odyssey*; for while in *The Aeneid* Dido does fall in love with Aeneas, as intended by Venus, the simile in *The Odyssey* mysteriously leads nowhere. The same criticism can be levelled at Athene's appearance to Nausicaa. Certainly, Athene must find some way of getting Nausicaa in Odysseus' vicinity (although surely the resourceful Odysseus could have cleaned himself up and found his own way to Alcinous' palace!), but why should she mention marriage to Nausicaa? This is finally activated in *The Aeneid* in Venus' plan to ensure Aeneas' favourable reception (this may indeed have been the element that made Vergil copy the simile in the first place). According to what we are told by Homer, the reason for Nausicaa's not running away, like her maids, when Odysseus appears is her confidence that "there is no man on earth, nor ever will be, who would dare to set hostile feet on Phaecian soil" (p.107). Her hospitality is due not to Odysseus' attractiveness (he has in any case not yet been cleaned up and beautified by Athene), but to her piety, her awareness that "all strangers and beggars come under the protection of Zeus", and that, as she says of Odysseus, "your manners prove that you are no rascal and no fool". Athene thus seems to have been expending her energy needlessly and Homer's simile seems not to be justified in the context, formulaic in the worst sense, in comparison with Vergil's simile which is fully integrated into his plot.

But while Vergil has in one sense improved on Homer by fully integrating his simile to larger plot concerns, his wholesale transferral of the Homeric simile again betrays a remarkable insensitivity to his material and a neglect of other concerns. To begin with, although it is appropriate that as Aeneas' mother, Venus, should be anxious to protect him, she is the goddess of love, not of craftsmanship, as Athene was in Homer's original simile, and there is no justification for her connection with art and craftsmanship in Vergil's simile. In this respect, Vergil's simile is more inappropriate than Homer's. This is all the more striking when one takes into account the fact, noted by W.F. Jackson Knight in *Roman Vergil*, that Roman deities characteristically exist only at certain moments and within very limited spheres.⁴¹ Henry W. Prescott also comments on this aspect of Vergil's work in *The Development of Vergil's Art*, giving the example that, while Homer's Poseidon takes part in the Trojan war, lives on Olympus, and is generally active outside his domain, Vergil's Neptune is inseparable from the sea.⁴² By the same count, although Juno is connected with storms as an extension of her connection with "furor", the fury that comes of futilely opposing her will to Fate, she cannot cause the storm directly, but must go to Aeolus who is guardian of the winds. Furthermore, when Neptune sees the ocean in turmoil, he turns to the winds, saying:

Make haste and withdraw and give your king a message from me. Dominion over the ocean sanctioned by the ruthless trident was allotted not to him but to me. His place is the rock's vast cavern where, Wind of the East, you winds have your home. That is the royal court of Aeolus. There he may vaunt his sovereign pride, so long as he keeps the prison of the winds well barred.
(p.31)

Here we see evidence in support of Knight's and Prescott's assertion that the separate spheres of the different gods are rigidly defined and this specifically Roman trait, plain to see in Vergil's own work, makes it all the more surprising that Vergil should allow Venus to step out of her own sphere in this simile. By substituting Venus for Athene without due regard to the propriety of the substitution, Vergil not only breaches the conventions of Roman mythology but also reveals his ignorance of the importance of craftsmanship for Homer. Even in his briefest, most casual Homeric borrowings, Byron generally shows a greater sensitivity. This is strange, since one might have expected the scholarly Vergil, setting out with the express purpose of becoming the "Roman Homer", to have been a better imitator of Homer, but in fact he repeatedly shows himself to have been interested almost exclusively in the surface textures of Homeric epic, not the content, the spirit that informs the surface. This would accord with Wilkie's theory that epic poets imitate the surface in order to show how the original content has been superceded by the new content proposed by the later writer. But, returning once more to Bowra's comment, such surface detail is no longer functional and is justified only by the desire to borrow an

"archaic elegance". Byron's imitations are of a different order since he is less interested in creating archaic elegance, the outward form of epic, than in transmitting the content of Homer in a new form appropriate to his age.

"Nowhere is an epic poet more truly himself than in his similes", proclaims Anthony J. Podlecki.⁴³ As noted, the formulae which comprise the bulk of the narrative in Homer's poems were inherited from previous generations of epic poets. C.M. Bowra, in *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, claims that "while in the narrative Homer maintained a close and consistent archaism, in the similes he allowed himself more rein and freely borrowed from the life he saw about him".⁴⁴ Albin Lesky, however, in *A History of Greek Literature*, disputes that there should be any question of conscious archaism, such as a modern novelist might use, pointing to the fact that "the poet alludes to things of his own time far more than a conscious archaizer would do".⁴⁵ The "archaism" in Homer is not deliberate but due simply to the formulaic nature of his narrative. In the composition of oral epic, formulae from different epochs become placed anachronistically together but possibly there was no consciousness on the part of the poet or his audience of the anachronisms resulting.⁴⁶ In the similes, however, the poet could allow free rein to his originality and hence, amidst all the jumbled formulae of different periods in the narrative, we find similes which show life as it was lived in Homer's own time, eg. Lesky notes that "Homeric heroes live on roast meat and are only reduced to fishing by the direst necessity; but in similes, fishing in various forms appears with the frequency of an everyday pursuit".⁴⁷ Even more significant is the fact that, while the narrative of *The Iliad* deals with young, healthy noblemen living according to the heroic code,⁴⁸ the similes include homely details from the life of humbler people, eg. women weighing wool or dyeing ivory for saddle decorations. Such similes show that the heroic life is not everything and that its true worth can be appreciated only when compared to the simple or homely. The inclusion of this dimension is clearly very important to Homer. The homely, domestic world often depicted in the similes corresponds in part to that which goes on within the walls of Troy: in contrast to the fit young Greek warriors, glimpsed only in warriorly pursuits, in Troy we see alongside the warriors, the old, women and children, a full cross-section of life. It seems likely that this refusal to exclude the mundane, less conventionally grand or heroic aspects of life was one of the factors that would endear Homer to Byron.

But the subjects of Homer's similes, especially the most down-to-earth ones, which, as has been shown, are the ones most intimately tied up with the everyday life of Homer's time, and thus are those least likely to be relevant to Byron's age. After all, what have women dyeing ivory saddle decorations got to do with Regency England? For his similes, Byron takes subjects from the world he knew, hence the comparison of a marriage broken by adultery to a "pipe of claret when prick'd", or a slave market with its mixture of black and white races to a backgammon board. Even when Byron does borrow a simile of this

homely nature from Homer, he adapts it, as with the simile used by Homer to describe the Greek troops at page 52: "The long-haired soldiers of Achaea were...as many and as restless as the unnumbered flies that swarm around the cowsheds in the spring, when pails are full of milk". In one sense, such a simile is as valid today as when it was first written, because taken from the timeless world of Nature, but such matters were not part of the drawing-room world that Byron knew so well and so we find English matchmaking women described as being "like flies o'er candy" as they buzz round 'the Fortune' (XII, xxxii). Byron is using images from his world in the same way that Homer uses images from his; the result is the same, though the means are superficially different, and not what one would consider conventionally "epic".

"Knights and dames I sing,/Such as the times may furnish" (*D.J.* XV,xxv), he trumpets, recalling his earlier parodic misquote from Spenser, and adds:

Your writers, who must either draw again
Days better drawn before, or else assume
The present, with their common-place costume. (*XV,xxvi*)

"Common-place" is a key word for Byron, alluding as it does to *Don Juan's* Horatian motto, "difficile est proprie communia dicere", which has been variously translated, but of which perhaps the closest, most literal translation would be "it is difficult to talk of common-place things in an appropriate manner", the implication being that it is difficult to integrate such matters to one's poetry, and thereby "dignify the common-place". In *Don Juan*, Byron is constantly "dignifying the common-place", as indeed Homer does, by making poetry of it. Byron tirelessly attacks "the Lakers" for trying to create a cosy, artificially self-enclosed world which hides from the physical, the sordid, or the merely mundane -- an attempt not to dignify the common-place, but to exclude it altogether. Holding up his own practice as an example, Byron claims to "sketch the world exactly as it goes", insisting that "The world is a curious sight/And very much unlike what people write". So far I have talked only of contemporaries like "The Lakers" as the targets of Byron's criticism, but it seems that Vergil too is included in the attack.

It is true that, in comparing Vulcan, rising in the early hours to forge Aeneas' new armour, to a poor woman who works into the night to make enough money to bring up her family, Vergil shows that he too is aware of the homely, domestic dimension of Homer's similes. Yet we have only one such simile in the whole of *The Aeneid*. Vergil seems uncomfortable with such commonplace detail, which seems strange when one recalls the earthiness of *The Georgics*. One must assume that he judged such matters inappropriate to the dignity of epic, to Roman "gravitas" (especially since the gods, or at least Fate is treated with great seriousness in *The Aeneid*), only including this one simile to prove that he did in fact understand what Homer was trying to do, and could reproduce

the effect himself. Had he fully understood Homer, he would have seen that the exclusion of earthy detail is not a prerequisite of epic grandeur. Thomas Greene, in *The Descent from Heaven*, finds that

The energy of epic breathes a kind of excitement which is like the basic human excitement of living bodily in a physical world.⁴⁹

This is something which Byron shares with Homer, but which totally eludes Vergil.

This is evident in the treatment of meals. Byron and Homer share an interest in meals, an affinity first suggested in the Haidée episode, where Byron describes the meal cooked by Haidée and Zoe for the recently-shipwrecked Juan thus:

They made a most superior mess of broth,
A thing which poesy but seldom mentions,
But the best dish that e'er was cooked since Homer's
Achilles order'd dinner for new comers. (II,cxxiii)

At this point, Solomou protests that "Byron does not really emulate Homer, since the reader who does not know how to make a superior broth will be none the wiser after reading *Don Juan*".⁵⁰ It is true that Homer does often go into some detail in his descriptions of meals, as in the instance alluded to here (II. p.166), or at page 244, where Nestor is served broth by his servant (Byron seems to have confused these two meals). As Solomou suggests in his quotation, we feel that we could, after reading Homer's poems, cook up a semblance of the meals eaten by Homer's heroes, eg. p.216:

Their comely attendant mixed them the pottage with Pramian wine, and after making it ready by grating into it some goat's milk cheese with a bronze grater and sprinkling white barley on top, she invited them to drink.

But Byron does not entirely overlook this aspect of Homer's work: for instance, at the illicit feast that Haidée throws for Juan, Byron is more detailed, including careful descriptions of the surroundings and tableware, frequently another feature of Homeric meals, as in the example above (II. p.214), observing that "cloves, cinnamon and saffron too were boil'd up/With the coffee" and that

The beverage was various sherbets
Of raisin, orange, and pomegranate juice,
Squeezed through the rind, which makes it best for use. (III,lxii)

Here Byron displays exactly the recipe quality of Homer noted by Solomou, and his pride at this is evident in *Don Juan* XV, lxii, where he boasts:

...what Muse since Homer's able
(His feasts are not the worst part of his works)
To draw up in array a single day-bill
Of modern dinners?

Vergil does not share Byron and Homer's fascination with food. It should be noted that the Homeric meals alluded to in relation to Byron (Il. p.166 & p.214) are fairly informal meals, for a small group of friends and as such can be separated from "feasts", which have a more formalised, ritualistic character. Only these feasts seem to interest Vergil, the less formal meals of Homer presumably being inimical to Vergil's ideas on epic propriety. But even in Vergil's imitations of feasts, there is a vagueness, despite apparent attempts at detail, eg. p.34:

The Trojans now prepared to deal with the game on which they were to feast.
Some of them flayed the hides from the ribs, disclosing the meat. Others then
cut the meat into steaks and spitted it, quivering.

Vergil misses the true Homeric spirit which Byron captured so well. We are left with the impression that he felt duty bound to include such descriptions, as part of the "surface" of epic, but that his heart wasn't in it. Vergil wants his epic to direct us to spiritual matters, to leave behind the bodily, as is suggested by the fact that the only meals he describes in *The Aeneid* are the grand feasts, which are more like rituals than meals. This is a very different approach to that of Byron and Homer whose epics remain firmly rooted in everyday physical realities of which eating becomes almost a symbol, a surrogate for other bodily functions, as when Byron muses

...that the act
Of eating, with another act or two,
Makes us feel our mortality in fact
Redoubled. (V,xxxii)

So often does Odysseus moan about his belly that it becomes a kind of in-joke in *The Odyssey*, eg. p.266: "If there is anything that a man can't conceal it's a ravening belly -- that utter curse, the cause of so much trouble to mankind" and, at page 118, "my heart is sick with grief, yet my hunger insists that I shall eat and drink. It makes me forget all I have suffered and forces me to take my fill". In sharp contrast to Achilles, whose grief over the death of Patroclus is such that he refuses food, one cannot imagine Odysseus' grief ever being sufficient to take away his appetite! Homer's famously audacious comparison of Odysseus to a blood pudding cooking on the fire seems to form part of this sequence of joking references to his hero's obsession with the belly. Bearing in mind this earthy aspect of the poem's hero, it is perhaps not surprising to find that it is to *The Odyssey* he turns for his closest and most sustained piece of Homeric imitation.

2

NAUSICAA AND HAIDEE

Although several influences feed into the Haidée episode, at least at the start it is parallels to Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa which are most marked. In both the Juan/Haidée encounter and that of Odysseus and Nausicaa, the heroes land on a kind of island paradise, an event marked by a dramatic change in the weather. After the storms which have wrecked the heroes, the island is imaged as a place of perfect stillness; the weather seems always good. The lush fertility of Scheria is pictured thus in *The Odyssey*:

Outside the palace but stretching close up to the gates, and with a hedge running down on either side, lies a large orchard of four acres, where trees hang their greenery on high, the pear and the pomegranate, the apple with its glossy burden, the sweet fig and the luxuriant olive. Their fruit never fails nor runs short, winter and summer alike. It comes at all seasons of the year, and there is never a time when the West Wind's breath is not assisting, here the bud, and here the ripening fruit; so that pear after pear, apple after apple, cluster on cluster of grapes, and fig upon fig are always coming to perfection.
(p.115)

This has its parallel in the abundance of Haidée's isle:

Above them their dessert grew on its vine,
The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er,
Dropp'd in their laps, scarce pluck'd, their mellow store. (III,xxxix)

From the start of the episode, Byron's imitative intentions are made clear: in each case, the hero is washed up alone on this idyllic land. Though both good swimmers, they are exhausted and must fight to avoid being swept back out to sea; Juan must dig his nails into the sand, Odysseus clings desperately to a rock, though he is swept off, leaving pieces of skin on the rock like the suckers of an octopus, as Homer puts it. Juan and Odysseus both fall into an exhausted sleep, to be found the next day by a beautiful young girl, a girl who has refused many suitors from her native land, but who immediately falls in love with the handsome stranger.

Collapsed on the beach, Juan is first described thus:

...like a wither'd lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay, (II,cx)

and then again,

...like a young flower snapp'd from the stalk,
Drooping and dewy on the beach he lay. (II,clxxxvi)

This links him to Haidée who, at the moment of her death, is also described with reference to a drooping lily:

...her head droop'd, as when the lily lies
O'ercharged with rain. (IV, lix)

Similes comparing a dead warrior to a flower are so common in epic as to be almost formulaic. The simile used to describe Haidée's death has similarities with two similes from *The Iliad*, one of which describes the death of Gorgythion:

Weighed down by his helmet, Gorgythion's head dropped to one side like the lolling head of a garden poppy, weighed down by its seed and the showers of spring. (p.153)

Similar is the comparison that marks the death of Euryalus in *The Aeneid*:

He was like a bright flower shorn by the plough, languishing and dying, or poppies, weighed by a sudden shower of rain, drooping their heads on tired necks. (p.239)

The simile from *The Iliad* is one of the most touching of Homer's many descriptions of dying warriors, capturing beautifully the idea of youthful potential in its details of the heavy load of seed and spring showers. These features are strangely absent from Byron's version, an omission that is all the more surprising when one considers that the idea of seeds and fruitfulness would have fitted in perfectly with the rest of the imagery of the Haidée episode concerning organic growth, fertility, dew and spring freshness. Three explanations for this occur:

1. That Byron had forgotten the very details from the Gorgythion simile that had made it stick in his mind in the first place (this would support my proposition that Byron is interested less in the surface of a text than in its underlying content).
2. That his simile is based not on Homer's simile, but on Vergil's, which lacks these details.

3. That Byron is prepared to sacrifice these details in order to use a lily rather than a poppy in his simile, the lily being a fitting symbol of purity. Used of Juan, it suggests his slender, youthful build and effeminate, "drooping" capturing perfectly this delicacy.

In connection with this broken or drooping flower imagery, we may note that the other simile used to describe Haidée's death also has precedents in both Homer and Vergil, where warriors falling in battle are frequently compared to trees being chopped down. Later on in *Don Juan*, at the siege of Ismail, we are told that the old Khan's "florid race/...grew like cedars round him gloriously" (VIII,cxvi), and that his youngest son "became" the earth "like a fell'd tree". But the reference to Haidée falling "like a cedar fell'd" is not an image standing in isolation: when we are introduced to her, we are told that "she grew to womanhood" "like a lovely tree" (*DJ*, II,cxxviii), a simile recalling Odysseus' enraptured comparison of Nausicaa to "a fresh young palm tree shooting up by the altar of Apollo" in Delos (p.106). The tree similes used to describe Haidée fit perfectly the imagery of natural growth that surrounds her, a complex of images which at the same time as it suggests vitality, suggests finite lifespan and the inevitability of decay. From the outset (though in reading through the section, we may notice it only gradually) there is a sense that this is all "too good to be true", and this impression is progressively strengthened, eg. at III,ix, Byron digresses:

All tragedies are finish'd by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage;

and two stanzas later, stanza xii begins "Juan and Haidée were not married". Byron quickly distracts our attention from the broad hint:

...but
The fault was theirs, not mine: it is not fair,
Chaste reader, then, in any way to put
The blame on me.

Yet, however he may obscure the hint, it still remains. In Canto IV, we are told that Juan and Haidée "could not be/Meant to grow old, but die in happy spring" (viii). Indeed, their love is doomed, Byron all the while increasing tension by delaying what we come to know must be inevitable; the awful vengeance of Lambro. The presence of this doomed quality seems somewhat out of place in *Don Juan*, where we never know what will happen to Juan next in his erratic and eccentric adventures. It seems likely that it is a result of Byron's imitation of *The Odyssey* that this fated quality appears in this section of *Don Juan*.

Parallels with Odysseus' homecoming (where the sense of destiny increases as it becomes clear that Odysseus will be granted his vengeance on the suitors) are now starting to predominate over those with the lighter Nausicaa episode. The first hint of such a parallel between Odysseus' and Lambro's returns may be the submerged reference to Ithaca at III, xviii. Like Odysseus, of course, Lambro has been away at sea for some time and comes back loaded with treasure. We are told that Lambro, "on seeing his own chimney smoke, felt glad", recalling Athene's words to Zeus at the start of *The Odyssey*; "Odysseus would give anything for the mere sight of the smoke rising up from his own land". Just as Odysseus had to bear the abuses of the suitors, so Lambro has to bear the insults of the drunks at Haidée's feast, who, Odyssey-style, failing to recognise their returned master, tell him that the old master is dead and that there is now a new one. Byron has also attempted to emulate Homer's tactic of delaying the final confrontation with the suitors, to build tension. Odysseus lands on Ithaca at Book XIII, yet it is not until Book XXII that he has his final battle with the suitors. Byron's version is obviously much condensed, but he does emulate surprisingly well the feel of his Homeric original, by cutting between Lambro and the banquet with its leisurely descriptions of food and furnishings. All this is, as Solomou records,¹ according to the epic norm, but Byron delays things further by a long digression on poetry, only picking up the threads of the Juan and Haidée story again at IV,viii. As is common in Byron, the method may be unorthodox when compared to Homer, but the end is the same.

Alongside the straightforward imitation of Homer, however, we do find instances where Byron has inverted his Homeric model. Most obviously we find that the Penelope figure in Byron, Haidée, has given in to her suitor, and that while Odysseus orders his bard to sing and play as loudly as he can to make the Ithacans think there has been a wedding, here there really has been. Byron's technique of parallelism/inversion is never more obvious than in the following passage:

The approach of home to husbands and to sires
 After long travelling by land or water,
 Most naturally some small doubt inspires --
 A female family's a serious matter...
 Wives in their husbands' absences grow subtler,
 And daughters sometimes run off with the butler.

An honest gentleman at his return
 May not have the good fortune of Ulysses,
 Not all lone matrons for their husbands mourn
 Or show the same dislike to suitors' kisses;
 The odds are that he finds a handsome urn
 To his memory -- and two or three young misses
 Born to some friend, who holds his wife and riches;
 And that *his* Argus bites him by -- the breeches.

(III,xxii - xxiii)

This comes near the start of the section describing Lambro's return and sets the tone for what is to follow, drawing attention to its links with Odysseus' homecoming. Solomou dismisses this as "comic updating",² but it is something more. Byron is certainly using a modern and flippant tone, as is his wont, and this might lead one to dismiss the section in this way, but in fact it is not so far removed from Homer as Solomou implies. It is not a case of Byron criticising Homer for not being true to life (as Solomou suggests) in giving *The Odyssey* such a happy ending. It is true that on his return, Lambro finds his "Penelope" has been unfaithful, but does not Homer remind us of just how exceptionally lucky Odysseus has been by repeated references to the case of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, substantially parallel to Odysseus and Penelope's case but with an opposite outcome. One can explain similarly the fact that Lambro's first concern upon returning to find a party in progress is money rather than morals: he looks on in hyperbolic horror,

Dreading the climax of all human ills
The inflammation of his weekly bills. (III,xxxv)

Byron has translated the scenario into a modern idiom -- we would hardly expect a pirate to have bills, never mind weekly ones. But we should not forget (as one suspects Solomou has), that in the pragmatic, domestic world of *The Odyssey*, both Odysseus and Telemachus (especially Telemachus) are concerned at the financial damage the suitors are doing to the family estate. Similar is Haidée's fear that if her father should find Juan, he would sell him into slavery, and the fact that this is precisely what Lambro does when he discovers Juan. This too has a precedent in Homer, when the suitors threaten to sell Odysseus, disguised then as a beggar, into slavery (p.314). Lambro's concern for money dominates the episode, infecting even the bard at Haidée's feast:

And being fluent (save indeed when fee'd ill),
He lied with such a fervour of intention --
There was no doubt he earn'd his laureate pension. (III,lxxx)

Where the reference to "laureate pension" makes us compare him to Southey, berated by Byron for his abandonment of youthful revolutionary ideals. Hence, to further point the resemblance, Haidée's bard is styled "an Eastern anti-Jacobin" and a "turncoat". The treatment of the poet here is in dramatic contrast to the praise accorded by Homer to Demodocus, the bard at Alcinous' court (his status being reflected in the fact that Odysseus gives him the best cut of meat), and to Odysseus' bard who is enlisted by the suitors for their entertainment but who remains loyal to his master throughout. Loyalty seems, in fact, to be a hallmark of bards in Homer; Agamemnon trusted his bard to look after his wife Clytemnestra while he went off to fight at Troy, and even though Clytemnestra was

unfaithful, the bard was not, and had to be disposed of by the queen's lover (p.57). Thus the unscrupulous fickleness of Haidée's bard is made all the more striking and deplorable.

It is a measure of the closeness of Byron's imitation of Homer that he feels it incumbent upon himself to tell us when he departs from his model in the slightest detail, as when he informs us of the identities of Haidée and Zoe are "Lest they should seem princesses in disguise" (II, cxxiv). There may be further significance in this comment, however, since he goes on a few stanzas later to tell us that Haidée was "the greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles". The implication is that she has money but not aristocratic blood. Nausicaa, of course, is a real princess and her father entertains Odysseus royally with aristocratic largesse which contrasts with Lambro's bourgeois meanness that would have him throw Juan in irons and sell him into slavery. Although both Nausicaa's and Haidée's fathers are sea-faring men, the Phaeacians seem to sail for the sheer pleasure of sailing, or for the opportunity to broaden their minds through contact with other cultures; Lambro must sail to make a (dis)honest living. But surprisingly, in the light of his implication with one of Byron's pet aversions, slavery, and the fact that he destroys Juan and Haidée's love idyll, Lambro is treated with considerable sympathy. If there is any decline to sordid modern concerns, as Solomou suggests, it would appear to be due to the raw deal Lambro has received in life, for it is at this point that Byron slips in some propaganda for the cause of Greek independence, a theme already raised in the song "The Isles of Greece". Lambro was once a patriot, but

His country's wrongs and his despair to save her
Had stung him from a slave into an enslaver, (III, liii)

as he finds "The mercy he had granted oft abused" (III, liv). This Zeluco aspect and the glib antitheses of the poetry here, make Lambro similar to the old style "Byronic hero" of the early verse-tales, and help to make us more sympathetic to this rather unattractive character. That a large part of the Haidée's feast sequence is seen through Lambro's eyes also helps build sympathy, as well as making a further parallel with the returning Odysseus.

Although Lambro is a fearsome character, and indeed is bound to be seen very negatively for breaking up so brutally the idyllic relationship between Juan and Haidée, it is a mark of Byron's genius that initially, as he gradually discovers what has been going on in his absence, the threatening aspect of Lambro is played down and he is almost totally pathetic. This is expressed in what, for Byron, after the destruction of his own dreams of domesticity, seems by its recurrence to have been an archetypally pathetic situation:

He enter'd in the house no more his home,
A thing to human feelings the most trying,
And harder for the heart to overcome,

Perhaps, than even the mental pangs of dying;
To find our hearthstone turn'd into a tomb,
And round its once warm precincts palely lying
The ashes of our hopes...

He enter'd in the house -- his home no more,
For without hearts there is no home; -- and felt
The solitude of passing his own door
Without a welcome. (III,li - lii)

Pathos merges with Lambro's more ferocious aspect when he is compared to "the cubless tiger in her jungle raging" (III,lviii), the simile used by Homer to describe Achilles when he discovers that, during his absence from the battlefield, Patroclus has been killed. Achilles is described as

Like a bearded lion when a huntsman has stolen his cubs from a thicket, and he comes back too late, discovers his loss and follows the man's trail through glade after glade, hoping in his misery to track him down. (p.345)

Although at this stage, Achilles is helpless with grief, the simile cleverly presages his fatal pursuit of Hector. The same threat of vengeance is to be found in Byron's simile, as it looks ahead to Lambro's retribution on Juan.

As is Byron's usual practice, the imagery used is self-contained, but gains resonance from its Homeric associations. As well as revealing Byron's *modus operandi*, that he can tap into the meanings and associations of his source through such an apparently casual reference shows clearly the depth of his knowledge and appreciation of Homer. The potential for this kind of adaptation only becomes apparent, however, when Byron says of Lambro that "there wanted but the loss" of Haidée's affections to "turn him like the Cyclops mad with blindness." (III,lvii). This simile directs us back to that moment of Homeric genius where we are made to feel sympathy for the most hideous and barbaric of monsters. As is common in *The Iliad* (as, eg. at Hector's rejoicing in the capture of Patroclus' armour), we feel the pathos of being in a position to understand fully a situation of which the protagonist remains partially ignorant: as Polyphemus talks, in his misery and pain, to the ram under whose belly Odysseus is hanging, he supposes that the ram, usually the first out of the cave, is grieving for the loss of his eye, but we see Odysseus hanging underneath and know that Polyphemus is losing the last and best of his flock. To tap into this painfully ironic situation with such a short allusion would be remarkable enough, but like many of Byron's images, it acts like a signpost, directing us back to his source, in this case not only to a great moment of Homeric sympathy for an enemy, but to a much larger principle of structure in *The Odyssey*.

This principle of structure lies in the alternation between the sea and dry land, which gives to the work a characteristic rhythm. In *The Odyssey*, the sea is often portrayed as

frightening, uncontrollable, unpredictable; a symbol for the uncertainty of life lived out as the plaything of the gods, in this case particularly Poseidon, who controls earth forces like sea and wind. When on land, Odysseus' "nimble wits" swiftly make him master of any situation, but once he sets out on the sea, he is helpless.³ Partly this is due, as Greene observes, to the fact that, although his peril is greatest at this time, Athene, his "guardian goddess", refuses to help since this would involve direct conflict with Poseidon (the gods are much more loyal and careful not to tread on each other's toes in *The Odyssey* than they were in *The Iliad*⁴). All of the most awful terrors that Odysseus must face are connected with the sea: as well as actual storms, there are the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and Polyphemus. True, Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus is on *terra firma*, but he is the son of Poseidon, and embodies the hostility of the sea,⁵ what Thomas Greene, noting⁶ the mutually exclusive spheres of influence of the two principal deities in the poem, calls the "Poseidon Principle", matched in turn by a corresponding "Athene Principle". The Poseidon Principle is concerned with the qualities we have already associated with the sea; chaos, uncontrollability, "brute force", the Athene Principle with order, civilisation, the arts, thought. Perhaps the two concepts may best be understood by taking another look at the Cyclops incident in this new light. The Cyclopes are a wholly brutish race. This is reflected in the arrogance of the following passage, which contrasts directly with Nausicaa's comments on the special relationship the Phaeacians enjoy with the gods:

Stranger, you must be a fool, or must have come from very far afield, to preach to me of fear or reverence to the gods. We Cyclopes care not a jot for Zeus with his aegis, nor for the rest of the blessed gods, since we are much stronger than they. (p.146)

The Cyclopes are described in wholly negative terms:

We came to the land of the Cyclopes, a fierce, uncivilised people who never lift a hand to plant or plough but put their trust in Providence. All the crops they require spring up unsown and untilled, wheat and barley and the vines whose generous clusters give them wine when ripened for them by the timely rains. The Cyclopes have no assemblies for the making of laws, nor any settled customs, but live in hollow caverns in the mountain heights, where each man is lawgiver to his children and his wives, and nobody cares a jot for his neighbours.

Not very far from the harbour on their coast, and not so near either, there lies a luxuriant island, covered with woods, which is the home of innumerable goats. The goats are wild, for no man has made pathways that might frighten them off, nor do hunters visit the island with their hounds to rough it in the forests and to range the mountain-tops. Used neither for grazing nor for ploughing, it lies forever unsown and untilled; and this land where no-one goes makes a happy pasture for the bleating goats. I must explain that the Cyclopes have nothing like our ships with their crimson prows: nor have they any shipwrights to build merchantmen that could serve their needs by plying to foreign ports in the course of that overseas traffic which ships have established between nations. Such craftsmen would have turned the island

into a fine colony for the Cyclopes. For it is by no means a poor country, but capable of yielding any crop in due season. Along the shore of the grey sea there are soft water-meadows where the vine would never wither; and there is plenty of land level enough for the plough, where they could count on cutting a deep crop every harvest-time, for the soil below the surface is exceedingly rich. Also it has a safe harbour in which there is no occasion to tie up at all...
(p.142)

Polyphemus' lack of civilisation is also reflected in his abuse of the laws of hospitality, firstly by asking his guests where they came from before they have eaten and secondly by imprisoning and eating some of them. As noted earlier, Polyphemus is the son of Poseidon and so a fitting representative of the Poseidon Principle. Though the Phaeacians had been the Cyclopes' neighbours, and are also related to Poseidon, their lifestyles are poles apart.

Nausicaa and her father represent the acme of good breeding and hospitality, carefully looking after the shipwrecked Odysseus and selflessly conveying him back to Ithaca with many gifts. Nausicaa's "savoir faire" is revealed in her request that Odysseus does not accompany her on her way through the city lest the people should gossip. She does not flee like her maids upon finding Odysseus, confident that "there is no man on earth, nor ever will be who would dare to set hostile feet on Phaeacian soil. The gods are too fond of us for that". The gods so love the Phaeacians that Alcinous can say:

In the past they have always shown themselves to us without disguise when we have offered them their sumptuous sacrifices; at our banquets they rub shoulders with us. Even when a traveller meets them on his lonely way, they make no concealment for we are near to them. (p.117)

Phaeacian refinement is evinced by the richness and taste displayed in the decoration of Alcinous' palace. Not only are things beautiful and costly, but great stress is put on their being the product of human skill;⁷ words such as "wrought", "inlaid", "carved", and "well-made", carry a significance that goes beyond mere "epic idealisation" to suggest the Athene Principle:

Walls of bronze, topped with blue enamel tiles, ran round to left and right from the threshold to the back of the court. The interior of the well-built mansion was guarded by golden doors hung on posts of silver which sprang from the bronze threshold. The lintel they supported was of silver too, and the door-handle of gold. On either side stood gold and silver dogs, which Hephaestus had made with consummate skill to keep watch over the palace of the great-hearted Alcinous. (p.114)

Chairs are draped with "delicately woven" covers and

The house keeps fifty maids employed. Some grind the apple-golden corn in the handmill, some weave on at the loom, or sit and twist the yarn, their hands fluttering like the tall poplar's leaves, while the soft olive oil drips from

the close-woven fabrics they have finished. For the Phaeacians' extraordinary skill in handling ships at sea is rivalled by the dexterity of their womenfolk at the loom, so expert has Athene made them in the finer crafts, and so intelligent. (pp.114-5)

The importance of Athene for the Phaeacians is suggested by the observation that Nausicaa directs Odysseus past "a wood sacred to Athene" on his way to the palace. In referring to the Phaeacians, he often appends the formula "those famous sailors" or something similar to remind us of how civilised they are. Shipbuilding is, for Homer, the highest possible expression of civilisation. Not only do ships require craftsmanship in manufacture and skill in sailing, but they are a symbol of man's ability to harness a chaotic force, the force represented by the Poseidon Principle. While the Cyclopes do not sail at all despite the perfect natural harbour they possess, having no interest in expanding their cultural or economic horizons by contact with other civilisations, the Phaeacians seem to sail for pleasure; "they have no use for the bow and quiver but spend their energy on the graceful craft they love to sail across the foam-flecked seas" (p.110). The ships of the Phaeacians, we are informed, are "as swift as a bird or as thought itself" which makes a further link to Athene, justifying further their identification as the embodiment of Greene's Athene Principle, since she is often described as moving "as swiftly as a bird or as thought itself"; after speaking to Telemachus, she vanishes "like a bird through a hole in the roof" (p.33), and she watches Odysseus dealing with the suitors in the guise of a swallow sitting on a rafter.

Immediately after Scheria (characterised, as noted, by its calmness and order), we are confronted by all the horrors of the sea, beginning with the Cyclopes episode, and hence the opposition between Athene and Poseidon Principles is immediately highlighted. This opposition underpins the entire poem. When Odysseus bores into Polyphemus' eye with his fire-sharpened pole, the deed is described by a detailed simile from shipbuilding:

Seizing the olive pole, they drove its sharpened end into the Cyclops' eye,
while I used my weight from above to twist it home, like a man boring a ship's
timber with a drill which his mates below him twist with a strap they hold at
either end, so that it spins continuously. (pp.149-50)

As the moisture in the eye hisses and bubbles up around the heated pole, Odysseus is "reminded of the loud hiss that comes from a great axe or adze when a smith plunges it into cold water -- to temper it and give strength to the iron". The detail of this description shows that this is intended to be seen as a victory of the Athene Principle over the Poseidon Principle; of the civilised skills of shipbuilding (albeit used in an unorthodox manner) over a monster that is a child of the sea. In contrast, the palace of Menelaus, like that of Alcinous is fitted with everything of the best; its walls are burnished and, as an

awed Telemachus exclaims, "the whole place gleams with copper and gold, amber and silver and ivory". Everything runs with perfect smoothness:

Helen, with her ladies came down from her lofty perfumed room, looking like Artemis with her golden distaff. Arete drew for her a comfortable chair; Alcippe brought a rug of the softest wool; while Phylo carried her silver work basket, a gift from Alcandre, wife of Polybius who lived in Egyptian Thebes, where the houses are furnished in the most sumptuous fashion. This man had given Menelaus two silver baths, a pair of three-legged cauldrons, and ten talents in gold; while in addition his wife gave Helen beautiful gifts for herself, including a golden spindle and a basket that ran on castors and was made of silver finished with a rim of gold. This was the basket that her lady, Phylo brought and set beside her. It was full of fine spun yarn, and the spindle with its deep blue wool was laid across it. (p.67)

Everything is of the very best. The same could be said of things in *The Iliad*, where chariots, swords, etc. are all invariably "well-made". But in *The Iliad*, this seems only to be part of a general tendency to idealize a distant, heroic world; in *The Odyssey*, it is developed and made to form part of a larger pattern, as I have been arguing.

As would be expected, Odysseus' home is full of artifacts, suggestive of the Athene Principle. Even Eumaeus, when Odysseus first sees him, is engaged in a craft, "cutting a piece of good brown leather and fitting a pair of sandals to his feet" (p.215). We are also told how busy he has been looking after Odysseus' swine, building walls and a "closely set stockade made of split oak which he had taken from the dark heart of the logs" (p.215). Everything is of the best, but further to this, there is a fascination with the processes of its manufacture. The key to the storeroom where the great bow is kept has "a well-made copper key which had an ivory handle" and its great oaken threshold is "the work of some carpenter of bygone days, whose adze had smoothed it well and trued it to the line and whose hands had fixed the doorposts too in their sockets and hung the polished doors upon them" (p.317). Penelope recognises Odysseus by the detailed account of how he made his carefully-crafted bed (which is "finished...off with an inlay of gold, silver, and ivory", p.346). Athene is clearly Odysseus' patron, and they enjoy an intimate, informal relationship,⁸ as when they sit down together like old friends under an olive tree to plot the downfall of the suitors. The goddess acknowledges this affinity between them when she says,

We are both adepts at chicane...in the world of men you have no rival as a statesman and an orator, while I am pre-eminent amongst the gods for invention and resource...that is why I cannot desert you in your misfortunes: you are so civilised, so intelligent, so self-possessed.

Penelope too, clearly embodies the Athene Principle, being crafty like her husband, and skilled in handicrafts, both of which Athene-influenced skills combine in her ruse to put off the suitors. The suitors, by contrast, are lazy, boorish, and gluttonous drunks, like

Polyphemus. They are at heart uncivilised, thus it is fitting that, being spiritually, as it were, creatures of the sea, ie. manifestations of the Poseidon Principle, when killed they should lie "like fish that the fishermen have dragged out of the grey surf in the meshes of their net onto a bend of the beach, to lie in masses on the sand, gasping for the salt sea water until the bright sun ends their lives": when confronted by the forces of civilisation, they die like "fish out of water" (fishing, like sailing, being another civilised skill which enables the hostile sea to be put to good use). Byron adapts this episode and its important imagery pattern in the dedication to *Don Juan*. Southey, typically, is criticised for attempting "to soar too high", ie. higher than his limited poetical powers will take him, thus in the simile, he is a fish which, trying to reach for the airy element to which it is unsuited, is left "gasping on deck", "quite a-dry, Bob", a highly appropriate end for one whom Byron regards as "quite a-dry", ie. boring (and sexually inept). "The Lakers" as a whole lend themselves well to being imaged as the Odyssean suitors, since they are in a sense "suitors" to the king, and it is largely this traitorously sychophantic aspect which so alienated Byron. There was doubtless considerable satisfaction in equating himself, as he embarked on this great crusade against cant and bad taste, with Odysseus, sweeping away the false and ill-bred suitors.

In the account of Haidée's feast in Canto III, which, as noted earlier, owes much to the account of Alcinous' entertainment, we see the same complex of imagery, with its Odyssean stress on craftsmanship. As well as the richness and lavishness of the food, we find

An ivory inlaid table spread with state
 Before them, and fair slaves on every side;
 Gems, gold, and silver, form'd the service mostly,
 Mother of pearl and coral the less costly. (lxi)

Cups are "Gold cups of filigree" (lxiii)

The hangings of the room were tapestry, made
 Of velvet panels, each of different hue
 And thick with damask flowers of silk inlaid;
 And round them ran a yellow border too;
 The upper border, richly wrought, display'd
 Embroider'd delicately o'er with blue,
 Soft Persian sentences in lilac letters. (lxiv)

Crystal and marble, plate and porcelain,
 Had done their work of splendour; Indian mats
 And Persian carpets, which the heart bled to stain
 Over the floors were spread. (lxviii)

There was no want of lofty mirrors, and
The tables, most of ebony inlaid
With mother of pearl or ivory, stood at hand,
Or were of tortoise-shell or rare woods made,
Fretted with gold or silver. (lxix)

Just as in *The Odyssey*, this imagery is used to separate out those who know how to live in a civilised manner and those who do not. The Phaeacians are a yardstick against which other beings are measured and the same is true of the Haidée episode of *Don Juan*; Haidée's isle is like a Garden of Eden from which Juan is exiled, and on his journey through the poem, he encounters three false or Acrasian paradises, which are recognisable as such because they fall short of this ideal, partly paralleling and partly inverting the imagery of the Haidée episode.

VERGIL'S FALSE PARADISES

The Haidée episode, too, however, has something of a dual aspect, possibly due to its being influenced by more than one source. At times it resembles, as noted in the previous chapter, the ideal represented in *The Odyssey* by the eminently civilised Phaeacians, in its references to inlay and the skills of craftsmanship generally. However, it is also implicated with the feasting of Penelope's suitors in its excessive lavishness, an aspect which would also link it with Dido's feast in *The Aeneid*, an instance of the self-indulgence and Eastern opulence which distract Aeneas from his mission. Excessive richness, verging on impracticality (the classical Greek aesthetic ideal consisting of the perfect balance of form and function) is suggested by the reference to "carpets which the heart bled to stain" (III, lxviii) which is echoed in the unambiguously negative context of Gulbeyaz' palace (V, lxv-lxvi). The blacks, dwarfs and eunuchs which appear in the same stanza of the Haidée section are also to be found as trappings of Gulbeyaz' palace:

And dwarfs and blacks, and such like things that gain
Their bread as ministers and favourites
(That's to say, by degradation) mingled there. (lxviii)

The reference to making money by degrading oneself may make one think of Haidée's poet. That Byron also linked these in his mind is shown when the poet is listed with such creatures at lxxviii:

And now they were diverted by their suite,
Dwarfs, dancing girls, black eunuchs, and a poet.

As noted, the poet is a parody of Homer's bards, and his presence here seems to indicate a degree of decadence, a falling off from the ideal celebrated in Homer. The drunken servants clearly parallel Penelope's suitors (failing to recognize their master and telling him he has been superceded), and the poet sings the praises of "Samian wine" as a means of forgetting Greece's woe. Byron could understand, but never condone, the chronic apathy of the Greeks who would rather try and forget the Turkish occupation of

their country than try to throw it off by martial force, so this is a further negative element, one which may indeed also be implicated with Aeneas' self-indulgence and forgetfulness of his mission, at Dido's court (we may recall that the wine given to Odysseus' crew by Circe also brought forgetfulness of the "mission" of returning home). Yet however decadent Haidée's feast may be, Juan and Haidée seem exempt from this negative aspect. Despite the artificiality and opulence around her, Haidée is still an unspoilt child of Nature, as is shown by the natural imagery which surrounds her:

Her hair's long auburn waves down to her heel
Flow'd like an Alpine torrent which the sun
Dyes with his morning light...
And...seem resentfully to feel
The silken fillet's curb. (III,lxxiii)

Similarly, her gold bracelet is not hard and constraining, but

...so pliable from the pure gold
That the hand stretch'd and shut it without harm,
The limb which it adorn'd its only mould; (III,lxxi)

and although Haidée wears make-up, it is "in vain":

Her eyelashes, though dark as night, were tinged
(It is the country's custom), but in vain;
For those large black eyes were so blackly fringed,
The glossy rebels mocked the jetty stain,
And in their native beauty stood avenged:
Her nails were touch'd with henna; but again
The power of art was turn'd to nothing, for
They could not look more rosy than before. (III,lxxv)

In having Juan and Haidée remain unaffected despite the fact that their surroundings are opulent to the point of decadence, Byron may again have been influenced by *The Odyssey*, where, amongst all the tasteful and exquisitely-crafted surroundings of Odysseus' palace, the suitors are boorish and uncivilised.

Vergil's Carthage is certainly marked by opulence and grandeur. Everything seems overdone; our introduction to Dido is through the "vast and sumptuous" temple that she is building, its "great scale", being mentioned several times. As Aeneas stands, looking up in awe at this huge edifice, one may recall Odysseus, similarly awed, looking up at the grand doors of Alcinous' palace, which were "golden doors hung on posts of silver which sprang from the bronze threshold" (p.114). Dido's temple doors may be modelled on these doors:

Bronzen were the raised thresholds to which the stairways led; bronze clamped the beams; of bronze were the doors which made the hinges groan. (p.41)

The idea of having doors so huge that they make the hinges groan (like "carpets which the heat bled to stain") clearly suggests excess, the ostentatious display of wealth here having taken precedence over functionality. The same is true of Aeneas' gift to Dido (already ominously tainted by its association with Helen), "a figured gown stiff with lace" (p.47). Homer might have praised a "figured gown", but never one so decorated that it was stiff. Just as Juan and Haidée's guests are offered "about a hundred dishes" for dinner (III, lxii), Dido, extravagantly, it seems, sends to Aeneas' friends on the beach "twenty bulls, a hundred bristling hogs backs" and "a hundred fat lambs with their ewes" (p.47) and there are, in all, two hundred and fifty servants, all this surely going beyond the limits of "epic idealisation", towards excess.

As Thomas Greene clarifies,

The value placed by *The Odyssey* on beautiful artifacts and on the cultural refinement they manifest is here suspect...Vergil was writing not for an audience whose achievement of culture was precarious and uncritical but for an audience whose traditions of austerity were threatened by power, luxury and corruption.¹

In *The Odyssey*, he concludes, one asks "how barbarous or how refined?", in *The Aeneid*, "How austere or how decadent?". It is just such decadent, oriental over-refinement that a Roman audience would expect to find associated with Carthage. When Mercury finds Aeneas, he is compromisingly dressed (p.105) in "a rich cloak of Tyrian purple, a gift from Dido herself, who had made it, picking out the warp-thread with a line of gold" and hanging at his waist is a dainty sword, its hilt "starred with golden-brown jasper", evidently more for decorative than martial purposes. Just prior to this, Iarbas has styled Aeneas "this second Paris, wearing a Phrygian bonnet to tie up his chin and cover his oily hair, and attended by a train of she-men" (p.103). This impression of Aeneas is given divine corroboration from Juno, who says of Venus: "she has borne a second Paris" (p.185) Turnus shares this view, calling Aeneas "that half man of a Phrygian", praying that he may "foul in the dust that hair crimped with curling tongs and oiled with myrrh!" (p.312). Aeneas must lose this effeminate taint, linked with the old Troy and with the caddish Paris, and look ahead to when there will be a "Roman breed, drawing strength from Italian manliness". In Evander's house, Aeneas is cleansed of his taint of oriental effeminacy and imbued with the Italo-Roman contempt for "luxuria".² Evander's house, repeatedly referred to as "humble" and "poor", and where one sleeps on the floor on a bed of leaves, could hardly be further from Dido's ostentatious temple.

Mercury chastises Aeneas for "living at wasteful leisure in Carthage". "Leisure" is almost a dirty word for Vergil; what he values is suffering and hard work, both of which he sees as civilising and character-building. In the *Georgics*, we find Nature a harsh and brutal taskmaster, the farmer having to work incessantly to prevent weeds and vermin from over-running the farm, but the reward of such work is that he is brought into harmony with Nature, deriving from this a sense of well-being that can come from no other source.³ As T.J. Haarhoff notes, Vergil "stands for the idea that the ideal of service is to produce harmony between man and nature, man and man, man and God".⁴ Similarly, in *The Aeneid*, through suffering and bending his will to that of heaven, Aeneas brings himself into harmony with the universe, and then nothing can stand in his way. Vergil confronts us with a concept of civilisation different from that of Homer: for Homer, civilisation is signified by fine craftsmanship, open-mindedness, and good manners, while for Vergil, civilisation means submission to the rule of heaven and hard, well-organised work. We see this ideal when Aeneas and his storm-wearied men arrive at Carthage:

Achates struck a spark from a flint, the first thing to be done...Others, although utterly weary from their plight, fetched out some grain which they had saved, though it was worse for sea-water, and utensils for cooking, they prepared to grind the corn on stones and bake bread. (p.32)

Meanwhile, maintaining the boy-scoutish atmosphere, Aeneas goes off and returns with seven stags to feed his men. We see the same ideal of organised work on our first view of the Tyrians in the process of building Carthage:

The Tyrians were hurrying about busily, some tracing a line for the walls and manhandling stones up the slopes as they strained to build their citadel, and others siting some building and marking its outline by ploughing a furrow. And they were making choice of laws, of offices of state, and of councillors to command their respect. At one spot they were excavating the harbour, and at another a party was laying out an area for the deep foundations of a theatre; they were also hewing from quarries mighty pillars to stand tall and handsome beside the stage which was still to be built. It was like the work which keeps the bees hard at their tasks about the flowering countryside as the sun shines in the calm of early summer, when they escort the new generation, now fully grown, into the open air, or squeeze clear honey into bulging cells, packing them with sweet nectar; or else take over leads brought up by their foragers; or sometimes form up to drive a flock of lazy drones from their farmsteads. All is a ferment of activity; and the scent of honey rises with the perfume of thyme. (p.40-1)

One crucial aspect of the work going on here is that it is well-organised, the work being divided into several tasks, each performed by different groups. This same fair division of labour marks the activities of the Trojans when they first land on Dido's shores, and it is

this same quality that endears bees to Vergil (they held the same fascination for him in the *Georgics*); they too share the ideal of a fair, organised division of labour. When we first see Dido, she is presented as the perfect Vergilian ruler:

Already announcing new laws and statutes to her people and deciding by her own balanced judgement, or by lot, a fair division of the toil demanded of them. (p.43)

Put differently, Dido is acting like a man, and this seems to be why Vergil finds her praiseworthy here. Through Dido, we are presented with another variation on the Penelope story, where on this occasion, we find the husband genuinely dead and the wife refusing all suitors, content to rule on alone in place of her dead husband. Her masculine aspect is implied also in the simile (itself a recasting of a simile describing Nausicaa in *The Odyssey*) by which Dido is introduced:

She was like Diana when she keeps her dancers dancing on the banks of Eurotas or along the slopes of Cynthus, with a thousand mountain nymphs following in bands on this side or that; she is taller than all other goddesses, as with her quiver slung from her shoulder she stops on her way, and a joy beyond words steals into Latona's heart. (p.43)

Although Diana is a symbol of womanhood, she is a symbol of a specific kind of womanhood; chaste, cool, distant, asexual even, which suits her identification with the moon. She has a masculine role and accoutrements, being conventionally, as here, depicted as a huntress, with bow and quiver. She is "taller than all other goddesses", and is here taking a masculine role as leader of her nymphs. The simile fits Dido's situation in several particulars. But Dido cannot maintain this masculine role when Aeneas comes, imaged in a parallel simile:

He was like Apollo when in winter he leaves Lycia and the river Xanthus and visits his mother's isle, Delos, to start the dancing anew, while around his altar, Cretans, Dryopians and tattooed Agathyrsans mingle and cheer; Apollo himself paces on the slopes of Cynthus, with his clattering bow and arrows slung from his shoulder and his flowing hair pressed into neatness by a soft wreath of leaves and held by a band of gold. Aeneas walked as alertly as he; and a grace like Apollo's shone from his noble face. (p.101)

In the presence of a dominant male figure, Dido is forced (with the complicity of Venus and Juno) back into a female role, the role not of leader or initiator but the passive one of victim. Some lines earlier this is expressed figuratively:

A doe caught off her guard and pierced by an arrow from some armed shepherd, who from a distance had chased her amid Cretan woods and without knowing has left in his winged barb. (p.99)

Again, the details of the simile parallel exactly what has happened to Dido, the arrows of the "armed shepherd" blending into those of Cupid. It will also be noted that it is a doe not a stag that features in the simile, further reinforcing the idea that Dido is being pushed back into a female role. One should recall that earlier, as mentioned, Aeneas goes out hunting Dido's stags to feed his men. The setting of these similes is important. Dido is often pictured in woods, which seem to be her natural habitat, where she feels at home. Continuing the hunting motif, Vergil has Aeneas and Dido go "hunting in a forest together", and this, of course, is when Juno engineers the storm which causes them to seek shelter in a cave, with fatal consequences. A cave, it will be remembered, is also where Haidée hides Juan from her father and where they consummate their relationship, in a scene clearly modelled on Vergil's. In *The Aeneid*, the scene is described thus:

Primaeval Earth and Juno, mistress of the Marriage, gave their sign. The sky connived at their union; the lightning flared; on their mountain peak nymphs raised their cry. (p.102)

As Prescott notes,⁵ the lightning can be seen to correspond to marriage torches and the cry of the nymphs to the marriage song. That this was Byron's interpretation may be seen from an examination of his version:

...the stars, their nuptial torches, shed
beauty upon the beautiful they lighted:
Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
By their own feelings hallow'd and united,
Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed:
And they were happy, for to their young eyes
Each was an angel, and earth paradise. (II,cciv)

Byron even extends and modernizes Vergil's account, introducing the idea of solitude as their priest and "ocean their witness". the weather is perfectly calm for Juan and Haidée's union, and everything seems right and beautiful, in contrast to the violent storm that brings together Aeneas and Dido, with lightning not stars for "nuptial torches" and the frantic shrieking of nymphs. The Juan and Haidée match, where natural phenomena replace the conventional marriage trappings, is depicted as superior to a normal wedding, which, Byron observes acidly, is the product of love as vinegar is the product of wine (III, v). Byron vents his scorn for the institution of marriage at some length (II,cxcix-cci) all the time contrasting it with the wholly natural union of Juan and Haidée. He talks of how marriage seems inevitably to lead to adultery, starting with the unfaithfulness of the husband which is followed by the self-destructive fury of the scorned woman, described in details which quite neatly fit Dido's case:

...their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel. (II,cxcix)

But after this bleak view of marriage, Byron breaks off with "Haidée was Nature's bride, and knew not this" (II,ccii). She is wholly innocent, unlike Dido, who should know better. Indeed the two women are implicitly contrasted when Byron tells us:

Haidée spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
Nor offer'd any; she had never heard
Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
Or perils by a loving maid incurr'd
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird,
And never having dreamt of falsehood, she
Had not one word to say of constancy. (II,cxc)

This brings to mind the much less innocent attitude of Dido: "she called it a marriage; she used this word to screen her sin", and now she insists that she has some legal hold on Aeneas, which he counters by saying "nor have I ever made any marriage rite my pretext, for I never had such a compact with you". Aeneas and Dido's parting is cold and bitter, reducing their relationship to legal obligations, products of civilisation, and as such excluded from the free, natural relationship of Juan and Haidée:

She loved, and was beloved -- she adored,
And she was worshipp'd; after nature's fashion,
Their intense souls, into each other pour'd. (II,cxci)

It is very important to notice too, the setting of Aeneas and Dido's "marriage". It occurs in a wood, a dark, wild setting, exactly the opposite of the well-organised milieu in which we first encounter Dido, a world of huge, sophisticated buildings of cut and polished stone, a world bounded by laws and controlled by hard work. The laws of the newly-built Carthage do not extend to the cave where "Primaeval Earth" and Juno reign. In the organised world of cut stone and huge buildings, Dido was able to maintain her masculine role, a role linked with rationality, organisation and good judgement, symbolised by the stone edifices of Carthage, as well as by her comparison with Diana (for Vergil a fairly wholesome, as asexual, or even masculine, version of womanhood). Now, however, Dido has been dragged down from her identification with Diana and with the moon (a distant, cold, light-giving symbol of purity), to the dark, spongy, fecund earth. For Byron it is encouraging that Nature seems to condone and encourage the "wedding" of Juan and Haidée, with the implication that naturalness will make their union proof against the problems normally attendant upon marriage as a social institution. Vergil's "Primaeval Earth" by contrast seems to represent a nature that is somehow unnatural: it represents a nature frighteningly untamed, a nature that always threatens, if for a moment we let our

vigilance slip, to engulf us, preventing us as men from becoming all we can and should be. This is the Nature against which the farmer must be forever on guard in the *Georgics*; Vergil is not a poet to sing rapturously of wild Nature, but about Nature tamed by hard work. The elemental Nature we confront in this episode in the form of the wood, the cave, the earth, rain, thunder and lightning can be seen as illustrations of mental states. When in the city, Dido was in control, able to act out her masculine role of ruler and organiser, but here, without these external props, she submits to the dark, powerful, female urges that were suppressed in the city, and which are so terrifying to Vergil. Perhaps this may be better explained by reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a story with several close parallels to *The Aeneid*. Here Marlow notes that it is easy to abide by society's laws when there is a constable on every street corner, but when, in the dark depths of the primeval jungle, these props are removed, one is thrown back on one's own resources. Under these circumstances, it is much harder to resist the darkness within, the darkness of the primitive mind, that not thousands of years of civilisation have been able to eradicate. With a new appreciation of this, Marlow returns to the city, and sees grass growing up through the paving stones as a sign that civilisation is barely able to hold back the heart of darkness, Vergil's Primeval Earth, which always threatens to engulf us, as it did Dido, as it does the slothful farmer. As in Conrad's work, the dark, mysterious and irrational force, is both external, in Nature, and internal, in the heart of Man. I suggested that Primeval Earth signified for Vergil a kind of "unnatural Nature". This is because of its link with Juno, a symbol of the dark, mysterious and irrational force of female sexuality, as is indicated by her constant irrational opposition to the male principle, Zeus or Fate (it is not necessary to go into just how closely Zeus and Fate are connected here). Viktor Pöschl, in *The Art of Vergil*, notes that "the contrast between Jupiter's quiet serenity and Juno's angry passion"⁶ (enacted by surrogates in the episode of Neptune's calming the storm in Book I) underscores the inner tension of the poem. Brooks Otis claims that Juno stands for "furor, the ultimate irrationality that resists Fate".⁷ Juno suggests the unnatural precisely because of her opposition to Fate or the natural order. Hence she is responsible for disturbances in Nature, eg. the storm of Book I and that which brings Dido and Aeneas together in the cave. And just as the darkness and mystery of the forest and the cave have their counterparts in Dido's psyche, so Juno's disruptive influence acts on Dido's mind, causing internal "storms". Tellingly, as Dido allows her feminine side to dominate, she loses the capacity for reasoned judgement which was cited so approvingly by Vergil at the start of her story, and the building work on Carthage grinds to a halt. This fits with her abandonment of her male role to indulge herself in female sensuality. That sensual indulgence is viewed as a female vice by Vergil is

indicated by Aeneas' becoming increasingly effeminate, as Iarbas' and others' comments show, and, like Dido, he too forgets his mission and must be reminded by Mercury of his true role; the masculine role of empire builder. Pöschl claims that

In *The Aeneid*, we see for the first time the tragedy of man suffering from historical fate. The hero is never allowed to belong completely to the moment. If and when, as in Carthage, he seems to be caught up in the moment, a god reminds him of his duty.⁸

In contrast, he finds that Homeric heroes inhabit a "sensual present". This term might be applied to the brief period that Aeneas has with Dido before Mercury calls him back to his duty. The lovers live in a self-indulgent world oblivious to the outside world and to time passing. The idea of an enclosed world is suggested by the dark, womb-like space of the cave, suggestive in turn of fearsome female sexuality and mysterious, primaeval fertility.

In the Juan and Haidée story, the cave occupies a similar pivotal position. Juan and Haidée seem to live wholly in a world of their own, timeless and carefree, like Aeneas' and Dido's, and, as we have already remarked, Juan and Haidée's marriage is depicted, like Aeneas and Dido's, as wholly natural. The huge gulf between the two depictions, however, is that for Byron, none of this carries any negative connotations: that "Haidée...was Nature's bride...Passions child" is wholly good in Byron, since she is free of the falseness and corruption of the civilised world where "fashion has replaced passion". When he credits Juan and Haidée with "romantic feelings", Byron notes that:

This is in others a factitious state,
An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
But was in them their nature or their fate:
No novels e'er had set their young hearts bleeding. (IV,xix)

Byron's worry is not, as it is in Vergil, that we may, if not vigilant, be swept away by our passions, but that our passions may be submerged and lost in the falseness of civilisation. Passion in the Haidée episode is not a dark, frightening, disruptive force, but soft, calm and perfectly natural, suggestive of a pre-Fall innocent state. Byron depicts submersion in the indulgent, enclosed world of female sensuality as a consummation devoutly to be wished. Byron and Vergil's views are obviously poles apart, and this is never more apparent than in their attitudes to childbirth. As Pöschl says, Dido's wish that she might give birth to "some tiny Aeneas" to play about her hall may be touching, but it is "unforgiveably undignified".⁹ And yet why should it be "undignified"? It is perfectly natural that a woman should wish to bear the child of a man with whom she is passionately in love. But it is largely because it is a typically female desire that it is

"undignified" in Vergil. Byron values such creativity and fertility, as is suggested by the organic imagery of flowers, trees and luscious fruits in the Haidée section, set against the ugly, destructive, male world of war and empire-building he goes on to describe at Ismail.

In Lambro's absence, Juan and Haidée set up a kind of counter-culture of love and flowers and peace, a world from which outside worldly concerns are excluded. These concerns come rushing back in with Lambro's return. Lambro has been out "earning" a living, and his connection with outside worldly concerns is further suggested by his preoccupation with expenses. In coming across the sea to break into the enclosed world of the lovers, bringing a reminder of the world outside, Lambro resembles Mercury in *The Aeneid*, who comes at the command of Zeus to remind Aeneas that he cannot continue to indulge himself in Dido's hospitality, but must remember his mission, the need to found Rome, and tear himself away from the enclosed world of female sensuality to the outward-looking male world of empire, hardship and war. But while this is a source of relief to Vergil that his hero can now get back on the right track, for Byron it is tragic that the ideal love he has portrayed cannot be sustained. In each poem, the intervention of the Lambro/Mercury figure signals a new phase of action, ending in the death of the female character. Ostensibly, Haidée dies heart-broken at having lost Juan, but on another, more symbolic level, she dies because she was too frail to exist in the real world, a world which admits the wider concerns symbolised by Lambro. She is a simple, natural girl and cannot cope with the complexities of life in a wider context. Byron several times makes remarks which suggest this:

...they could not be
Meant to grow old, but die in happy spring,
Before one charm or hope had taken wing. (IV,viii)

They were not meant in the real world to fill
A busy character in the dull scene,
But like two beings born from out a rill,
A nymph and her beloved, all unseen
To pass their lives in fountains and on flowers,
And never know the weight of human hours. (IV,xv)

The world was not for them, nor the world's art. (IV,xxvii)

Haidée represents an ideal which cannot be sustained in contact with real life.

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Dido too dies because she cannot cope with the intrusion of larger masculine concerns into the enclosed female world of her love for Aeneas. In devoting herself wholly to Aeneas, she has immersed herself in emotionalism, and female irrationality to sacrifice "all

for love", and so cannot understand Aeneas' explanation of why he must leave her since it is couched in rational terms, the very language which is meaningless for her at this time.¹⁰ Here we see the great gulf between them: Aeneas' effeminacy was only superficial, a brief holiday interlude, and he soon remembers the masculine role he must play. Dido has totally abandoned her masculine role, being too far submerged in the female world of her passions to turn back. She refuses to believe that Aeneas can be leaving her; refuses to accept Fate, and this in itself is a sign of her possession by female forces, for such a refusal to accept Fate is a characteristic of Juno, the personification (or deification!) of the dark, emotional, irrational side of femininity treated so negatively in the poem.

Dido's unnatural desire to know and alter Fate is shown in her immoderately frequent visits to the altars of the various gods, to make sacrifices and offer prayers in the hope that she will be able to change her destiny. That even for a Roman reader this would seem excessive and unbecoming is shown by the picture of Dido peering "with parted lips into the message of their still-breathing vitals" (p.99). It seems that she does not receive the favourable signs she hopes for, but having seen this, she does not gracefully and piously submit, but makes more and more sacrifices, in the irrational hope that this will change the already-determined course of destiny. The close contact of Dido (she does not use a priest to perform the rites) with these animal sacrifices, described so graphically as "reeking" and "still-breathing", maintains her connection with the dark, the sensual, the physical, the sacrifices coming to assume a status similar to Primaeval Earth, as the opposite of the higher, more masculine, more spiritual faculties. In most philosophies and religions, the body is seen as dragging down the higher faculties and that to free them, one should mortify the flesh; attempt to repress its desires. Here we see Dido giving in, at the expense of what Vergil would see as the higher part of her being; her masculine, legalistic, judgemental side, seen at the start of her story.

This impression is reinforced by the reference to Dido's insisting "beyond all reason on hearing yet once more the tale of Troy's anguish" from Aeneas' lips, and by the fact that, though the banquet ends "as the moon in her turn quenched her light to darkness and the setting stars counselled sleep" (p.99), Dido remains alone in the deserted banquet hall, unable to stop thinking of Aeneas. She is out of step with Nature and, most significantly, with the moon, symbol of light, and the higher, masculine form of femininity. The moon has set, leaving Dido in a darkness that is also the metaphoric darkness of those deprived of "the light of reason", and the darkness recurrently connected with Dido's destructive female passions (it is immediately after this that Juno unveils her plan to trap Aeneas and Dido together in the cave).

Although Circe and her magic are given a fairly perfunctory treatment by Vergil as compared to that given by Homer, this is because, as Charles Segal observes, Vergil "has already transferred Aeneas' sensual temptation to an earlier stage in the figure of Dido".¹¹

Certainly there are several similarities between the two female characters. Homer's Circe, like Dido, is an expression of the dark, mysterious side of female sexuality, being able to turn men into swine and cause them to lose all memory of their homes, and their desire to return there. This, if taken symbolically rather than literally (the fantastic, such as the kind of magic which would change men into beasts, is excluded from *The Aeneid*), fits quite closely what happens to Aeneas. Circe also shares Dido's connection with the earth, hers being a kind of earth magic based on herbs and roots. Circe's castle lies in the midst of a dense enchanted forest. The coast of Carthage is covered in dense forest also, and one of the first impressions Aeneas and his men get of Dido's land is "an overhanging forest-clad mountainside, mysterious and dark", "mysterious and dark" being a description which attaches with almost formulaic frequency to Dido, though in the earlier part of the book, these seem unwarranted, merely giving a sense of menace which deepens as events unfold. Once Odysseus has defeated her magic, Circe becomes a lavish hostess, pampering Odysseus and his men, wanting to rest them and feed them up after the hardships of their travels. But this goes on too long until the self-indulgence and sloth becomes almost as sinister as the original magic (also enacted through food and drink), and Odysseus must be reminded by his men of the need to resume the journey home. The parallels are obvious, but gradually, as Dido becomes more frantic, she takes on more and more of Circe's sorceress character, already hinted at in her over-zealous performance of sacrifices, religious duties that, when carried out to this degree, become almost like black magic, especially in the shared aim of diverting the course of Fate. Such an opposition to Fate is suggested not only in Dido's inner turmoil, but in the many unnatural signs which accompany her actions, eg. as she goes to make her offerings, the holy waters turn black and the wine turns to blood, she imagines she hears Sychaeus calling her, and has nightmares of Aeneas pursuing her (p.111). As Vergil states explicitly, "Dido was possessed by demon powers". Her mysterious sorceress aspect intensifies as she gives herself up wholly to black magic, the unnaturalness of which is expressed in Dido's enthusiastic reference to the Massylian priestess (note how Vergil keeps up the identification of dark powers with women) who "can stay the current of a river and reverse the movement of the stars" (p.112). Dido's funeral pyre is built as a form of spell:

The queen had festooned the hall with flower-chains and wreathed the pyre with the greenery of death. On it was the bed, and there she placed a sword which Aeneas had left, with garments that he had worn, and a portrait of him...Around it were altars. The priestess, hair astream, told in a voice like thunder the names of her thrice-hundred gods, told Erebus and the Void and Hecate of three forms, who is Diana, the maiden of the triple countenance. She had sprinkled water, supposed to be from the fount of Avernus. Herbs, reaped with bronzen sickles by moonlight and bursting with a black, poisonous milk, were gathered there, and with them a love charm ripped from

the brow of a baby foal before the mother could take it. Close to the high altar stood Dido, holding the sacred meal and lifting pure hands above, with garment girt back and one foot unsandalled. (pp.112 - 113)

Here, although Diana is mentioned, it is with specific reference to her darker aspect, Hecate.

And yet, even in the midst of this black magic, there is for Vergil a positive element. Despite Dido's frantic indecision when she thinks first of begging Iarbas to marry her, then of chasing after Aeneas in the hope that he might take her with him, she finally sticks to a well-planned course of action, based on the correctly-reasoned conclusion that neither of these other propositions is really viable, that she has lost the respect of her people and that the only remaining option is death. By choosing this way out, she regains a measure of dignity, returning almost to the state in which we first encounter her. Her death is not an impulsive act, but one planned carefully and, although implicated with black magic, does not the building of her pyre recall the building of Carthage we see at the start of her story? This interpretation is supported by the fact that Dido is no longer connected with woods and organic matter, but with the marble of the altars she visits, of her bedroom, and of the shrine devoted to Sychaeus. Back in this male world of order and cut stone, Dido is able to see the full horror of what in the dark, womb-like cave seemed so right. Dido comes to appreciate that her female nature is alien to this masculine world and she cannot return to her old role as ruler of Carthage. The only possibility of preserving this masculine image of herself is to die grandly, in a masculine way, as it were. As Pöschl notes, "if passion obscured her true self, death confirms and maintains it on a higher and purer plane".¹² (One might take issue with the contention that "passion obscured her true self"; it seems more likely that, in Vergil's terms, it revealed her true self, but the rest of the quotation is valid). It is important for Dido to preserve the masculine image of herself "for a man walks among the shades in the form in which he leaves the earth".¹³ That Dido is aware of this, and that it forms part of her purpose in her grand and carefully-staged death is indicated by her remark "now my wraith shall pass in state to the world below". This should call to mind the stately procession of Dido to her temple at her first appearance before Aeneas; she had come full circle to regain a measure of the dignity she possessed initially. In the underworld, the same motifs recur and she is compared to flint or a block of Parian marble. This suggests that in the underworld she has succeeded in preserving her cold, masculine purity, even though she is seen in a dark wood. This impression is strengthened by the simile used to describe her as Aeneas sees her

dimly through the shadows, like one who early in the month sees, or thinks he sees, the moon rising through the clouds. (pp. 160 - 161)

Here the clouds represent the dark, sensual female side of Dido, and the moon the cold chastity of Diana. The image captures perfectly Dido's state at death; a nascent moon rising through the clouds paralleling Dido's attempt to recreate her masculine moon-self, pulling herself up from the dark clouds of sensuality.

Although the stagey aspect of Dido's death contrasts with the naturalness of Haidée's, there are deeper similarities. Just as Dido can no longer sustain a dignified persona in the face of life's complexities, and so must die, Haidée's idyll collapsed when faced with the intrusion of the outside world, and she too must die. In the coma, she is compared to marble, an image surely based on the imagery patterns of *The Aeneid*. Furthermore, as is the case with Dido, death is a way of fixing an ideal persona:

The ruling passion, such as marble shows
When exquisitely chisell'd, still lay there,
But fix'd as marble's unchanged aspect throws
O'er the fair Venus, but forever fair. (IV,lxi)

For both Dido and Haidée, the only way their best qualities (as perceived by their respective authors) can be preserved is in death.

As already noted, the organic imagery of flowers and trees that surrounds Haidée suggests a finite lifespan, the inevitability of decay, so from the start it is implicit that Juan and Haidée's love is doomed. I have already spoken of the fated, foredoomed quality to be found in the Haidée episode of *Don Juan* and suggested that this might be due to Byron's imitation of the episode of Odysseus' return in *The Odyssey*, but there is also much evidence to suggest that this fated quality has its origins in *The Aeneid*. If the pivotal actions of *The Aeneid* take place in the dark, twilight marks similar moments in the Haidée episode. This may be the time of greatest beauty, but this is at least in part because it is a beauty shortly to pass away into darkness. Sunset is always in Byron (and not just in *Don Juan*) a symbol of transience, as here at IV,xx:

They gazed upon the sunset; 'tis an hour
Dear unto all, but dearest to *their* eyes,
For it had made them what they were: the power
Of love had first o'erwhelm'd them from such skies.

Sunset, as a recurrent motif, has the cumulative effect of suggesting that their pleasures will be shortlived. Immediately after they consummate their love, Byron makes more explicit references to impending doom:

Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers. (III,ii)

This new atmosphere of doom would seem to coincide with Byron's switch from the Nausicaa episode of *The Odyssey* to the Dido section of *The Aeneid* as his principal model. As they lie in each others arms (at sunset), Juan and Haidée are chilled by the sight of a strange sign, "a large black prophet eye" (IV,xxii) which seems to track the sun as it is setting. We see in what way the eye is prophetic when Haidée, waking from a nightmare, sees another "dark eye", her father's, looking into hers. Nightmares and omens both have parallels in *The Aeneid* but are not regular features of Byron's work, suggesting that it could be Vergil's influence that is responsible for their presence here. A further parallel is that, after Haidée's death, the island seems to go to wrack and ruin, rather in the way that Dido's death "shades all Carthage as if it were being invaded and put to the torch by some enemy" (p. 117). As Aeneas looks back from his ship he sees "walled Carthage now aglow with tragic Dido's flames": the whole city is affected, just as the whole of Haidee's island is affected by her death.

The way in which Byron adapts Vergil's Dido episode clearly shows considerable familiarity with, and appreciation of, the older poet's work. But it may seem perverse that Byron should go to this Vergilian episode, showing an evil, unnatural love that must be rejected in favour of duty to illustrate a wholly innocent, wholly natural love affair. The answer lies in Wilkie's model of how one epic poet will subvert the contents of earlier epics while carefully imitating its surface features. This is not to say that Byron's imitation is quite of the kind Wilkie has in mind, the sort of stiff imitation of superficialities that we have seen to be typical of Vergil's adaptation of Homeric epic -- Byron has clearly updated to suit his own style and idiom -- but within his close imitation the intention to subvert Vergil's original message is clear. While Vergil's message is that the irrational, luxurious, female side is always lying in wait to trip us up and divert us from higher purposes, Byron's message is that submission to this side can be good and creative in contrast to the destructive male world of duty, responsibility, war and glory. It is true that the Byronic idyll comes to an end, as surely as does Vergil's, but this does not mean that Byron is saying the indulgence represented by Haidée is wrong, merely that it could not be sustained in contact with a harsh and fallen world.

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The Haidée episode does not, however, signal the end of Byron's imitation of Vergil. Carthage is one of a series of false paradises for Aeneas, others being Crete and Epirus. Byron too wishes to portray several false paradises for his protagonist, and he uses imitations of the Dido episode to identify them as such. Since Haidée's isle is not a false paradise in the same sense as later versions, Byron's adaptation of Vergil is here quite solemn, in keeping with the tragic theme. Juan's false paradises are at times, however,

outrageously parodic, to further emphasize Byron's differences with Vergil. This will become apparent through an examination of the first of these Acrasian paradises, where Juan encounters Gulbeyaz.

Perhaps the most obvious comparison of Gulbeyaz and Dido occurs in Byron's descriptions of Gulbeyaz' maids. After we have been introduced to Gulbeyaz, having passed through the grandeur of the palace in a kind of procession, which itself recalls Dido's procession in state to Juno's temple, we are given this description of Gulbeyaz' maids:

They form'd a very nymph-like looking crew,
Which might have called Diana's chorus 'cousin', (V,xcix)

this simile being a direct reference to Vergil's simile comparing Dido and her procession to Diana and her nymphs. Gulbeyaz herself resembles Dido in several particulars: her eyes flash fire (V, cxxxiv), recalling how Dido is surrounded by fire imagery after she sets eyes on Aeneas, and both wear purple, the colour of the Roman emperors. Indeed, one of the most important resemblances between Gulbeyaz and Dido is that both are women playing men's roles, and we are made acutely aware in each case of the tension this creates. Of Gulbeyaz we are told:

'To hear and to obey' had been from birth
The law of all those around her. (V,cxii)

She has masculine power, but her femininity comes through in the way in which she uses it. We are led to doubt "if her caprices e'er stood still" and told

There was no end unto the things she bought,
Nor to the trouble which her fancies caused,
(V,cxiii)

and that "Juan was the latest of her whims". "Whims", "caprices" and "fancies" are words normally used disparagingly of women, to suggest an incapacity for sustained, sensible thought, and indeed Byron concludes "she had no prudence". Dido too is imprudent; after her night of passion in the cave with Aeneas, we are told she "cared no more for appearances or her good name and ceased to give any thought for secrecy in her love". The same disregard for secrecy causes the tragedy of Haidée's death, and Gulbeyaz too, runs terrific risks, of which we are reminded by Baba as Juan is ushered through the door to Gulbeyaz' chamber, past the dwarf-guards who

...have eyes
Like needles, which may pierce those petticoats;
And if they should discover your disguise,
You know how near us the deep Bosphorus floats. (V,cxii)

At bottom, she is

...a headlong, headstrong, downright she,
Young, beautiful, and daring – who would risk
A throne, the world, the universe, to be
Beloved in her own way, (VI,iii)

a description which would, of course, fit Dido perfectly. But while for Vergil, this is incomprehensible, evil, unnatural, for Byron it is encouraging, as he indicates with reference to a specifically Roman love affair:

If Antony be well remember'd yet,
'Tis not his conquests keep his name in fashion,
But Actium lost, for Cleopatra's eyes
Outbalance all the Caesar's victories. (VI,iv)

As well as an implied criticism of Vergil, Byron is here making a statement clarifying his interpretation of *The Aeneid*. Where Gulbeyaz is frightening is in her masculinity, her power, as is suggested by Byron's relief that "Nature teaches more than power can spoil". For Vergil, Nature should be "spoiled" by the action of power, because it is wild and unruly and must be tamed. For Byron, civilisation is a falsification of the natural, as is made particularly clear in this section, where it has a markedly different, stifling effect on human sexuality, as will be explored in greater detail later. Gulbeyaz has a certain hauteur, a quality both psychological and spatial; one always gets the impression that she is up high, looking aloofly down on Juan, an impression strengthened no doubt by the suggestion that Juan should kiss her foot. People bow or kneel to her and she is always raised on a throne or dais. This aspect she shares with Dido, who also tends to be seated grandly, on a throne or even on her pyre. When Aeneas first sees her, she is taking her position in the huge temple "on a raised throne" (p. 43), the impression of elevation being increased by the fact that Aeneas' men come as supplicants before this throne, their supplicant status helping to increase this sense of a height differential. One may also recall Dido's watching Aeneas' men loading their ships like tiny ants from her watchtower (p.109). At the start of her story, Dido is cold and distant, qualities suggested by her comparison with Diana (and the moon), but she is brought down by her passion, down to the Primaeval Earth on the floor of the cave. Gulbeyaz experiences a similar fall when, following Juan's example, she "cries and lets the woman out", just as Dido does when she falls for Aeneas. And the cause is the same in each case, pity: "at her first sight of Aeneas, Phoenician Dido was awestruck, thinking of the terrible fate which had been his" (p.46) and when Juan bursts into tears, Byron tells us that Gulbeyaz was "infected...with sympathy" (V, cxix). The arrival of an attractive man marks the turning point in the lives of both Dido and Gulbeyaz. In her tears, Gulbeyaz shows herself a woman, and in doing

so, comes down metaphorically from her pedestal, sweeping away the distinction between slave and owner to forge a new bond of human sympathy between them. This would be in keeping with the anti-slavery sentiments which are especially prominent in this section, as well as letting Gulbeyaz break free of her stifling, masculine power role to behave for once like a woman: it is made abundantly clear that Gulbeyaz is as much a prisoner in her masculine power role as Juan is, as her slave, dressed absurdly in the costume of a harem girl. The idea of the enslaver enslaved is introduced by Johnson:

Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,
To their own whims and passions. (V,xxv)

Later we are told of Gulbeyaz,

Something imperial, or imperious, threw
A chain o'er all she did. (V,cx)

In her bedroom we find that

...many a vase
Of porcelain held in the fetter'd flowers
Those captive soothers of a captive's hours. (VI,xcvii)

Like Dido, Gulbeyaz' masculine role is connected with grand surroundings. Of course, to Vergil, who views Dido's masculine role positively, Dido's grand surroundings and their construction are an expression of civilisation, the taming of Nature, and thus an aid to the preservation of Dido's masculine dignity. While in *The Aeneid*, Vergil recognizes a tragic conflict between Dido's femininity and her surroundings, he advocates that she adapt herself to the cold, hard world she is building around herself, repressing the warm, yielding female side. Byron regards Gulbeyaz' surroundings as a cruel fettering of her true nature. One problem with these surroundings is that they are not on a human scale; they do not fit her, just as the masculine power role she is being forced to play does not fit her.

As one might expect, Gulbeyaz' palace is modelled on Vergil's Carthage. When first they arrive at the palace, Juan and Johnson are ushered into "a magnificent large hall" (V, li), recalling the huge hall where Dido entertains Aeneas and his men (p. 49). They pass on through a "range of goodly rooms" (V,lv), but these are

Splendid but silent, save in *one*, where, dropping,
A marble fountain echoes through the glooms
Of night. (V,lv)

This sets Byron musing on how Man's pride makes him build buildings too large for himself; "man makes that great which makes him little" (V,lix). He finds nothing sadder

Than an enormous room without a soul
to break the lifeless splendour of the whole
(V,lvi)

and explains,

I pass my evenings in long galleries solely,
And that's the reason I'm so melancholy.
(V,lviii)

With some relish he records a variation on "Death the Leveller", reminding us that we will all be equal in death, regardless of our dwellings in life (lix, lx, lxiii). Then from these proud and oversized buildings, Juan, Baba, and Johnson come to a room crammed full of junk:

Though full of all things which could be desired,
One wonder'd what to do with such a number
Of articles which nobody required;
Here wealth had done its utmost to encumber
With furniture an exquisite apartment,
Which puzzled Nature much to know what Art meant.
(V,lxiv)

There is the suggestion in Vergil that Dido's surroundings are overdone to the point of decadence. Buildings in Vergil seem usually to be a sign of civilization, but there, far from the austere Augustan style of architecture that Vergil presumably held as his ideal, we find a lavish, oriental style of architecture, as we do here in *Don Juan*. From the start, Byron draws attention to the ostentatious, overgilded Ottoman style of architecture: Juan is even brought to Gulbeyaz' palace in "a gilded boat", and over the facade of the palace,

A rich confusion form'd a disarray
In such sort, that the eye along it cast
Could hardly carry anything away,
Object on object flash'd so bright and fast;
A dazzling mass of gems, and gold, and glitter,
Magnificently mingled in a litter. (V,xciii)

Wealth had done wonders -- taste not much; such things
Occur in Orient palaces. (V,xciv)

Here we are as far as we possibly could be from the Homeric ideal, where "taste" is always the keynote, the mark of civilization and good breeding. Returning to the description of the imposing portal of the temple of Juno in *The Aeneid*:

Bronzen were the raised thresholds to which the stairways led; bronze were the raised thresholds to which the stairways led; bronze were the beams; and of bronze the doors which make the hinges groan. (p.41)

As noted before, when comparing this passage to Homer's description of the doors of Alcinous' court in *The Odyssey*, the doors are too grand, ostentation having taken precedence over functionality. Although Byron does not specifically draw our attention to this aspect of Vergil's description, telling us of the hinges of Gulbeyaz' palace "being as smooth as Roger's rhymes" (V, lxxxix), he does give enough details to make us recognise his model:

The giant door was broad, and bright, and high,
Of gilded bronze, and carved in curious guise.
(V,lxxxvi)

The door is huge and bronze, like that of Dido, but carries on the Byronic theme of gilding as an expression of gaudy superficiality and excess. But then our attention is drawn to the "hideous, misshapen pygmies, deaf and dumb" that stand by on either side of this massive gate to open it,

...as if allied
In mockery to the enormous gate which rose
O'er them in almost pyramidic pride.
(V,lxxxvii)

Here, through the grotesque incongruity of size between the pygmies and the door, Byron emphasizes his point that the palace is inhumanly large, dwarfing and imprisoning all its inmates, especially Gulbeyaz.

Byron uses the word "glitter", with its connotations of tawdriness (similar to those of gilding) to describe Juan's impressions as he is led through the various rooms of the palace:

Through glittering galleries, and o'er marble floors,
Till a gigantic portal through the gloom,
Haughty and huge, along the distance lowers;
And wafted far arose a rich perfume:
It seemed as though they came upon a shrine,
For all was vast, still, and fragrant, and divine.
(V,lxxxv)

The reference to "gloom" is worth a passing mention. It suggests darkness but also depression, and is the dominant atmosphere of the episode. The buildings may be gaudy and glittering but they remain strangely gloomy, and the only light seems to be artificial (this would seem to be in keeping with the key comparison to an opera set). At stanza lvi, we see that:

Some faint lamps gleaming from the lofty walls
Gave light enough to hint their farther way.
(V,lvi)

It has already been mentioned that much of the action of the Dido episode goes on at night, and the reference to "marble floors" and the shrine-like aura further evokes memories of Dido's Carthage, especially in the later stages of the story when Dido visits the altars of various deities and the marble shrine devoted to Sychaeus. A shrine is no place to live -- or love -- as Gulbeyaz illustrates. Her seat is of marble, covered with a thick pillow:

...her hair
Fell in long tresses like the weeping willow,
Sweeping the marble underneath her chair,
Or rather sofa (for it was all pillow)...
(VI,cviii)

However lavish the pillow, it cannot compensate for the cold, hard marble underneath, and this would appear to be symbolic of the whole palace: however luxurious one makes the surroundings, it is still a place of coldness and sterility. When Gulbeyaz' blunt question "Canst thou love?" makes Juan think of his lost love Haidée, his blood (Byron poetically alleges) rushed from his face to his heart "and left his cheeks as pale as snowdrops blowing" (V,cxvii). This imagery recalls the imagery of flowers, especially lilies, of the Haidée episode, but here, in contrast to the tropical warmth and fertility of Haidée's isle, we are confronted by the cold sterility of winter and snow, similar in significance in its frigid minerality to marble. But the section where we see the greatest concentration of such imagery is in the oda. Of its inhabitants, we are told:

One with her flush'd cheek laid on her white arm,
And raven ringlets gather'd in dark crowd
Above her brow, lay dreaming soft and warm;
And smiling through her dream, as through a cloud
The moon breaks, half-unveiled each further charm,
As, slightly stirring in her snowy shroud,
Her beauties seized the unconscious hour of night
All bashfully to struggle into light.
(VI,lxvi)

This parallels the simile used to describe Aeneas' glimpse of Dido in the Underworld: "he recognized her dimly through the shadows, like one who sees or thinks he sees the moon rising through the clouds". Byron has mischievously imitated the idea of the moon rising through the clouds in the picture of the odalisque's physical "beauties" struggling into

light. The mention of "snowy shroud", with its suggestion of death, coldness and sterility, would fit with the fact that Vergil's description was of Dido in the Underworld. Byron continues in similar vein:

A third's all pallid aspect offer'd more
The traits of sleeping sorrow, and betray'd
Through the heaved breast the dream of some far shore
Beloved and deplored; while slowly stray'd
(As night-dew, on a cypress glittering, tinges
The black bough) tear-drops through her eyes' dark fringes. (VI, lxvii)

Just as in the previous stanza, Byron describes raven ringlets on a white arm, here there is a similar chiaroscuro effect in the mention of the "all pallid aspect" and the "black bough". This of course helps give the impression of night, when everything appears in monochrome, and this would only increase the similarity with the Dido episode, all marble and gloom. Again, there is the suggestion of death in the reference to "cypress". But the culmination of this imagery pattern comes in the next stanza:

A fourth as marble, statue-like and still,
Lay in a breathless, hush'd, and stony sleep;
White, cold, and pure, as looks a frozen rill,
Or the snow minaret on an Alpine steep,
Or Lot's wife done in salt,-- or what you will; --
My similes are gather'd in a heap,
So pick and choose -- perhaps you'll be content
With a carved lady on a monument.
(VI, lxviii)

One would expect imagery of warmth, softness and sensuality in a harem, but here we find the exact opposite. We do see the kind of imagery we would expect around Dudù however. She

Look'd more adapted to be put to bed,
Being somewhat large, and languishing, and lazy
Yet of a kind of beauty that would drive you crazy. (VI, xli)

A kind of sleepy Venus seem'd Dudù...
Thinner she might have been, and yet scarce lose:
Yet, after all, 'twould puzzle to say where
It would not spoil some separate charm to *pare*.
(VI, xlii)

This soft voluptuousness is the antithesis of the coldness, hardness, and sharp edges suggested by marble or salt. Dudù is described in natural, organic imagery:

She...stole on your spirit like a May-day breaking; (VI,xliii)

...she was a soft landscape of mild earth,
Where all was harmony, and calm, and quiet,
Luxuriant, budding... (VI,liii)

There is a charming innocence and naturalness about her; despite her beauty, we are told "she never thought about herself at all" (VI,liv). She is fond of kissing (VI,lix) and

Her toilet,...cost little, for she was
A child of Nature carelessly array'd
If fond of a chance ogle at her glass,
'Twas like the fawn, which, in the lake display'd
Beholds her own shy, shadowy image pass,
When first she starts, and then returns to peep,
Admiring this new native of the deep.
(VI,lx)

As a "child of Nature" linked with "mild earth" and budding growth, Dudù is linked with Haidée, having the same unspoilt, natural aspect, like a wild animal, the fawn puzzled by its own reflection in the lake. This is an enchanting image in itself, but it also links her with the very similarly-named Dido, who is imaged as a wounded doe roaming in a forest. Like Dido, like Gulbeyaz, Dudù is a warm, sensuous woman trapped in a masculine environment of marble, the sterility and coldness of which is the very opposite of her nature. This is exposed in the comparison of Dudù to Pygmalion:

She look'd (this simile's quite new) just cut
From marble, like Pygmalion's statue waking,
The mortal and the marble still at strife,
And timidly expanding into life.
(VI,xliiii)

The notion of "the mortal and the marble...still at strife" is a key image for the entire Gulbeyaz section, illustrating as it does, that as the palace, in the coldness and hardness of its construction, and in its vast size, is stifling the human impulses of its inhabitants, especially the female ones. The oda is a microcosm of Gulbeyaz' palace as a whole since this is where the warm, organic female imagery and the cold, male, mineral imagery (both from *The Aeneid*) are most precisely juxtaposed. Attention was drawn earlier to the comparison of the palace to a "pretty opera set"; it accords with the idea of Gulbeyaz playing a male role and also with the fact that the palace, particularly the oda, is like a stage set for the enactment of carnal delight. The harem girls, however, are unable to play their parts because of their surroundings and because, as mere slaves, they are being forced to perform. This idea is reiterated in their comparison to hothouse flowers:

Many and beautiful lay those around,
 Like flowers of different hue, and clime, and root
 In some exotic garden sometimes found,
 With cost, and care, and warmth, induced to shoot.
 One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
 And fair brows gently drooping, as the fruit
 Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath,
 And lips apart... (VI,lxv)

Suggestive of coercion, the key phrase is here "induced to shoot", a restatement of the idea of actors being expected to play their roles once the stage is set. Although the simile implies that "warmth" is what is needed to make them "shoot", this is precisely what is lacking. The imagery of this simile is also important because it recalls the imagery which surrounds Haidée: The "auburn tresses lightly bound" recall Haidée's hair (also auburn) which seemed "resentfully to feel the silken fillet's curb" (III,lxxiii), as does the reference to fruit nodding from the tree recall at Haidée's feast,

The orange and the pomegranate nodding o'er
 Dropp'd in their laps, scarce pluck'd, their mellow store
 (III,xxxii)

(an image whose pedigree was earlier traced back to Homer's description of Scheria). The girls, especially Dudù (a kind of figurehead for all the odalisques), seem to have the same capacity for natural love as Haidée and are connected with the same imagery of warmth, softness and luxuriant growth, but all this goes to waste in their cold, hard, sterile environment, a situation which is emblematic, more generally, of their captive state. We may recall that in the Haidée episode the Vergilian marble imagery occurs only at the time of her death, and here too it is connected with the imagery of death, as noted above. Instead of the atmosphere of creative fertility which should pervade the oda, and which is there in potential in the girls, we find sterility and death; a typical Byronic juxtaposition of the creative female world of sensuality and the male world of death and destruction.

The waste and distortion of sexuality endemic in the Sultan's palace is also reflected in the freak show that forms his staff: the "misshapen pygmies, deaf and dumb" (V,lxxxviii) who guard the door to Gulbeyaz' chamber and Baba, the black eunuch sent to buy Juan and Johnson. It is in keeping with this atmosphere of perverted sexuality that, while in *The Aeneid* Aeneas is beautified for his appearance before Dido by Venus, here Juan is prepared for his appearance before Gulbeyaz by Baba. Venus is, of course, the goddess of love, especially in its aspects of sex and fertility, but here she is replaced by a eunuch. This is coupled with the additional perversion of Juan's being dressed as a woman, recalling the compromisingly effeminate costume of Aeneas when he is visited by Mercury. The resemblance is further pointed by the observation that Juan's hair is oiled,

as is Aeneas'. To the falseness of Juan's impersonating a woman (another example of forced role-playing), is added false hair and make-up (here disdainfully referred to as "paint", and thus linked to the gaudy, opera set paintwork of the buildings).

All this is only a taste of things to come, for it is in the actual meeting of Juan and Gulbeyaz that we find the closest imitation of Vergil's Dido episode. One may say "imitation" but in fact there is also a great deal of parodic inversion. The most fundamental inversion concerns Juan and his refusal to submit to demeaning himself with Gulbeyaz, showing principles which contrast ironically with Aeneas' readiness to abandon his mission and indulge his illicit passion with Dido. Even though Juan finally dresses up as a woman, he does so only under duress, while Aeneas dresses up effeminately with apparent relish, as if this were an expression of his true nature. Also, Juan remains true to what he knows to be right, refusing to "stoop/To any foot unless it shod the Pope" (V,cii), despite Baba's threats. Juan remains true to his "mission", where Aeneas does not, by keeping Haidée's memory alive. Unlike Aeneas, it seems, Juan can recognise a false paradise when he sees one, and speaks out fearlessly, disregarding of the consequences:

...looking her coldly in the face, he cried,
"The prison'd eagle will not pair, nor I
Serve a sultana's sensual phantasy.

Thou ask'st, if I can love? be this the proof
How much I *have* loved -- that I love not *thee!*
In this vile garb, the distaff, web, and woof,
Were fitter for me: Love is for the free!
I am not dazzled by this splendid roof;
Whate'er thy power, and great it seems to be,
Heads bow, knees bend, eyes watch around a throne,
And hands obey -- our hearts are still our own'.
(V,cxxvi-cxxvii)

Juan's allegations gain resonance from being accurate, or at least by giving this impression since they correspond to the author's own views. Just as Juan cannot be made to love on demand, neither can the odalisques, who are living proof that "the prison'd eagle will not pair", being themselves compared, in their desire for love, to a caged bird in its desire for freedom (VI,xxvi). Juan, we are told, "stood like Atlas...and nathless would not bend" (V,civ), a simile recalling the manly, rugged, and icicle-clad figure of Atlas encountered by Mercury on his way down from heaven to remind the effeminately-attired Aeneas that he is indulging himself in Dido's opulent oriental hospitality at the expense of his mission. As Thomas Greene says of Atlas,

The great shaggy, icebound figure sustaining the sky is an exemplum of heroic self-denial, of austere exposure to the elements for the sake of the world

community. Atlas embodies the qualities which Aeneas has temporarily forgotten.¹⁴

In Byron's poem, Juan, in his resistance to Gulbeyaz, similarly represents how Aeneas (in Vergil's view) ought to have behaved.

The Byronic inversion technique, however, does not extend to Gulbeyaz: she is modelled fairly closely on Dido, and performs similarly. At Juan's refusal to obey her commands we are told "fire flash'd from Gulbeyaz' eyes" (V,cxxxiv). Dido is constantly surrounded by fire imagery, first, when under the influence of Venus, when it is the fire of "amor" and then, when Juno dominates, the fire of "furor". Gulbeyaz and Dido both contemplate carefully-staged suicides. Dido builds a huge pyre, fooling her sister that it is some kind of spell to rid her of the thought of Aeneas, and, mounting her pyre, stabs herself, but here, in the even more theatrical world of Gulbeyaz, the emphasis is not so much on ending it all, as on show:

She thought to stab herself, but then she had
The dagger close at hand, which made it awkward;
For Eastern stays are little made to pad,
So that a poniard pierces if 'tis stuck hard... (V,cxl)

Byron adds to the effect by a further parallel with the Dido story:

Her rage was but a minute's, and 'twas well--
A moment's more had slain her... (V,cxxxv)

Again the tragedy of Dido has been evoked, averted, and dissolved in laughter. There may also be a passing allusion to Dido's belief that she has a legal claim on Aeneas in Byron's observation, based on painful, personal experience, "that ladies are litigious/Upon all legal objects of possession" (VI,x). Like Aeneas in the same situation, Juan "began to stammer some excuses;/but words are not enough in such a matter" (V,cxliii). Aeneas learns this lesson too: he knows he is doing the right thing by leaving Dido, but all he can say to Dido by way of explanation is that he has been troubled by Anchises' ghost -- he says not a word about his dreams and visions, and cannot even give Dido a picture of his grand destiny since "the gods have not given him any real, concrete detail that he could communicate to others".¹⁵ He speaks only the simple truth as he understands it, but this is not the whole truth because the whole of Aeneas' truth is beyond words.

Dido's rage at this is like a storm, appropriately since she is under the disruptive influence of Juno at the time, and Juno it is who caused the storm which shipwrecked Aeneas on Dido's coast and that which caused Aeneas and Dido to shelter in the cave. Gulbeyaz' rage is described in the same terms:

Like ocean warring 'gainst a rocky isle;
And the deep passions flashing through her form
Made her a beautiful embodied storm.

(V,cxxxv)

Gulbeyaz is thus further linked to Dido, but the simile is also significant with regard to Juan who is here, since he is standing firm against Gulbeyaz' rage, identified with the "rocky isle" of the simile used to describe Latinus resisting the mob who gather round his palace:

He stood firm like an immovable rock where loud breakers crash, holding firm by its own mass however many the waves which yelp around. (p.193)

In its effect, the simile is indeed similar to that used to describe Aeneas resisting the full fury of Dido's stormy rage (the situation paralleling in several particulars the one in *Don Juan*):

He stood firm like a strong oak-tree toughened by the years when northern winds from the Alps vie together to tear it from the soil, with their blasts striking on it now this side and now that by their insistent pleas and deeply his brave heart grieved. But his will remained unshaken. The tears rolled down without effect. (pp.110 -111)

Thus although the exact simile which Byron uses is applied to Latinus not Aeneas, Byron is able, through an ingenious manipulation of his source material, to draw on both, because the situation in which his simile occurs recalls the simile used of Aeneas. Juan is thus identified once more with Aeneas, at the same time as Byron impresses upon us his own subversive reading of Vergil's work.

Further Vergilian parallels are to be found in the next of Juan's false paradises, the Russian court of Catherine the Great, where the parody becomes even more outrageous, in keeping with the grossness of Catherine herself. Although the satiric target is changed from slavery to war in this section, these are both aspects of a destructive need to exercise power over others, and Catherine is another masculine woman, a woman with power. The resemblance to Dido is especially prominent in that both are empire builders (Gulbeyaz was linked with the Ottoman empire). Here we see a different side of imperialism; not the repression of the people in occupied territory, nor the slavery which to Byron the Ottoman empire symbolised, but the war and destruction that goes into acquiring such territory -- Catherine is "a modern Amazon", with all the warlike and gender-bending tendencies that that implies. Though Catherine is a widow like Dido, she is not devoted, as Dido is, to her late husband, and is anything but chaste. However, when Juan comes, she has just lost her beloved Lanskoï, who, like Paris, was a great lover "and yet but made a middling grenadier" (IX,liv). One of the most sustained and detailed pieces of Vergilian imitation comes in the description of Juan's dress uniform, a variation

on the description Vergil gives us of Cupid transforming his appearance into that of Ascanius, an action performed at the command of Venus who hopes thus to make Dido fall madly in love with Aeneas. We are told:

Suppose him in a handsome uniform;
A scarlet coat, black facings, a long plume,
Waving, like sails new shiver'd in a storm,
Over a cock'd hat in a crowded room,
And brilliant breeches, bright as a Cairn Gorme,
Of yellow casimere we may presume,
White stockings drawn uncurdled as new milk
O'er limbs whose symmetry set off the silk;

Suppose him sword by side, and hat in hand,
Made up by youth, fame, and an army tailor --
That great enchanter, at whose rod's command
Beauty springs forth, and Nature's self turns paler,
Seeing how Art can make her work more grand
(When she don't pin men's limbs in like a gaoler),--
Behold him placed as if upon a pillar! He
Seems Love turn'd a lieutenant of artillery!

His bandage slipp'd down into a cravat;
His wings subdued to epaulettes; his quiver
Shrunk to a scabbard, with his arrows at
His side as a small sword, but sharp as ever;
His bow converted into a cock'd hat;
But still so like, that Psyche were more clever
Than some wives (who make blunders no less stupid),
If she had not mistaken him for Cupid.

(IX, xliii - xlv)

Vergil's version is as follows:

Cupid obeyed his dear mother's command. He took off the wings from his shoulders, and, in great amusement copied Iulus' way of walking... (p.48)

Taking the reference to Cupid's removal of his wings as a starting point, which he adapts to "wings subdued to epaulettes", Byron compiles a "*reductio ad absurdum*" list of similar changes, eg. "his quiver/Shrunk to a scabbard", to end up with the most preposterous of all, "his arrows at/His side as a small sword" possibly recalling the decorative sword that Aeneas is sporting as part of his effeminate costume when visited by Mercury. To make what he is doing here more obvious, Byron precedes this Vergilian simile by describing Juan as "Love turn'd a lieutenant of artillery" and ends by suggesting that Juan was almost impossible to tell apart from Cupid. This final reference to wives mistaking Cupid for someone else is another mischievous reminder of the Dido story where Dido believes she is holding Ascanius while in reality it is Cupid in disguise. But one fact of crucial importance in this passage is that the transformation of Juan is effected not by Venus, but

by "an army tailor"; by war, not by love. Just as in his transformation into a woman at the hands of Baba, Juan is transformed not by a symbol of love and fertility, but by a symbol of war and sterility. Also worthy of note on this connection is the contrast between the naturalness connected with fulfilling love and the unnaturalness and artificiality of military dress which pins in men's limbs "like a gaoler".

Such a mingling of love and war is a keynote of the Catherine section. This is seen in the description of how Catherine receives the dispatch which Juan is to deliver: at first she is so taken with Juan's appearance that she forgets to break the seal on the dispatch, but,

Then recollecting the whole empress, nor
Forgetting quite the woman...
...she tore
The letter open... (IX,lviii)

Her masculine role as ruler which demands she take an interest in war, momentarily takes second place to her female interest in the attractiveness of her messenger. Like Dido, she is a woman in the masculine role of ruler, and finding this role undermined by her female nature, which, we are informed, "composed at least three parts of this great whole" (IX,lviii). But although she is three parts woman, because of her close linkage with war, always portrayed in Byron as sterile and destructive, we have no imagery of fertility or organic growth around this female character. Hearing news of "a ta'en city, thirty thousand slain",

Glory and triumph o'er her aspect burst,
As an East Indian sunrise on the main.
These quench'd a moment her ambition's thirst—
So Arab deserts drink in summer's rain:
In vain! — As fall the dews on quenchless sands,
Blood only serves to wash Ambition's hands!
(IX,lix)

We are presented with images of dryness and barrenness rather than the freshness and lushness typical of Haidée's isle. One reason why Catherine is such a horrific figure is that she suggests that sex and war may not be opposites, but fundamentally related in that lust is a cause of war. This is revealed in Byron's version of Horace's famous address to the female sexual organ:

Thou gate of life and death...
Whence is our exit and our entrance...

From thee we come, to thee we go, and why
To get at thee not batter down a wall,
Or waste a world? since no-one can deny
Thou dost replenish worlds both great and small.
(IX,lv - lvi)

Catherine of course is "the grand epitome/Of that great cause of war or peace or what/You please..." (IX,lvii). This dual creative/destructive aspect woman shares with the Cuvieresque god of *Cain*, who creates and destroys to relieve his boredom. That Cuvier was in Byron's mind at the time of writing this section is confirmed by the fact that he is mentioned twice in connection with his theory of successive cataclysms (IX,xxxviii; X,lii). Catherine is so disturbing because she unites the creative female aspect and the destructive male aspect; if she is a destroyer, she can afford this because of her limitless potential for creativity, though this betokens a frightening indifference to the individual life, an indifference further indicated by the ease with which she finds consolation when robbed of her Juan. Women, like Gulbeyaz, like the Blues, or the "Gynocracy" of English matrons, who, Dido-fashion combine male and female aspects like Catherine, are a feature of all the false paradises encountered by Juan. But, though based on the Dido episode of *The Aeneid*, where Dido succumbs to her dark, mysterious female side, dragging Aeneas down with her, the lowest point for Byron's hero is Catherine, whose creative, female need for love is diverted -- indeed perverted -- into the destructive, masculine need for imperial power.

There is also evidence of imitative intent in Byron's account of Juan's effect at his appearance before the court:

The whole court melted into one wide whisper
And all lips were applied to all ears!
The elder ladies' wrinkles curl'd much crisper
As they beheld; the younger cast some leers
On one another, and each lovely lisper
Smiled as she talk'd the matter o'er; but tears
Of rivalship rose in each clouded eye
Of all the standing army who stood by.

All the ambassadors of all the powers
Inquired, who was this very new young man,
Who promised to be great in some few hours.
(IX,xxxviii-lxxix)

There is also a possible allusion to Dido in Byron's "old flames, new wives become our bitterest foes". Certainly for Aeneas, Dido is an "old flame" who becomes a "bitterest foe", and though "old flame" is a general and commonly-used term, it would have special relevance to Dido who is customarily surrounded by fire imagery. This would constitute a typically disrespectful Byronic joke.

It has already been noted how Juan is compared to Cupid, and, sure enough, this is an integral part of the plot, not mere decoration, for Juan acts on Catherine the way Cupid does on Dido. In the *Aeneid*, Dido is imaged as "drinking deep of her love", and later, Juno rejoices that "Dido has drunk the maddening poison into her very bones" (p.100).

Byron, describing Catherine falling in love with Juan, notes that "Cupid's cup/With the first draught intoxicates apace,/A quintessential laudanum or 'black drop'" (IX, lxvii). The parallel is enhanced by the fact that Catherine, like Dido, is seated on a throne, and Byron stresses the height differential between the two; Juan is "the lieutenant at her feet" (lxi). As in the Gulbeyaz section, social status is measured spatially. This helps Juan seem like a child, like Cupid or Ascanius. This impression of youthfulness is developed, possibly to stress the age of Catherine and her unbecoming craving for young grenadiers, by Juan's comparison to "the herald Mercury/New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill" (IX, lxvi), again the height differential is stressed when Byron adds "the hill [surely a smirking reference to the *mons veneris*] seem'd rather high/For a lieutenant to climb up" (IX, lxvi). In comparing Juan to Mercury, Juan may be mixing up Vergil's Mercury and Homer's Hermes, who appears in *The Odyssey*, "looking like a young man at that most charming age when the beard first starts to grow". Vergil's Mercury is not described thus, though possibly this is because Vergil needs a more manly figure to contrast with Aeneas' effeminacy. Juan, like Hermes, is "slight and slim,/Blushing and beardless" (IX, xlvi), and Byron adds later,

Juan, I said, was a most beauteous boy,
 And had retain'd his boyish looks beyond
 The usual hirsute seasons which destroy
 With beards and whiskers, and the like, the fond
Parisian aspect, which upset old Troy.
 (IX, liii)

One may recall that Aeneas is called a "second Paris" (p.103) by Iarbas and by Juno (p.185), where Paris signifies vanity and effeminate love of luxury. Later, we are told of Juan that

He...if not in love,
 Fell into that no less imperious passion,
 Self love. (IX, lxviii)

Self-love is most definitely something which one would associate with Paris, and through him, with Aeneas, who, as suggested, may never have really loved Dido at all, but was merely selfishly indulging himself in her opulent oriental hospitality. There is a repeated stress, as we see from his comparison to Cupid and to Mercury/Hermes, on Juan's youthfulness, his boyish aspect, a quality verging onto effeminacy. There is always a hint of this around Juan, as in his comparison to flowers, especially the lily, when he lies dripping and drooping on the beach of Haidée's isle, or when likened to snowdrops in the Gulbeyaz episode. There he is also the first to cry, something Byron identifies as a specifically feminine thing to do. Possibly Juan is portrayed thus as an *exemplum*, a symbol of the female values of love, creativity, and the self-justifying action championed

throughout *Don Juan*. That even the women are tainted with masculinity shows the kind of fallen world Byron felt he inhabited, where the pursuit of power and glory, and the destructiveness they entail, take precedence over the true values of love and happiness. Juan represents these positive values in Catherine's court, as is indicated by his effeminately boyish appearance, and by the organic imagery (throughout associated with the female) in which he is described. Like Haidée (and Nausicaa), he is described as "growing up like a green tree" (X,xxii):

The gentle Juan flourish'd, though at times
He felt like other plants call'd sensitive.
(X,xxxvii)

He preserves the positive female values amidst the sham, masculine world of Catherine's court. It is true he becomes "a little dissipated" (X,xxiii), and "lived... in a hurry/Of waste, and haste, and glare, and gloss, and glitter" (X,xxvi), the description here recalling the similarly glittering and superficial world of Gulbeyaz' palace. This link is further strengthened by citing the description Byron gives of St. Petersburg when Juan first arrives there, "That pleasant capital of painted snows" (IX,xlii), which recalls the superfluous gilding and "opera scene" character of Gulbeyaz' world. The play-acting of Catherine's court is reiterated by the mention of the

...bear-skins black and furry--
Which...
Peep out sometimes, when things are in a flurry,
Through all the 'purple and fine linen'.
(X,xxvi)

Such superficiality is echoed by the reminder of Donna Inez' mercenary hypocrisy and her belief that "the sole sign of man's being in his senses/Is, learning to reduce his past expenses." (X,xxx)

Juan's becoming "a little dissipated" (X,xxiii) and "a very polish'd Russian" (X,xxi) recalls Aeneas' ready submission to the easy life offered to him by Dido. But while Aeneas must be summoned from his false paradise by Mercury, it seems Juan has an inner defence mechanism, which manifests itself in his mysterious illness. The doctors who suggest that Juan must be sent to a warmer clime can be viewed as parodic Mercuries. Dido's grief at losing Aeneas is also mercilessly parodied in the ease with which Catherine gets over her grief and finds a replacement:

So much did Juan's setting off distress her,
She could not find at first a fit successor.

But time, the comforter, will come at last;
And four-and-twenty hours, and twice that number

Of candidates requesting to be placed,
Made Catherine taste next night a quiet slumber.
(X,xlvii - xlviiii)

The English cantos really follow on thematically from the scenes in Catherine's court, dealing not so much with war, it is true, but with the superficiality, hypocrisy and concern for money that become targets in the second part of the Catherine section. Indeed, despite *Don Juan's* apparently chaotic structuring, there is a definite progression from Haidée's isle, through to the English cantos: Lambro had been turned into a bad character because of his despair at Greece's oppression by the Turks, so Juan is sold as a slave to a Turk. Greece is under Turkish rule because of the desire of the Turks to build up an empire, so from there he goes to Ismail, where an even greater imperial expansionist power, Russia, is taking over Turkish lands. Russia is a land of cold, wintry sterility, as is suggested in the figure of its ruler, Catherine, and by its implication with war, but it tries to be civilized, a place of warmth, though it fails, like the Sultan's palace, in the attempt. England is also a cold, Northern, imperialist power, riddled with hypocrisy, and can be taken as a compendium of the ills of all the other places Juan has visited prior to his coming to England. There are still echoes of Aeneas' encounter with Dido but they are much less systematic. Byron's further Vergilian imitations seem to decrease the further we get from the point of their greatest concentration, in the latter part of the Haidée episode, as other influences come to predominate.

The English cantos are marked, like the other "false paradises", by masculine women, here "The Blues", eg. Miss Maevia Mannish, and the "gynocracy" of scheming, matchmaking women. Byron describes the social world of England as "a field so sterile" (XI,lxiv). Juan goes "riding round those vegetable puncheons/Called 'Parks', where there is neither fruit nor flower/Enough to gratify a bee's slight munchings" (XI,lxvi), continuing the link of sterility with false paradises. As in Russia, Juan inhabits an unreal world: the parks have hardly any vegetation, and "The World" is a false, fragile construct of apparently forced gaiety:

Then dress, then dinner, then awakes the world!
Then glare the lamps, then whirl the wheels, then roar
Through street and square fast flashing chariots hurl'd
Like harness'd meteors; then along the floor
Chalk mimics painting; then festoons are twirl'd;
Then roll the brazen thunders of the door,
Which opens to the thousand happy few
An earthly Paradise of *Or Molu*.
(XI,lxvii)

"Or Molu" following on the motif of cheap, gaudy decoration noted elsewhere in Gulbeyaz' gilding and Catherine's St. Petersburg of "painted snows". All are places of "glitter", a word that for Byron seems to encapsulate the idea of showy superficiality: Juan

"must steer with care through all that glittering sea" (the mention of sea perhaps designed to reawaken the chaotic/destructive connotations sea has in *The Odyssey*). Like Carthage, like Gulbeyaz' and Catherine's palaces, London is a place of dressed stone; a masculine world. Also, like Dido's world, it is nocturnal and thereby unnatural, as Byron suggests when he defines "The World" as "about twice two hundred people bred.../But to sit up while other's lie in bed".

At Norman Abbey, we are told:

...all was gentle and aristocratic
In this our party; polish'd, smooth, and cold,
As Phidian forms cut out of marble Attic.
There now are no Squire Westerns as of old;
And our Sophias are not so emphatic,
But fair as then, or fairer to behold.
We have no accomplish'd blackguards, like Tom Jones,
But gentlemen in stays, as stiff as stones.

(XIII,cx)

We are in the same cold, hard, artificial world as Dido. "Society" is "that China without flaw", a metaphor recalling Gulbeyaz' description "as alabaster pale" and suggesting exquisite but fragile and transitory beauty. Transience is further stressed in the comparison of "the world of *eight* years past" to

... "a globe of glass!
Crack'd, shiver'd, vanish'd, scarcely gazed on, ere
A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.

(XI,lxxvi)

The idea of "dissolving" would better fit with ice than glass, and icy, wintry imagery is a feature of this section, carrying on from the previous Russian section and from the harem scenes of the Gulbeyaz section, and linked to the cold, sterile marble and stone imagery of the Dido section of *The Aeneid*. The famous frozen champagne simile is followed by the observation that

Your cold people are beyond all price,
When once you have broken their confounded ice

Juan avoiding scandal is like a skater gliding over ice (XII,xxv): he has carefully picked his way "through virtue's primrose paths of snows" (XII,xxvi). English women become "Those polar summers, *all* sun, and some ice." (XII,lxxii). Ice, as well as suggesting winter, the season of death and sterility, also suggests transience, the fleetingness of this existence, as was suggested earlier by the glass globe simile, and by Byron's amazement that The World he knew eight years ago has all passed away. It is a false, unnatural existence founded on hypocrisy and outward show, but some women do manage to keep

their perpendicular "like poplars, with good principles for roots" (XII,lix). This simile, though brief, is based on the much longer simile, already quoted in full earlier, describing Aeneas resisting Dido's fury as like an old oak tree able to resist the storms because of its deep roots.

"FIERCE LOVES AND FAITHLESS WARS"

Juan's exile from Haidée's isle is, then, a move from the the natural to the false, but also a move from an enclosed female world of love to the external, male world of money, empire, and war. This sequence reaches its nadir in Catherine, "the grand epitome/Of that great cause of war" as depicted in *Don Juan* (IX,lvii). If Haidée represents procreation, Catherine, in her association with war, represents uncreation:

'Let there be light!' said God, 'and there was light!'
'Let there be blood!' says man, and there's a sea. (VII,xli)

Byron is certainly anxious to strip war of any spurious glamour, as in his ironic assertion that "conquest and its consequences" "make epic poesy so rare and rich" (VIII,xc), and in his parody of Spenser's "Fierce wars and faithful loves" (VII,viii). The reality is shown in Suvarrow's making "each high heroic bosom" burn "for cash and conquest". Byron knows that as he bluntly puts it, "War's a brain-splattering, windpipe-slitting art," (IX,iv) and is confident that "the true portrait of one battlefield" will swiftly dispel any illusions we might harbour about the glamour of war:

There the still-varying pangs, which multiply
Until their very number makes men hard
By the infinities of agony,
Which meet the gaze, whate'er it may regard --
The groan, the roll in dust, the all-*white* eye
Turn'd back within its socket, -- these reward
Your rank and file by thousands, while the rest
May win perhaps a riband at the breast!
(VIII,xiii)

But this should not be taken as an attack on epic, as Byron repeatedly asserts his fellowship with Homer, eg. in describing

...a cannonade
As terrible as that of Ilion,
If Homer had found mortars ready made;
But now, instead of slaying Priam's son,
We only can but talk of escalade,

Bombs, drums, guns, bastions, batteries, bayonets, bullets;
Hard words, which stick in the soft Muses' gullets. (VII,lxxviii)

Oh, thou eternal Homer! I have now
To paint a siege, wherein more men were slain,
With deadlier engines and a speedier blow,
Than in thy Greek gazette of that campaign;
And yet, like all men else, I must allow,
To vie with thee would be about as vain
As for a brook to cope with ocean's flood;
But still we moderns equal you in blood;

If not in poetry, at least in fact;
And fact is truth, the grand desideratum!
(VII,lxxx - lxxxii)

Although he may distract attention from it by his sardonic complaints about the difficulty of making poetry out of the impedimenta of modern warfare, Byron is in reality inviting us to compare Homer's treatment of war with his own. Byron hails Homer as a fellow realist. He continues:

Oh, blood and thunder! and oh, blood and wounds!
These are but vulgar oaths, as you may deem,
Too gentle reader! and most shocking sounds:
And so they are; yet thus is Glory's dream
Unriddled, and as my true Muse expounds
At present such things, since they are her theme,
So be they her inspirers! Call them Mars,
Bellona, what you will -- they mean but wars.
(VIII,i)

This Solomou sees as paralleling Homer's disparagement of the Greek god of war, Ares, in *The Iliad*.¹ Again, Byron is demanding that his reader see *Don Juan* as "an encounter with the genuine epic tradition freed from the trappings of degenerate imitation"; such imitation as we find in Vergil.

While Byron's disgust at the horrors of war is manifested like Homer's in gruesome accounts of these horrors, Vergil's disgust causes him to shy away from a detailed portrayal of war. This tendency was exacerbated by the fact that Vergil's knowledge of warfare (a consequence of his distaste for the subject) was only second hand, and, it seems, more from the poets than the historians. Byron too obviously got his information second hand, but he was an avid reader of histories and for his depiction of the siege of Ismail, went to an eye witness account in the *Histoire de la Nouvelle Russie*. Byron doubtless also followed closely accounts of his hero Napoleon's campaigns (Napoleon, incidentally, while admiring Homer's grasp of military tactics [*The Iliad*, indeed, was used by the Greek army as a military text book for hundreds of years], knew instantly that Vergil had never stood on a battlefield). Ironically, Vergil's distaste for war and his lack of

close knowledge, means that he fails to show the full horror of war, and in consequence can be seen to be glamourising it. This paves the way for a whole tradition that regards glorification of combat as a prerequisite of epic,² the tradition glanced at by Byron in his ironic claim that "conquest and its consequences" "make epic poetry so rare and rich".

Homer, however, as Byron's comments imply, should not be considered as part of that tradition. Indeed, the only way in which Byron claims his account of warfare need differ from Homer's (excepting the joke concerning the "hard words which stick in the Muses' gullet") is in the extent of the carnage caused. In contrast to the battles of *The Iliad*, in which we feel we know the main protagonists, one of the horrors of modern warfare is the fact that it swallows up the individual. The epitome of this tendency is "Suwarrow, – who but saw things in the gross/Being much too gross to see them in detail" (VII, lxxvii). This quality he shares with his sovereign, who makes her bedroom like a battlefield in its turnover of young grenadiers. In her Cuvieresque creative/destructive aspect, as representative of an infinitely fecund (and female) Nature, Catherine can afford to be "careless of the individual life", soon finding a successor for Juan, just as she soon got over the loss of her beloved Lanskoï.

To counter this loss of individuality, Byron turns again to Homer who, as evidence of his intention to preserve accurately each act of heroism, frequently appeals for divine assistance:

Tell me now you Muses that live on Olympus, since you are goddesses and witness all that happens...tell me who... (pp.52-3; cf.p.203)

One of the most characteristic features of Homer's treatment of war is his attempt to see warriors as individuals rather than "en masse". A sense of identity was of great importance to the Greeks of Homer's time, since for them, a man became equal to the sum of his accomplishments. Thomas Greene finds that "epic tries to define the relation between the hero's name and his death":³ the heroes of *The Iliad* are engaged in a struggle to impose themselves on their world, to inform their names with meaning. The importance of the poet's role as preserver of heroic deeds is suggested by Homer's anxiety to record exactly who killed whom, resulting in the long lists of names that seem so dry and unpoetical to the modern reader, eg. p.223. Similar is the famous Catalogue of Ships, a list not only of names but of other individualizing details such as where the various characters came from. The same individualizing process is found in the lapidary sketches of warriors at their moment of death. As G.S. Kirk observes in *The Songs of Homer*, "hundreds of otherwise obscure Trojan and Achaean warriors are brilliantly illuminated at the moment of their death".⁴

The personal details we are given concerning these warriors increases our interest in them, and thereby increases the pathos at their death. Jasper Griffin, in his essay "Homeric

Pathos and Objectivity", identifies several recurrent "pathetic motifs"⁵ (almost like formulae in their recurrence) which can be depended upon to elicit the desired pathetic response from the audience, eg. youth/beauty brought low, bereaved parents, death far from home or near friends unable to help, a body denied proper burial, and so on,⁶ eg. at the death of Hippothous we are told:

He was a long way from deep-soiled Larissa when the spear of Aias cut him off. His life had been too short and now he could never repay his parents for their care.

Here, three motifs -- death far from home, short life, and inability to repay parents -- combine to give a highly pathetic picture. Yet while by increasing the details, the pathos is made greater, the vocabulary remains wholly unemotional; we are presented with only the bare facts of the case, not told how to react to them. This is why Griffin can talk of this as "emotional writing in the dispassionate style".⁷ The audience supplies the emotion. The same is true of Homer's style in general, which is bare, objective, telling us only what happened and leaving us to supply the motivations and emotions of the characters. This is in contrast to Vergil's subjective style where characters' thoughts and emotions tend to be filled in, directing the reader to the response that Vergil thinks is appropriate. As Bowra notes, clarity of expression and singleness of effect are of paramount importance in oral epic and to have supplied the detail supplied by Vergil, as well as his more difficult to assimilate grammatical structures would have meant a loss of these important qualities; the work would get clogged up, and the audience would not receive single, clear impressions.⁸ Homeric objectivity is reflected even in sentence structure, where every experience is of equal value, placed on the same level, next to other experiences in parataxis. Vergil's syntactic style, on the other hand, is an extension of his general tendency to guide the reader to a "correct" response; some experiences are subordinated grammatically, thus subtly shaping the reader's attitude to the text. Homer does not use emotional language or grammatical shaping to tell us how to react to pathetic incidents but relies instead on skilful collocations of formulae and words, letting our natural emotional responses do the rest.

Although it would be foolhardy to liken Byron's generally digressive and emotional style to the purity and simplicity of Homer's, it is conspicuous that when writing of events of obvious intrinsic pathos such as the shipwreck in Canto II (particularly the fact that the survivors were too weak to throw their dead comrades overboard), he does stand back, as it were, suspending his usual ironic commentary, to let facts speak for themselves. This one sees again at the siege of Ismail, where Lloyd N. Jeffrey finds "something like a true Homeric strain",⁹ particularly in the death of the Khan and his sons, one of whom, neglected because of a deformity, "died...to save a sire who blush'd that he begot him" (VIII,cx). And Byron indicates that he understands Homer's procedure for individualizing

minor characters when he singles out Jack Smith, one of the English soldiers in the Russian campaign to tell us "the elder Jack Smith/Was born in Cumberland among the hills" and "his father was an honest blacksmith" (VII,xx). Details like this, as has been seen, are a common feature of similar sections in Homer. Jack Smith is now not just any Jack Smith, one of many (as the cliché name suggests), but someone real enough to have a background with an "honest blacksmith" for a father. He has become an individual, like the "hundreds of otherwise obscure Trojan and Achaean warriors" we find in Homer.

While Vergil may duplicate quite accurately Homer's individualizing techniques with regard to minor characters, one receives the impression that his heart is elsewhere. Vergil may wish to suggest, for the sake of imitating Homer, that he is interested in individuals, but at every turn he betrays himself. He is interested above all in the destiny of a people, the divinely-sanctioned birth of Rome. Even characters we may feel to be individuals, like Dido or Turnus, though we may see inside their minds, are really just pawns of Fate, tests for Aeneas, as Brian Morris puts it.¹⁰ So what status can then be left to lesser characters? Of Vergil's treatment of Aeneas' men, T.R. Glover observes:

The poet looks at these men much as a Roman general would have, and he conceives that Aeneas did the same. Watchful of their general interests, careful, kindly, Aeneas will not concern himself too closely with them as individuals, he thinks of them as a body.¹¹

T.J. Haarhoff, in *Vergil the Universal*, makes the comment that Vergil tends to be neglectful of detail because his eyes are always fixed on the larger picture.¹² The implications of this are seen, as suggested, in the very structure of *The Aeneid*; no one episode is allowed to assume a disproportionate significance, everything having its proper place and being subordinate to the whole. This process one sees carried right down to the level of individual words and phrases in Vergil's complex, syntactic sentences. We should hardly be surprised, then, to find individuals subordinated to the poet's main goal, the founding of Rome. However much Vergil may follow Homer's example in trying to individualize his minor characters, his sympathy must inevitably be compromised by the cold fact that in Vergil's view, the end ultimately justifies the means.

In this, there are similarities with Catherine and Suvarrow, who, in bedroom and battlefield respectively, each take things in the gross, being much too gross to see them in detail. The siege of Ismail is also a place where present carnage is justified by future imperial glory. While Vergil wrote with the purpose of glorifying the Roman empire (hence the destruction is justified for the greater good), Byron, presumably with an eye to Vergil's treatment of female sexuality, attributes much lower motives for the siege of Ismail, implicating, as suggested, Catherine's desire for new territory with her desire for young soldiers, both of which desires are equally non-creative. But if lust is the underlying cause of the siege of Ismail, is the root cause of Homer's siege of Troy any less

absurd? Ostensibly, the Greeks are there to avenge the abduction of Menelaus' wife, Helen, by Paris, ie. a question of honour, but Thomas Greene finds in fact that there appears to be little real animosity between the two sides fighting so fiercely:

The Achaean warrior's antagonist is not so much the Trojan as it is death itself and time, flux, oblivion, mutability...combat is less a vendetta than a performance.¹³

The Greeks personify the "heroic code", which viewed honour as a man's most precious possession, something almost external, in the hands of others, and which had to be tirelessly defended. Gagarin observes that although Homer had a sense of "character" in the sense of a "consistent pattern of behaviour", this pattern was not seen as forming an inner unity that could be judged morally.¹⁴ In this "shame culture",¹⁵

a person must be valued in terms of external success or failure if there is no internal personality that might be valued in contradistinction to external success or failure.¹⁶

Hence, as mentioned earlier, Homer's heroes are engaged in the struggle to inform their names with meaning, a theme expanded upon by C.M. Bowra:

The heroic world holds nothing so important as the prowess and fame of the individual hero. The single man, Achilles, Beowulf or Roland surpasses others in strength and courage. His chief, almost his only aim is to win honour and renown through his achievements and to be remembered for them after his death. He is ruthless to any who frustrate or deride him...he lacks allegiance, except in a modified sense to suzerain or cause. What matters is his prowess. Even morality hardly concerns him; for he lives in a world where what counts is not morality but honour.¹⁷

With no concept of a "soul", the only way to "live on" after death was through the fame of one's deeds remembered in the songs of poets, hence glory is

So prized that one willingly shortens the physical life to lengthen the invisible one. One bargains life for fame.¹⁸

As noted previously, the Greeks personify the heroic code; they have come to retrieve Helen as a question of honour, and honour is virtually their sole preoccupation. In Troy, we see a less one-sided view. The Trojans have also their wives, their families, and their homes to consider; domestic values which are excluded from the heroic code.¹⁹ By admitting these values to his epic, Homer is making an implicit criticism of the narrowness and over-simplification of the heroic code, rather in the way that Byron reacts against the false glamourization of war and the tendency to exclude mundane matters like eating found in Vergil and other poets of the "Epic Tradition" which grew up after Homer. Nor is

the linkage of Byron and Homer in this way as contrived as it may sound. This discussion of epic began by examining some of the ideas put forward on the subject by Brian Wilkie. It is a basic flaw in Wilkie's argument to group Homeric epic together with the later tradition; to see Homer as the originator of the tradition while neglecting the likelihood that Homer came at the end of an earlier tradition. Kirk gives a salutary reminder that "the fascination and subtlety" of the Homeric poems

lies to a considerable extent in the contrast between the simplicity and crudeness of traditional and conventional attitudes and the brief flashes of critical and deeper understanding, or conversely in the harsh realities beneath the polished surface.²⁰

The Iliad can be seen as a journey from the old futilely destructive brand of heroism to a new kind, of which Hector is the representative. As C.M. Bowra notes, "prowess in battle is only a part of his nobility, but it is only a part, with Achilles it is the whole man".²¹ While for Achilles, the epitome of the old style heroism, "sedition, violence, and fighting are the breath of life", Hector fights reluctantly, not out of love of fighting or of the glory that it brings. He would rather stay at home and live quietly with his wife and family, and at every opportunity he leaves the battlefield to be with his wife and baby son. In this, he stands as a figurehead for his people just as Achilles does for his, each warrior, each people, representing a different way of life, and a different form of heroism.

It may not be putting it too strongly to suggest that *The Iliad* is substantially an account of the education of Achilles in the shortcomings of the heroic code which has hitherto been the be-all and end-all of his life. As G.S. Kirk proposes:

The transformation of his pride and anger, first in the Embassy into doubt of the whole heroic code, then into indecision and the compromise that leads to Patroclus' death, then into self-reproach and grief, then into obsessional madness, and finally into some sort of reluctant acceptance of the basic laws of society and at least a similitude of generosity -- all this is the moral core of the whole poem, and that which raises it beyond the level of reiterated cruelty and death to a more universal plane of purgation and divine law.²²

Kirk concludes that this "first questioning of the ultimate perfection of heroic standards was, as well as its consummation, the beginning of the epic's decline".²³ Achilles begins his questioning of his values when Agamemnon robs him of his rightful prize, Briseis. The significance lies not in Achilles' love for Briseis, but in the fact that she is his honour prize, a very important thing in a culture where status is measured only by such external signs. Achilles, the greatest warrior of his day, feels he is being undervalued, robbed of the status he has fought so hard to achieve.²⁴ That the rewards of so much effort can be so easily taken away brings home to him the futility of his way of life. He has no longer any interest in fighting and indeed when he does return to the fray, it is not from a desire for

honour or from a sense of duty, but from a need to vent his personal fury at the death of his friend. Finally, when Priam comes to Achilles' tent to beg for the return of his son's body, Achilles learns compassion as the two, Achilles, the greatest warrior of his day, and Priam, old and frail but still courageous, sit and weep side by side over the human condition. The old heroic code would have forbidden any such show of compassion to an enemy,²⁵ but Achilles has gone beyond the narrow and rigid old code to a new heroism informed by compassion, an ethos closer to that of Hector. One sign that Achilles has learnt his lesson is that he urges Priam to eat, thereby reasserting the claims of life. We have moved from a sterile, destructive code that was a denial of life to a reconciliation with the human condition. Earlier, Achilles (like Priam) had refused to eat, refusing even to allow his men to eat, but now he has come down from his godlike isolation to achieve a measure of solidarity with the rest of suffering humanity. Comparing the old Achilles with Hector, Bowra was able to say of him, "soldier born and bred, he lacks root in ordinary life and is alien to domesticity".²⁶ Finally we see him reconciled to domesticity and mortal life, something we never see in Aeneas.

To the classical mind, with no thought of a Christian-style afterlife, there were two ways to "live on" after death. The first, to gain honour and have one's deeds remembered in epic poetry, has already been mentioned, the second was to have children.²⁷ This is the less destructive way to immortality which seems to be vindicated towards the end of *The Iliad* in Achilles' and Priam's reconciliatory talk on fatherhood. Byron picks up on this, and appears to be preaching a switch to love and creation rather than war and destruction. That love and glory were linked in Byron's mind is shown by the following:

O love! O Glory! what are ye who fly
 Around us ever, rarely to alight?
 There's not a meteor in the Polar sky
 Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.
 Chill, and chain'd to cold earth, we lift on high
 Our eyes in search of either lovely light. (VII,i)

It should be noted that love and glory are alike in their elusiveness, transience, and in the airy imagery with which they are identified. But while they may be equally difficult to attain and sustain, love does not have the destructiveness of war; it is a wholesome, positive force. This is why we perceive a decided downturn in Juan's fortunes when he abandons the world of women and love for that of war to go and fight at Ismail. This episode has marked parallels with Aeneas' desertion of Dido in *The Aeneid*. Aeneas too is abandoning a female world of love and luxury to pursue the hard road to glory and empire, but the difference is that Vergil never doubts the rightness of Aeneas' choice. The certainty that this is heaven's will, and that all will eventually be justified, vindicates Aeneas' decision.

Returning to Joseph Conrad for another modern recasting of the scenario, in *Lord Jim* we find the question left characteristically open. In Conrad's novel, Jim sacrifices the love of Jewel for his "pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct", which comes to him "veiled like an Eastern bride", this last simile emphasising the point that, in pursuing this "shadowy ideal", he leaves behind a real flesh and blood "Eastern bride". Jim seems to die a futile death, although this question is left open. With Byron, there is no doubt; he does not hesitate in championing the real, the physical, the immediate, above the distant, vague, and possibly non-existent. This is not to say that Byron is anti-heroism -- as noted, he is eager to record individual moments of heroism such as those of the Khan and his five sons at Ismail. But such deeds have an intrinsic worth; they are not done in anticipation of fame or that they will add up to some greater purpose. This self-contained quality is one shared with love. Love may lead to procreation but it is also recreation; children are, in a sense, a by-product. While Haidée's isle is a world of love, fertile and described in imagery of natural growth and fertility, Catherine's world is barren and dry, a world of death. Haidée represents creative love (she dies carrying Juan's child), war is uncreation:

'Let there be light!' said God, 'and there was light!'
 'Let there be blood!' says man, and there's a sea! (VII,xli)

Just as Vergil's concept of heroism, selfless, always looking ahead to some future vindication of present sacrifices, develops out of his conviction that there is order and purpose in the universe, so Byron's concept of heroism is adapted to the world as he perceives it; to the possibility, or even certainty, that in a chaotic world, only the act with intrinsic meaning can have any validity. This is suggested by Byron's belief that

The drying up a single tear has more
 Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore.

And why?--because it brings self-approbation (VIII,iii - iv)

Wilkie sees as one of the few defining characteristics of epic the proposal of a new and higher version of heroism than that of one's predecessors. Since one cannot really be much more imitative than epic already is, the only way of parodying epic, he suggests,²⁸ is to refuse the proposal of a new, higher version of heroism, or to substitute an incongruous version of heroism. This, as noted earlier, he deems to be the case in Fielding and in *Don Juan*. Although Wilkie concedes that there are brief moments of heroism at Ismail, he stresses the fact that these individual instances can never come together for any larger or more meaningful purpose.²⁹ This misses altogether the definitive quality of such incidents; that they are self-justifying, intrinsically valuable, and

creative, not destructive. The instances of heroism recorded in *Don Juan* are moments of love, human brotherhood, "the drying up a single tear", the affection of the Khan and his sons. That Byron is shifting his attention from the traditional means of asserting greatness (through martial prowess) to love should not be taken to mean that Byron is mocking or denying the possibility of heroism. Byron's version of heroism may look "incongruous" next to the post-Homeric "Epic Tradition", next to Vergil, but not, I think, next to Homer himself. Indeed Byron's new heroism has its roots in Homer, in a side of Homer overlooked by Wilkie.

Hector is the pivot on which this interpretation largely turns. Hector is an important figure for Vergil, and indeed can be seen as the model for Aeneas in many respects. Wendell Clausen suggests that of all Homer's characters, Aeneas most resembles Hector and Sarpedon:

It can be no accident that their names occur in this opening speech for they, almost alone of Homer's heroes, strike that note of melancholy resignation so characteristic of Vergil's Aeneas.³⁰

This is illustrated in the pivotal scene of Hector's leave-taking of Andromache. He would clearly rather stay with his wife, as she pleads with him to do,

but if I hid myself like a coward and refused to fight, I could never face the Trojans and the Trojan ladies in their trailing gowns, besides it would go against the grain, for I have trained myself always, like a good soldier to take my place in the front line and win glory for my father and myself (pp.128-9)

He is resigned to Troy's fall and knows that if he goes out to fight, he will probably be killed, but tells Andromache:

My dear, I beg you not to be too much distressed. No-one is going to send me down to Hades before my proper time. But Fate is a thing that no man born of woman, coward or hero, can escape (pp.129-30)

In adapting the character of Hector to suit his ideal of Roman heroism, Vergil emphasizes the character's dutiful submission to Fate. However, this means that he plays down Hector's domestic side. Perhaps (as suggested earlier) he felt that such matters did not accord with epic dignity. But in doing this, Vergil misses the essential balanced and well-rounded nature of Hector, the very aspect that makes him such an effective foil for Achilles; his "raison d'etre", one might even go so far as to say. Because Vergil has missed this essential point, Aeneas comes, at least in one respect, to resemble not Hector, his original model, so much as Achilles, the type of hero Aeneas was intended to replace. One major aspect of this is that while Vergil wants to depict Aeneas to some extent as an ordinary man, a modern Roman hero, a man strongly attached to home and family, but

who must forgo these pleasures for the greater good of the Roman empire, in fact Aeneas' love for his home and family remains only implied; assumed, not really portrayed, the emphasis falling on his selfless submission to Fate.

The first six books of *The Aeneid* are conventionally interpreted as the education of Aeneas in the ways of Fate so that he emerges, reborn as it were, from his Underworld trip a model Roman hero, confident in his destiny.³¹ But in the process, Aeneas seems to become a mere agent of Fate, being gradually drained of humanity, losing any capacity for affection -- if indeed he ever had any. When Creusa disappears mysteriously in the flight from Troy, neither Vergil nor Aeneas seem unduly concerned. She has served her purpose, it seems, in supplying Aeneas with an heir, and now she may be dropped with the same bewildering discontinuity as Una's lamb in *The Faerie Queene*. Although Aeneas sheds tears for Dido at their parting, these seem more tears of pity for Dido and himself at having to leave this paradise of luxury to resume his arduous quest for Rome, than grief at having to leave a lover.³² Greene suggests that "Aeneas' evasion [of duty] stems not so much from any love for Dido as from a dreamy willingness to indulge himself in her opulent, oriental hospitality".³³ There is no suggestion of any love between Aeneas and Lavinia; theirs is a marriage based solely on political expediency; a means of joining together the Trojan and Latin nations. Even Aeneas' "love" for his son is "more dynastic than personal",³⁴ according to Steele Commager. A lack of love is a marked feature of Achilles' life. He has not seen his father for years, and his mother is a goddess who can help him but whom he cannot help in return, and who has no need of his love.³⁵ These observations further point the contrast between Achilles and Hector. In addition, Achilles is isolated from the other warriors by his greatness, particularly his semi-divine origin. Such origins Achilles shares with Aeneas and the Roman hero seems to become progressively more isolated from his fellows, less human, as he becomes more attuned to his destiny, and appears to live less in the world of men than in the world of gods.³⁶ Substantially the same could be said of Achilles since, at the height of his grief, Achilles sits alone day and night, with Patroclus' corpse, denying himself sleep, refusing himself food and drink, until the gods feed him with nectar and ambrosia, the sustenance of the gods. As in the case of Aeneas, the divine part of his make-up seems to be dominating the mortal.³⁷ But one should remember, as Vergil apparently fails to do, that this is not how *The Iliad* ends.

It is perhaps best to see Homer as a point from which epic imitation could develop in two ways. In my view, Byron chose the more apt, or at least the more Homeric, interpretation. As I have argued, *Don Juan* is substantially "about" reclaiming, prophet-fashion, the true Homeric essence, stripped of false imitation. He takes from Hector his domestic, creative, female aspect, and glorifies the act that is intrinsically valuable. After the Epic Tradition, this interpretation seems subversive, as Wilkie detected when he

considered *Don Juan* as mock epic, and Byron indeed leaves himself open to this kind of misinterpretation through his general flippancy, his sexual innuendo along the lines of "make love not war", and the Byronic inversion of the *Don Juan* story to have Juan, instead of the traditionally aggressive seducer, the innocent and passive seduced. But the key to this surrender to love, to the female, the passive, is that it is creative, or at least non-destructive, in contrast to the normal, martial route to glory in epic.

As Wilkie notes in his analysis of the Epic Tradition (which I think can be safely applied to Vergil, while acknowledging its shortcomings in relation to Byron), each poet, into the religiously copied epic form, puts a version of heroism suitable for his time. Homer, I have argued, does this through the character of Hector, a less destructive, less selfish figure, better adapted than followers of the old heroic code to life in the new political landscape of the city states.³⁸ The social milieu of Vergil's time had changed in turn from that which produced either the Hector or the Achilles archetype; now requirements of empire were paramount, as Bowra outlines, contrasting the Vergilian hero with the earlier Achilles archetype:

It is Rome to whom in the last resort the glory of her sons belongs and it is for her that they make their sacrifices not merely of life but of happiness and all that the old heroic type took for granted as its right...The old concept of a man's honour is merged in a scheme of morality where duties are laid down with precision and must be fulfilled if the gods' will is to be done. Vergil revealed an entirely new use for epic to an age for which the old heroic outlook was too andarchic and anti-social.³⁹

As is obvious, this new selfless brand of heroism demands that the sacrifices of immediate personal pleasures and comforts will ultimately be justified. It is because Vergil perceives and portrays the world as having a natural order, an ultimate plan and purpose, that such a version of heroism is sustainable. One should not, however, underestimate the human cost of this type of heroism: as Brian Morris says, "Aeneas is drained of life in these last books and Rome is built at his expense".⁴⁰ Everywhere in *The Aeneid* we feel Fate pressing down on mortal life. It crushes all opposition; Juno and her earthly representatives, Dido and Turnus, and even, more sinisterly, its agent, Aeneas, as Morris suggests. But this submission to Fate does have its compensations; as Aeneas surrenders up his personal will to that of heaven, he becomes unbeatable, as is suggested by the pattern of Vergilian battles; here there is no Homeric sense of a playful battle between the gods, with man as their pawns; rather "it is a matter of watching the heaven-directed Aeneas steadily, ruthlessly, and relentlessly crushing the opposition to the divine will".⁴¹ Fate is always, everywhere, and inevitably, in control and this is why Dido and the Latins, united in their opposition to Fate, cannot win their battle against the Trojans; it would be unnatural, contrary to the nature of the universe. This sense of the inexorable, inevitably

right force of destiny is necessary to magnify the greatness of Rome, and, it follows, to diminish the importance of the bitter fighting that leads to its foundation.

In Homer, Fate does not have this oppressive, omnipresent character. It is true that at certain times it is acutely felt, eg. when Zeus grieves that he is not able to save his son, Sarpedon, but destiny is not felt consistently in this way. Homer's world lacks the certainty of Vergil's, an impression stemming largely from the inconstancy of Homer's gods. These are dizzyingly capricious, at least in *The Iliad*; Here and Athene turn against Troy simply because Paris has offended them by deeming Aphrodite more beautiful than they. Here indeed, in her anxiety to be avenged on Troy, says to Zeus that if he permits the sack of Troy he may sack the three towns she loves best, Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae. Athene is outraged at Ares' fickleness on the battlefield, complaining to Diomedes that

only the other day that pestilential, double-dealing villain gave Here and myself his word to fight against the Trojans and help the Argives, and now he has forgotten all he said and is fighting on the Trojan side (p.114)

Even when the Olympians are not being fickle, the fortunes of mortals are still unstable because the Olympians are constantly trying to outmanoeuvre one another to give their favourites the upper hand. Zeus, it is true, generally has the final say, being by far the most powerful god, but even he loses control of the situation when, tricked by his wife, Here and lying asleep in a golden cloud, Poseidon wreaks havoc amongst the Trojans. Even in the *Odyssey*, where gods' allegiances are more fixed (we know Odysseus is a favourite of Athene, and that she will help him at every opportunity), there is little certainty, as Poseidon several times demonstrates, by upsetting, or at least delaying, Odysseus' homecoming. The overall impression of Homer's work is that there is no real shaping force in life, engineering things to fit some higher purpose, and the Homeric gods seem at times merely attempts to rationalize a chaotic universe. Fate is mentioned with some frequency in Homer's works, but tends to be evoked as an explanation of events that have already occurred rather than as a prediction of events yet to take place. Thus we do not get in Homer, as we do in Vergil, the sense of some great plan being realized before our eyes. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the work of the two great epic writers. There are prophecies in both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* but in neither work are they so pervasive as those in Vergil, nor do they seem to carry the same weight (characters seem readily to forget them). Whereas of *The Aeneid*, Bowra could claim that "In no great poem do signs and omens play such a part as in *The Iliad*. At every turn of the action and in every crisis Aeneas is helped by some manifestation of divine help".⁴² Shortly after he lands on Dido's shores, Aeneas meets Venus disguised as a Carthaginian maid who tells him all about Dido and Carthage, but, as Prescott observes, Venus does not tell Aeneas anything that could not have been told him by an ordinary Carthaginian maid.⁴³ Vergil seems here to be giving expression to a profound conviction that no event

in human experience is quite independent of divine influence or intervention. The prestige of Rome is, of course, increased hereby. There must never be any doubt that Aeneas is "on the right track". His is not always an easy way, but because all the visions, omens, etc. assure us that he is "doing the right thing", we never feel that any real harm can come to him. He seems to go around in a kind of protective bubble. "If you do the gods' will, as manifested in their abundant signs, the gods will look after you" seems to be one of the governing principles of Vergil's world. We see it not merely in Aeneas' ultimate triumph, but in smaller incidents too. Comparing Vergil's boat race to the chariot race in *The Iliad*, Prescott finds

It is the pre-eminence of the inner qualities of the captains, rather than the excellence or inferiority of their ships, as determining the issue of the race, that sharply differentiates Vergil from Homer...the best horse wins in Homer, the best man in Vergil.⁴⁴

That bad things should happen to good people must, in Vergil, signify some disturbance in the natural order. This would seem to be the only explanation for the Dido tragedy. It results principally from Juno's plotting to divert Aeneas from his Fate-ordained mission. Such an interpretation is corroborated by the fact that while Dido, under the disruptive influence of Juno, is unable to sleep, tormented by the knowledge that Fate is irreconcilable with her desires, all the rest of Nature is as it should be:

It was night and tired creatures all over the world were enjoying kindly sleep. Forests and fierce seas were at rest, as the circling constellations glided in their midnight course (p.113)

The word "kindly" seems to carry connotations similar to those it has in, eg. Chaucer, ie. "according to its kind, appropriate", giving the sense that everything has an allotted place in the cosmos, like the constellations which glide in their pre-ordained courses. This passage is an eloquent expression of the Vergilian sense of calm and order that comes of being in harmony with the workings of the universe. Predictably, in contrast to Dido, Aeneas (who is in harmony with Fate) is sleeping soundly at this time. Calm and order are the natural state in Vergil's perception of the universe. This is shown when Neptune calms the sea in Book II. The storm can be seen as an extension of Juno's turbulent nature, which in the second section finds issue in war, both war and storm being disruptions of the natural state of calm. This, one suspects is more of an artistic contrivance, like his structuring of the war books, than a genuine belief in the workings of the cosmos, yet still it carries an air of falseness. In Homer, it is quite natural for the sea to be rough, probably as likely as it is to be smooth: it depends on the whims of the gods. Byron exhibits a similarly equivocal view of Nature in *Don Juan*, where he juxtaposes two versions of Nature: the idyll of Haidée's isle, and the horrors of the storm and shipwreck.

Byron makes clear that the cannibalism he depicts in the latter is as "natural" as the nature depicted in the former, explaining, "Nature gnawed them to it".

The differences here apparent between Vergil and Byron have far-reaching consequences. The differences between Vergilian, Homeric and Byronic hero-types have already been discussed along with the fact that Vergil's view of heroism is dependant on this certainty that the universe follows some clearly-defined plan. The view of the cosmos taken by by Byron and Homer lacks this crucial certainty. There is always a lingering doubt in Homer (almost a certainty in Byron), that human effort, at least such as we see in war, never leads to anything worthwhile or lasting. Several times Homer stresses the futility of the greatest heroic deeds. What one would expect to be a moment of triumph is often tinged with tragedy, eg. Hector's short-lived delight in the capture of Achilles' armour (regarded pityingly by Zeus), and similarly Achilles' victory over Hector, which seals his own fate. This pervasive sense of futility is one reason why Byron and Homer's sympathy with warriors at the hour of their deaths is more genuine than Vergil's.

While in Homer's universe any larger divine pattern tends to be obscured by the capriciousness and petty squabbling of the Olympians, Byron's poetic universe appears at times wholly chaotic. Survival at Ismail is "according to the artillery's hits and misses/What sages call Chance providence or Fate" and its suggestion that the Irish is "descended from the Punic" is "rational as any other notion". The implication is that we can put any interpretation we choose on the world, but ultimately it defies explanation. Fame is deceptive, illusory even, and leads people to their death. It is from this perspective that Byron advocates the immediate and creative tangibility of love rather than the destructive, deceptive and possibly illusory glory offered by war. If life goes on as we plan it, then we will "live on" in our children, if not then at least the act has intrinsic and immediate value, unlike the pursuit of Fame which relies on a consistency present in Vergil's ordered cosmos, but missing from Byron's. In Byron's chaotic universe, only the act with intrinsic value can have any sure worth, and this is the essence of Byron's new heroism. This is a version of heroism that has its roots in Byron's interpretation of Homer although this interpretation seems incongruous when placed beside Vergil's use of Homer, which forms the basis of the entire Epic Tradition.

THE QUEST FOR PERSPECTIVE

In Byron, Fame is notoriously fickle, its pursuit hazardous and destructive, but Byron's differences with Vergil in this respect are more general; Byron's universe is apparently governed only by Chance. At the start of Canto I of *Don Juan*, as part of the search for a suitable hero for his epic, Byron gives a long list of "followers of Fame", a list of names, many of which have little significance now, and which tend to clog up the poem for the modern reader (Byron may here have been imitating Pope's list of now-forgotten minor poets in *The Dunciad*, which has the same, and similarly obstructive, aspect of built-in obsolescence), merely highlighting the short duration of Fame. Among these names, Nelson's may be the only one worth remembering, but he is now neglected:

Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
 And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd
 There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
 'Tis with our hero quietly inurn'd;
 Because the army's grown more popular...
 ...the prince is all for the land service,
 (I,iv)

and at Troy,

There, on the green and village-cotted hill, is
 (Flank'd by the Hellespont, and by the sea)
 Entomb'd the bravest of the brave, Achilles;
 They say so -- (Bryant says the contrary):
 And further downward, tall and towering still, is
 The tumulus -- of whom? Heaven knows; 't may be
 Patroclus, Ajax, or Protesilaus,
 (IV, lxxvi)

and

...where I sought for Ilion's walls,
 The quiet sheep feeds, and the tortoise crawls.
 (IV, lxxvii)

We can be sure of nothing

Save change: I've stood upon Achilles' tomb
And heard Troy doubted; time will doubt of Rome.
(IV,ci)

At stake is not only the fame of individual warriors, but a whole civilization. Much of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, of course, is taken up in expressions of horror and disbelief that such great civilisations, the foundation of Western culture, should be reduced to ruin. From this, Byron is led to doubt the existence of any absolute values. Nothing seems fixed; not only buildings, but

Even gods must yield -- religions take their turn:
'Twas Jove's -- 'tis Mahomet's -- and other creeds
Will rise with other years...
(*CHP* II,iii)

Against such a backdrop of cosmic chaos, Byron asks what place then has the mind or the will of Man, a question he answers in *The Two Foscari*:

...nothing rests
Upon our will; the will itself no less
Depends upon a straw than on a storm;
And when we think we lead, we are most led.
(II.i,358 - 361)

This is an answer influenced by experience of his own "mobility"; his mental changeability. In discussions, Byron freely admitted he would be influenced not necessarily by the strongest argument, but by the last speaker. In comments like the following:

If a writer should be quite consistent
How could he possibly show life existent,

Byron suggests that his mobility, as an inward echo of the outward chaos, is a kind of honesty, a truthfulness at least to the passing instant, "For surely they're sincerest/Who are acted upon by what is nearest" (*D.JXVI*,xcvii). Brian Wilkie suggests as much in these remarks on *Don Juan*, where Byron

Seems to have cared about the particular points he made in particular stanzas; if we allow for his irony, we need not doubt that at any one moment Byron believed what he was saying, however contradictory his ideas may seem when we take a birds-eye view of them...His intention was to state an endless list of truths which did not lead up to any Truth.¹

In *Don Juan*, Byron gives free rein to his butterfly mind to dart around and settle where it pleases, blissfully disregarding of any obligation to "get on with the story". One aspect of this is that Byron can evoke first a serious and then a comic response to the same event, as in the notorious rhyme:

They grieved for those who perish'd with the cutter,
And also for the biscuit-casks and butter. (II,lxi)

Similarly, into Byron's mind, as he is celebrating Juan and Haidée's passion, pops a topical political issue:

And oh! that quickening of the heart, that beat!
How much it costs us! yet each rising throb
Is in its cause as its effect so sweet,
That Wisdom, ever on the watch to rob
Joy of its alchemy, and to repeat
Fine truths; even Conscience, too, has a tough job
To make us understand each good old maxim,
So good -- I wonder Castlereagh don't tax 'em. (II,cciii)

For Byron to limit himself to bare narration would have been to exclude too much, not to be true to the instant. And Byron, as previously noted, wanted to write poetry that would encompass reality, the conventionally "unpoetic" as well as the conventionally "poetic". Such are the far-reaching implications of Byron's self-deprecating explanations of his method in *Don Juan*, "I rattle on exactly as I'd talk" (XV,xix) and "I write what's uppermost without delay". The mental leaps which are the result of Byron's successfully recording his mobility are rendered even more startling by the vast scope of a sponge-like mind which could amass and hold a bewildering number of pieces of information, from the latest scientific discoveries to advertising slogans, all on the same level, with no apparent ranking in importance. Thus one finds the sentimental thrown together with the cynical, the "important" sitting on equal terms with the "trivial", challenging any but an arbitrary ordering of the world. One of the more remarkable aspects of this vast, uni-levelled scope is Byron's sense of history, which erodes divisions between past and present. It is this quality to which Robert F. Gleckner seems to be referring when he talks of Byron seeing Rome "in one vast present".² Byron's extensive classical reading (and in addition to fictional works, he was an avid reader of histories) drew him to Greece and Rome and enabled him to people the ruins he visited with characters from his reading. This might be said of other writers, but for Byron the past lives in a special way. As T. Spencer observes, "Shelley could write (*Hellas* ll.696-703) "Her citizens, imperial spirits,/Rule the present from the past", but in Byron's poetry, the Greece of the imagination and the Greece of observation were one".³ Of contemporaries, perhaps Scott alone (one of Byron's favourite writers) approaches the sense of history we encounter in Byron.

Largely as a consequence of this, that monuments to great civilizations, like the Parthenon, should be in ruins, the haunt of sheep and tortoises, makes an unusually strong impression on Byron. Related are Byron's musings on the skull he picks up at the Parthenon, or indeed those triggered by Shelley's skull, which Byron found an unbelievably small and frail receptacle for so great a mind. This highlights the difficulty Byron had in accepting that something he knew as so alive, be it a mind or a culture should ever cease to exist, since to him past and present seem almost equally alive.

Places often act as triggers for Byron's transtemporal musings, as in "Where'er we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground" (*CHP*.II,xxxviii) or "Stop! -- for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!" (*CHP*.III,xvii). The sense of immediacy, of being on the spot with Byron, is a reminder of just how vividly the past was alive for Byron. An interesting use of such immediacy occurs in the dying gladiator episode of Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. All is recounted in the present tense, as if by a Roman sports commentator on the spot:

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
He leans upon his hand -- his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low --
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him -- he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hail'd the wretch who won. (IV,cxl)

Incensed by this bloodthirsty sport, Byron urges the gladiator's fellow countrymen "Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!" (IV,cxli), but then, turning away from the small scope and immediacy of the present tense commentary,⁴ he admits a larger perspective which reveals that his desire for Rome's destruction has been fulfilled and

Here, where the Roman million's blame or praise
Was death or life, the playthings of a crowd,
My voice sounds much -- and fall the stars' faint rays
On the arena void -- seats crush'd -- walls bow'd --
And galleries, where my steps seem echoes strangely loud. (IV,cxlii)

This sudden shift from a narrow immediacy to the larger view which incorporates it, putting it in perspective, is typical of Byron's practice. Shifts between an immediate and a much wider view are characteristic of Attic tragedy: witness Oedipus, who is, it seems, innocently making his very successful way in the world when he suddenly finds that he is part of a much larger scenario. Events which happened long ago, and of which Oedipus was ignorant, turn out to have a great bearing on his present situation. Similarly, Aeschylus' Orestes finds himself suddenly caught up in chain of events to the instigation of which he was a complete outsider. There is always this sense of a wider view, of another

dimension, in Greek tragedy; and in epic too, as has been shown. This is reflected in oracles, in omens, and by the actual appearance of the immortals themselves. Though often the gods intervene to sort out problems that have arisen because of the limited vision of mortals, there is also the sense that such interventions are beneficial only coincidentally and that the concerns of the immortals, of Fate, or of some universal law are entirely independent of human wishes. Often in tragedy, as in epic, Man seems dwarfed and oppressed by a much larger reality to whose laws they are subject but which can be known only partially.

Sophocles, like the Homer of *The Iliad*, clearly opposes the dark and oppressive world of men with the bright world of the gods, where all uncertainty is absent. The danger of deception in Sophocles' confusing dramatic universe is dramatized in *Antigone* in the character of Creon. Initially, Creon appears a good ruler, presenting reasoned arguments for the subordination of individual inclinations for principles found to be best for the *polis*. In contrast, Antigone appears selfish and over-emotional. But as the play progresses, right shifts to Antigone, a movement marked by Creon's "betrayal" by his own imagery.⁵

Creon argues – reasonably it seems – that it is in the natural order for a ruler's people to be subordinate to him just as animals are to men, but this is to overlook the ineluctable differences between animals and men, men and gods. Towards the end of the first stasimon, we are reminded of these differences: while, in the first two strophes, we find a celebration of Man's prowess in subduing and productively using animals; in the last two strophes, this is contrasted with Man's control of himself and his fellows; a control which must be self-taught, not imposed from without (ll.354-6).

Another imagery pattern comes from chariot-racing. Initially Creon sees himself as the chariot driver, but in the odes, the gods are the drivers, and by the end of the play, Creon has realized that he is driven, not the driver. That previously Creon did not have such respect for the gods is shown in his arrogant denial of Tiresias' reminder that if he leaves Polyneices unburied, it will be an affront to the gods; he knows, he claims, that no man can pollute the gods. On the surface, this would seem sound reasoning, according to the gods their properly unassailable station, so far above us that we cannot affect them, but this is to know better than the gods and is an act of *hybris*. In the end, it is Antigone who, looking in her own pious heart, is more truly in touch with the laws of the gods. As Goheen concludes,

Finally the tragedy of Creon is not that he was evil in intent or even that he aspired to political tyranny but that he was limited in his rational and factual wisdom.⁶

Appropriately in the dark and confusing world of Sophocles, sight, and the idea of seeing truly, ie. with the vision which can encompass the wider view as well as the purely

mortal view, assumes a great importance. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, having first scorned the warnings of the blind soothsayer, Tiresias, Oedipus finally discovers that it was the blind man who had the true vision, and only comes to realize the full truth when he is himself blind. This is almost exactly the same pattern followed in *Antigone*, where Creon's external senses have only deceived him by giving him a shortsighted focus on matters of this world, blinding him to the truly-important things beyond. Creon comes to grief because, due to this narrow vision, he is led to set up his own, distorted, subjective view of the world as objective, absolute truth. Finally, crushed, Creon must be led away by helpers, paralleling Tiresias' physical frailty and need for a sighted guide, both of which details belie his great powers of vision, and show furthermore that complete autonomy is impossible.

In Euripides' work, the limits of partial mortal understanding are shown in the extent to which characters' language and perceptions are shaped by their situation. Because of this, their words, though they may give a false account of events, tell us more about the characters and their circumstances than about the ostensible subject of their speeches. Barlow notes, for instance, how Euripides' choruses often lack the authority of their Aeschylean counterparts, being no more likely than other characters to possess the truth, limited as they are by their lack of the necessary detachment. Yet still they act dramatically, since

the pictorial language the chorus use conveys the world they and other characters inhabit, as it has become immediately significant to them in their imagination.⁷

Their point of view may be misguided, but it still conveys much information, revealing, as it does, their prejudices, the blinkers on their vision that have led to this erroneous point of view. Similar is Electra's playing for sympathy by making her situation seem worse than it really is, eg. complaining (ll.175-87) that, while her mother is preoccupied, with Aegysthus, she is neglected, unable to go out to the dance, because she has no fine clothes or jewellery, when in fact her friends have generously offered to let her borrow theirs. Likewise, she over-dramatizes her hard life with her peasant husband, complaining of having to wear rags and carry heavy jugs of water when her husband makes it plain that she insists on doing this. As Burian says,

Most speeches in Euripides' plays reveal more than the speaker intends to say or even happens to know; everything is subordinated to the play as a whole...Euripides' thought cannot be identified with anything less than each entire play.⁸

It is Electra's husband who criticizes those who "would judge all things by the standard of their own wretched minds". This criticism could also be levelled at Sophocles' Creon,

and Euripides' target, as was Sophocles', seems specifically to have been the Sophists. The Sophists, who were rising in influence about this time to challenge previously-accepted beliefs, were, like Creon, masters of the ostensibly flawless, but ultimately specious, argument, and were criticised for their pride in the autonomy of their own mental powers. There were thus parallels with the Romantics of Byron's day whom Byron likewise criticised for judging "all things by the standard of their wretched minds", though less by logic in this case than by imagination. While High Romanticism preached the mind's power to colour or shape its surroundings, Byron delighted in demonstrating (as Euripides did) the extent to which the much larger external world influences the mind.

Byron may draw characters who attempt to impose their defiant wills upon their world but while this may be a source of triumph on the individual level, it is always set, as such moments tend to be in classical literature, in a larger perspective,⁹ eg. Hector's joy in the capture of Achilles' armour, watched over by a pitying Zeus, or Clytemnestra's triumph in the murder of her filicide husband. It is this ability, alongside depictions of the defiant Romantic will, to show the much larger external forces which limit such rebellions with at times, it seems, an almost premeditated malevolence, which allies Byron firmly to the classical tradition. *Cain* can be viewed as an elaborate indictment of the Romantic quest for mental autonomy. In this piece, partly no doubt as revenge for Wordsworth and Southey's allegations of immorality and Satanism, Byron makes Lucifer, in his urgings to "create an inner world where the outer fails", an arch-Romantic. The self-centredness of this exhortation, and urgings to "war triumphant with your own" are opposed by Adah who puts forward love rather than knowledge, a love that is a bond to others. It is by following Lucifer's way that Cain becomes the first murderer. Bound, like the characters of Attic tragedy, by the limitations of his own make-up, society, and the cosmic order, Cain must realize that on these planes will the repercussions of his actions be felt. Thus, while Manfred can shout defiantly "I...was my own destroyer and will be/My own hereafter" (*Manfred* III.iv,138-40), he is finally destroyed, and, as in the Faustian model, his powers' promise remains unfulfilled. Manfred's triumph -- and it is a considerable one -- is nonetheless limited. Indeed, both Manfred and Cain could say, with Doge Foscari, that they had but learned "a magic which recoils upon/The adept who pursues it" (*The Two Foscari* II.i,337-8).

Faced, like the characters of Attic tragedy, with the ever-present danger of "overstepping", in such a treacherous, incomprehensible universe, Man's only response can be modesty, modesty born of a consciousness of his own relative smallness. Thus we find Byron endorsing Socratic modesty (which he distorts, perhaps, to provide an excuse for his own intellectual laziness): "All that we know is, nothing can be known" (*CHP*.II,vii), a dictum which clearly struck a chord with Byron, as we find another version of it in *Don Juan* (VII,v):

Socrates said, our only knowledge was
'To know that nothing could be known'.

For similar reasons, Byron is drawn to Newton, who, Byron notes approvingly,

Declared, with all his grand discoveries recent,
That he himself felt only 'like a youth
Picking up shells by that great ocean, -- Truth'
(VII,v)

which perhaps translates into Byron's "intention...to state an endless list of particular truths which did not add up to any Truth". Given this view of the world, Byron has a particular dislike for "System", defined by M.K. Joseph as "abstraction divorced from fact", the attempt to make the whole confusing nature of reality fit some "preconceived theoretical pattern", something Byron accuses "the Lakers" of attempting with regard to poetry in the dedication to *Don Juan* (iv-v). He finds "a narrowness in this notion,/Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean".

Thus we find the bathetic possibilities of the *Don Juan* style fully exploited when Juan is portrayed as a parodic Romantic:

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks,
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

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

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,
Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
How many miles the moon might have in girth,
Of air balloons, and of the many bars
To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies; --
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'Twas strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If *you* think 'twas philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
And when he look'd upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner --
He also found that he had lost his dinner. (I,xc-xciv)

Bearing in mind Byron's large scope discussed earlier, and his desire to capture this in his poetry, in the inclusion of details normally considered "unpoetic", such as "a pipe of claret", or "thine incomparable oil, macassar", such narrowness, particularly when it would exclude or denigrate Byron's style of poetry, was something Byron found hard to stomach. One aspect of this narrowness which further alienated Byron was his perception that the Lakers were retreating from the real, external world into their own minds, a path as susceptible to error (since divorced from external reality) as the "inner world" of Lucifer, of Creon, or of the Sophists. Such a "system" was made worse in its internal focus by its avowed intention to cut loose from the great classical tradition, particularly in its more recent manifestations, eg. Dryden and Pope, which was the basis of Byron's poetry, indeed felt by Byron to be the foundation of good taste in poetry. With this in mind, it should come as no surprise to find Byron berating the Romantics for conceit, for Luciferian pride. As in the quotation above, where Juan's lofty meditations lost him his dinner, Byron delights in reminding us of our limitations, particularly physical limitations. Notwithstanding the very real pain in Julia's letter (despite the novelistic hyperbole of its expression),¹⁰ these sentiments are comically lost on Juan as his seasickness takes precedence. Such instances of physical necessity interfering with spiritual aspirations are legion in *Don Juan*, and serve as a repeated warning to those who would soar with the spirit and forget that they are also composed of clay. McGann's comment on *Cain* is true of Byron's work generally:

Whenever characters lose a sense of the relation of their acts to the implicated actions of others, some sort of folly or disaster occurs.¹¹

Part of Byron's strategy in his attack on Romantic conceit in *Don Juan* is to draw attention to the many factors that always impinge upon our mental autonomy.

This is indeed incorporated in the narrative structure of *Don Juan*. Despite the implication that a story once begun, will progress with some unity to its conclusion, it is increasingly likely to dissolve in a series of digressions as Byron writes "what's uppermost without delay". This accords with the philosophical remarks at the start of *Don Juan*, Canto II:

Well -- well; the world must turn upon its axis,
And all mankind must turn with it, heads or tails,
And live and die, make love and pay our taxes,
And as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails. (II,iv)

Indeed, Byron has just furnished us with an illustration of how little we are in control of our lives in the Donna Julia episode, which provoked this comment. Here several characters have made plans, but these all go comically awry: Juan, in keeping with his innocence and passivity, is completely bewildered by the strange new sensations Julia is causing in him; Julia, though sharing some of Juan's innocence and bewilderment, does see some of the dangers and makes plans to guard her virtue. First, she decides to stop seeing Juan. This failed, she decides the truly virtuous should rather face and overcome temptation (I, lxxvii). Next she convinces herself that hers is a pure, Platonic kind of love (I, lxxix), and finally, as her resistance weakens, she imagines that if her husband should die, she would then be able to marry Juan. These genuine, if failed attempts to guard innocence, Byron treats with a sly, knowing, but indulgent scepticism. Byron views in a less favourable light the cynical schemes of Donna Inez to carry on her relationship with Don Alfonso, even to the extent of allowing Juan to act as a decoy for her rival, Julia. This, Byron hints at, as, typically, he skates around the very thing he wants to say, ironically attributing less self-seeking motives to Inez:

...Inez was so anxious, and so clear
Of sight, that I must think, on this occasion,
She had some other motive much more near
For leaving Juan to this new temptation,
But what that motive was, I shan't say here;
Perhaps to finish Juan's education,
Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes,
In case he thought his wife too great a prize.
(I,ci)

As his title, *Don Juan in Context*, suggests, McGann highlights how Byron, largely to counteract what he saw as the folly and conceit of his fellow Romantics, drew attention to the great importance of context; to the many factors that always influence our thoughts and actions.

McGann, further, terms *Don Juan* "a sort of working hypothesis of what itself can do";¹² it proceeds by inquiring "What would happen if...". When Juan is placed in a

particular situation, he comes to it from a network of previous experiences, eg. when brought before Gulbeyaz he is in "no complaisant state of mind"¹³-- he is still grieving over the loss of Haidée, and he resents his treatment as a slave, particularly being dressed as a harem girl. Thus Byron makes us see "with extraordinary sharpness, the nature and significance of the many different details that impinge upon any actual experience in the world".¹⁴ Byron lets us see this method at work when he says, as a transition between sections, "Suppose him in a handsome uniform" (IX,xliii). "Once a supposition is made, it generates its own local circumstances".¹⁵ In the Donna Julia episode, much of the humour comes from Byron's seeing the internal and external limitations that his characters (particularly, in this case, Julia) do not. Thus, while "A lad of sixteen causing a divorce/Puzzled his tutors very much, of course" (II,ii), Byron can say "I can't say that it puzzles me at all,/If all things be consider'd" (II,iii).¹⁶

It is because of the wider scope that allows Byron to see and take into consideration the many factors that impinge upon our lives and our decisions like this that he is able to build or conserve sympathy for the classic Byronic heroes of the Tales. Byron lets us see all the factors in the background of his characters that have made them the black characters that he so revels in depicting. Broadly speaking, Byron works on the premise that to know all is to forgive all, and asks us to excuse them their sins as these are not really their fault (just as, perhaps, he is too ready to forgive himself his own shortcomings, leading to what Andrew Rutherford terms¹⁷ "shoddy self-approval"). By introducing the many factors that have made his villain-heroes what they are, he has, in a sense, absolved them, on the grounds of diminished responsibility, since he has reduced them to little more than an agglomeration of changing circumstances and motivations.¹⁸ This lack of a core capable of moral judgement is something Michael Gagarin finds characteristic of the heroes of Homer.¹⁹ Further to this, Gagarin notes that such characters, because of this external focus, do not follow a cycle of sin and repentance, but of pollution and purification.²⁰ Homeric heroes belonged to a "shame culture" where honour was seen as something almost tangible, in the hands of others, so that what matters is not motivation but results; that Oedipus married his mother in ignorance does not in any way absolve him -- there has been a breach in the natural order which must be repaired. The focus is always wholly external. The heroes of Byron's Tales seem to live in a similar milieu, their punishments often out of all proportion to the apparent magnitude of the original offence. Such a pattern is seen more clearly, however, in Byron's plays (where he makes his intention to emulate Greek tragedy explicit), eg. in Marino Faliero's attribution of his late woes to ill omens and the curse of the Bishop of Treviso.

Another point of contact between Byron's characters and their classical forebears is a propensity for soliloquy rather than true dialogue, a feature noted by several critics, eg. Macaulay: "the dialogue of Lord Byron always has to lose its character of dialogue, and to

become soliloquy".²¹ This may, paradoxically, be linked to the classical emphasis on the external. In Byron's classical plays, we encounter a situation similar to that outlined by P.E. Easterling, who finds that it is not so much the personality of characters which interests him;

Rather their suffering and their words are important because they articulate the dramatic situation, not because they convey any consciousness on the part of the characters.²²

Classical heroes tend to be "types", that is to say, they demonstrate feelings that might be typical of any person finding themselves in the situation in question, rather than of an individual personality which develops in interaction with other characters. On the contrary, writes Albin Lesky,

In Sophocles' earlier tragedies, the characters do not develop in ever-changing relationships with other characters, but rather an already-established character emerges in reaction to external events.²³

But perhaps it could be said of the similarly typical characters encountered in Byron's classical dramas, that what emerges is less a character than a point of view, a way of reacting to "external events". This view is supported by Martyn Corbett in his observation that

His [Byron's] dramatic interest lies not in physical action or emotional input, but in the force of his tragic conceptions and the impelling struggle of idea with idea.²⁴

Both of these interests would link Byron closely to Greek classical dramatists; "the force of his tragic conceptions" presumably refers to Byron's concept of the tragic in life – Man's mixed state and the dark and confusing world which surrounds him (in this, as will be explored later, Byron shares many points of contact with his Attic forebears). But taking the second of the focusses of Byron's interest outlined by Corbett, "the impelling struggle of idea with idea", we find that Byron's dramas display some of the characteristics of philosophical debate, particularly that of Plato's Socratic dialogues, where, as J.A.K. Thomson notes, no solution may be found, but at least the question is examined thoroughly from all sides.²⁵ This bears a striking resemblance to C.M. Bowra's analysis of Sophoclean drama:

In his plays, Sophocles shows how deceptive many issues are; presents different views of them and looks at them from more than one angle. As the drama develops, the nature of the problem becomes clearer and eventually we know what it is.²⁶

So, while Lesky talks of "an already-existing character" emerging "in reaction to external events", it seems one could equally well talk of the emergence, or refinement, of a philosophical position, such as happens in Socratic dialogue where likewise, "the nature of the problem becomes clearer and eventually we know what it is", and, "though no solution may be found,...at least the question is examined thoroughly from all sides". The similarity between these comments becomes all the more remarkable when set beside Paul West's description of Byron's plays as "exhaustive dossiers on specific aspects of the human condition. They offer no startlingly evident solutions".²⁷ It is typical of Byron's view of life's inconsistencies and his distrust of "System" that he should prefer merely to raise and clarify difficult questions and then leave them with us unresolved, a *modus operandi* analogous to his practice, noted earlier, of stating "an endless list of truths but no one Truth".

Yet this is by no means an adequate summary of Byron's approach, for alongside a desire to remain true to life's inconsistencies went an attempt to lift oneself out of the confusions of life to attain a higher perspective within which these individual truths could in fact be united into one Truth. Although so far it has been the confusing aspect of Attic tragedy that has been emphasised, as a link to the uncertainty so apparent in Byron's own tragic universe, this uncertainty and irresolvable conflict is limited to the sphere of the actors, and this is only one of the levels of Attic tragedy.

One reason for the uncertainty and precariousness of life in the world of Greek tragedy is precisely that the actors' lives are lived out beneath a larger cosmic order. In fact, it is possible to identify three distinct levels of insight:

1. That of the actors on which opposed *dikes* clash and reach deadlock, to issue in tragedy.
2. That of the chorus, in which, not directly involved in the issues which so obsess the actors, a calmer, more objective perspective may be attained.
3. That of the gods; the most authoritative view, entirely external to the narrow mortal concerns and thus capable of resolving the seemingly intractable conflict.

The archetypal scenario, according to Hegel, concerns a conflict between two characters, two *dikes* in which often both parties seem to have right on their side, so that there seems to be no possibility of resolution. Into this conflict step the Olympians, dispensing divine order and clarity. Setting aside the mystique of deity, it seems -- and this is certainly true of the chorus -- that their greater insight comes largely from their distance from the

foregrounded clash of *dikes*. Like Creon, actors may be so limited by their narrow mortal understanding that the problem becomes ever more intractable; only the gods have the sufficiently wide perspective to see the way clear to resolution.

As noted previously, when the similarity of Attic tragedy and Socratic dialogue was highlighted, at the level of the actors in the cauldron of mounting tensions generated by the clash of *dikes*, these positions are refined, smelted out, as it were, in the heat of action into polarity, for, as problems are clarified, as Bowra suggests they are, the gulf between the opposed positions becomes more apparent. Gilbert Norwood picks up on this aspect of Greek tragedy when he observes that "Aeschylus tends to deal with the huge questions not of the individual life, but of the race or the universe",²⁸ eg. the relation of Justice and Mercy in *The Oresteia*, but goes on to note how Aeschylus achieves the impossible; the reconciliation of these opposites by lifting us out of time to raise the question once and for all in its completest form. It is of great significance, however, that to achieve this reconciliation, Aeschylus must lift us out of time, out of the deadlocked plane of the actors to the plane of the gods. Herein lies the particular genius of Greek tragedy: while there is considerable scope for open-endedness in the foregrounded plane of the actors where a conflict can be clarified and examined from all sides, there is also resolution on another, higher, level. Thus Goheen can remark that "much of the essence of Greek tragedy is in the way in which it sets human problems in some kind of final perspective".²⁹ Attic tragedy is remarkable in that it permits immediacy and detachment, open-endedness and closure, mortal and divine, to stand together. Indeed, not only are they allowed to co-exist, but in each of these equations, each side is accepted as equally valuable and mutually necessary. This profound duality, rather than mere facility for seeing truly in a confusing world, is, then, the true genius of Greek thinking, as Byron well understood.

One is justified in talking of "Greek thinking" here because this quality is not confined to Greek tragedy but seems rather to form part of a classical Greek mind-set; a mode of perception not now natural to us, indeed probably barely comprehensible in its full implications. Even if gods are not specifically mentioned, there is generally the sense of an order, or even simply of another dimension, beyond what we know. Characters unwittingly bring down curses upon themselves which may endure throughout generations, highlighting again the sense of vastness stretching out beyond narrow present concerns. A similar perspective is afforded by *The Iliad*, where men, defined as "those who plough the earth and perish", scurry around like ants, fighting their fruitless war of attrition while the gods gaze down from the cool, placid splendour of Olympus, which itself provides a fitting contrast with the hot, dusty confines of the Troad;³⁰ we are presented with similes set in the mountains, of streams and forests, scenes reminiscent of Olympus in their coolness, freshness and mountain setting and diametrically opposed to the heat and confinement of the real narrative situation. Such images afford relief from

the tensions built up by the foreground action, and reveal a world quite different from that of the warriors on the battlefield, interested only in winning glory in battle. The concept of introducing a different world may be further expanded to encompass the epic poet's own world, since, as noted earlier, it is an intriguing feature of Greek epic writing that in similes the poet could introduce images taken from his own world and from that of his contemporary audience, a world separated by hundreds of years from that of his fictional world. Greek art, then, in Homeric epic, as well as in Attic tragedy, tends towards this kind of multilevelledness; however intensely it focusses on the foreground action, it always makes clear that there is a larger setting out there into which all the rest fits. Nothing happens entirely in isolation; all is interdependent, every action subsumed within a larger whole.

That Byron understood and valued this peculiarly classical outlook is further suggested by his quest for a similar multilevelledness, with similar motivations, in his own work. In *Don Juan*, Byron uses similes as Homer does, to lift us out of the "story", furthermore using in them imagery from his own world, the world of frozen champagne and shotguns that misfire.

As one would expect, when Byron turned to writing drama, he attempted to incorporate into his own work the features outlined above as characteristic of Greek tragedy. Thus we find, as in Greek tragedy, the foregrounded action set against, and impinged upon, by a larger context. For example, in *Sardanapalus* the foregrounded conflict between Salamenes, Sardanapalus, and Myrrha concerning modes of leadership and conflicts between love and duty are set against the backdrop of a vast spatial and temporal vista through frequent references to the stars (and their meanings) and to Sardanapalus' bloody, empire-building ancestor, Semiramis. Byron here skilfully uses the vastness of the backdrop to intensify the narrow focus and self-enclosure which epitomize Sardanapalus' lifestyle. This concept of the action being dwarfed by the setting is further conveyed by having the action played out in one night where the dark vastness of the night sky threatens metaphorically to engulf the brief flare of lights from the island where Sardanapalus is conducting his revels, just as the quasi-biblical flood threatens to sweep it away literally. Sardanapalus is indeed arguably the most successful of the plays in capturing the peculiar ambience of Greek tragedy, recalling at times the initial pages of the *Agamemnon* in its fascination with the slow-wheeling motions of the stars which echo, as in the Greek play, the cyclicity of the sins of the fathers living on to beget new crises in the present.³¹

Similarly, Marino Faliero feels the weight of the past in conflict with his own choices, a dilemma visualized in his standing before the glowering portraits of his ancestors as he ponders his problem. But these attempts to capture the large scope of Greek drama, while revealing its influence, remain as mere shadows of their models. However much

Byron tries to compensate (largely with elements from other sources, eg. Shakespeare) the fundamental problem remains that he lacks the necessary framework. He never finds an adequate substitute for the classical chorus and, of course, had no access to the pantheon of gods available to the Greek dramatist. The result is that without this framework, Byron has great difficulty in conveying the same multilevelledness that one finds in Greek drama: in Byron, the different levels tend to collapse into one, crushing the life out of his characters as they do so. Paul West laments that the characters of the plays display "no minor emotions, no trivial ideas...everything is made to sound important". Faliero's last words corroborate this: "I speak to Time and to Eternity/Of which I grow a portion, not to man" (*Marino Faliero* V,iii, 26-7. Without the chorus or the gods, the characters have to convey both the confused immediate view and the more knowing, distanced view, leading to stiffness and bombast. As Paul West says, in the plays, "every character is relentlessly ruminative, has no minor emotions, no trivial ideas..everything is made to sound important",³² concluding, "the plays really amount to prodigious soliloquies set out as drama".³³

* * *

Don Juan is a much more satisfying work than the plays partly because, in this poem, Byron had found a form which enables him to incorporate the multi-levelled scope found in Greek art. Byron playfully exposes his intentions early on in *Don Juan*, when, claiming to be writing an epic, he notes that his "spirits" will have to "serve for the machinery". Previously, this was taken at face value, as an indication that, by substituting his "spirits", or his whim, (as acted upon by alcohol), Byron is rejecting the idea of a divinely-ordered cosmos.³⁴ But there is another possibility; that Byron is seriously proposing that his narratorial presence performs a purpose analogous to that of the conventional machinery of classical poetry.³⁵ And this proposal may not be as far-fetched as it sounds: looking at the poem in this light, we find that the commentary sections of *Don Juan* do lift us out of the immediacy of the action in the narrative and give us a higher perspective. From his privileged position, the narrator is able to see further, more truly than his characters, who make their erratic progress through life in a confusing haze of unconnected impressions. It is this perspective which separates him from the objects of his satire.³⁶ The *Don Juan* style is in a sense the end of a quest for Byron, for in it he has found a way of communicating the immediacy and the larger view, the capacity for which he so admired in the Greeks.

M.K. Joseph furnishes us with an interesting comment, looking at this aspect of *Don Juan* from a different angle. Assessing the importance of the *Don Juan* style, he notes that the Tales and the Satires represent two needs of Byron's nature; "the need to recreate

experience imaginatively in narrative and the need to comment on that experience in satire".³⁷ Both these sides could be combined in the *Don Juan* style. Putting it in Andrew Rutherford's terms, Byron found a manner of writing he need not repudiate as sentimental or overblown, as he did with his *Tales* for example, "for while the passionate melancholy and misanthropy of the Byronic hero pleased and satisfied him in some ways, they were directly contrary to his social ideal and alien to his normal self".³⁸ The *ottava rima* form "enabled him to write like a man of the world with gay, witty astringency, and to avoid the attitudinizing and emotional exaggeration which had made him ashamed of his own earlier verses".³⁹ The *Don Juan* style has its own built-in repudiation; a cynicism that keeps the brakes on his previous excesses, in the form of a narrator who is older, wiser, and more distanced. Both Joseph and Gleckner view Byron's search for style in terms of a search for a way of looking at the world,⁴⁰ and *Don Juan* represents the culmination of that quest, uniting narrative and satire, distant and near.

But although it was arguably only in the *Don Juan* style that Byron found a satisfactory solution to this literary problem, it was one that had occupied him throughout his entire creative life. As early as Byron's first volume of poems, *Hours of Idleness*, Robert F. Gleckner finds that "in many of the poems Byron tends to employ an ostensible theme voiced by the speaker and an underlying, more all-inclusive theme voiced by the poet".⁴¹ For example, in the Caroline cycle, ostensible subjects include tearful goodbyes, the fear that love will not last and the thought that death may unite the lovers parted by enemies. Underlying all, however, is the perennial Byronic inevitability of exile from a paradisaical state (usually imaged as the ideal love relationship). Similar broad underlying themes are to be found in *The Curse of Minerva*, where the topical controversy over the plundering of the Elgin Marbles is transformed into a version of the recurrent myth of a falling off from a golden age of wisdom and art. While the narrator self-righteously attempts to deny guilt and placate Minerva, the voice of the traveller enunciates the "underlying universalisation of the surface facts".⁴²

The Giaour bears witness to Byron's continuing fascination with different levels of narration and marks a development in their use. Here we find three voices, but more important than the increase in number is their clearer differentiation; Byron informs us in a note to the poem that the additions and interpolations (to an original tale "recited by one of the coffee-house story-tellers who abound in the Levant") by the translator, will be easily distinguishable from the rest "by the want of Eastern imagery". As in *Hours of Idleness*, and *The Curse*, we find a ranking of points of view, becoming progressively more distanced from the events recounted. This is also a pattern central to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

In this poem, we find Harold, nominal hero of the piece and whose itinerary we follow, the narrator, who moralizes on the scenes and on the lifestyle of his sullen charge, and lastly the poet, who tries to form a vision of the whole. Harold, as I have suggested, is the motive force of the poem in that it is his pilgrimage we follow, but he speaks only rarely, indicating Byron's original intention to deal with him not through him, as object rather than as subject,⁴³ perhaps in a manner analogous to his treatment of figures like Napoleon and Rousseau. This process of projection apparently gave him a clearer perspective than he could achieve by straightforward examination of his own problems (where personal involvement clouds his judgement and his poetry). The attempt, through Harold, to distance himself from his own problems whereby he could achieve the perspective he required is suggested by Harold's embodiment of several Byronic traits, eg. his ennui, his melancholy, his wicked past, all character traits Byron liked to exaggerate in real life. Here, these traits are exaggerated almost to parodic levels and as with the heroes of the Tales, "there was a kind of release and even pleasure in the exaggeration of the picture, a pleasure derived largely, one suspects, from Byron's cathartically showing himself how ridiculous are his own real life poses of wickedness, melancholy, etc."⁴⁴ Just as his alter-ego is essentially running away from himself,⁴⁵ so is Byron, by projecting these traits through a magnifying or distorting lens, onto his alter-ego.

Byron's need is always for distance, and a further distancing from the exaggerated traits of Harold is provided by the commentary of the very down-to-earth narrator. Because, as has been noted, Harold speaks little, most of the impressions evoked by scenes during the pilgrimage emanate from the narrator -- it is from him that we get the historical/geographical detail and the conventional moralizing on the passing of classical greatness. Through the conventionality and provinciality of the narrator, we find Harold's traits further exaggerated to almost ridiculous levels. This distancing effect is intensified in typically Byronic fashion by the vagueness and mystery in the comments of the narrator regarding Harold, eg. "this none knew", "if friends he had". The narrator's condemnation of Harold's lifestyle -- the darkly hinted-at depravity and decadence that are to blame for his present world-weariness -- is also overdone,⁴⁶ however, again typically, reinforcing our sense of the narrator's limitations; he is too bound by his English conventionality and refuses to countenance anything outside of the standards this would imply. The third voice, however, that of the poet, takes a much wider, more comprehensive view, and while the narrator voices the usual commonplaces, a series of unconnected impressions triggered by the scenes through which he passes, the poet attempts to analyze the human condition and form a comprehensive vision of the whole.⁴⁷

As Gleckner notes, the focus is not on the plot, but on speakers

juxtaposing their various spacial-temporal views to build up an interpretation of the human condition to which all speakers contribute while at the same time maintaining the proper partisanship of each separate view.⁴⁸

Jerome J. McGann finds a similar approach in Cain, where,

The moral norm...is not embodied in a single character, but is implied in the dramatic relationships that develop between the various people.⁴⁹

In this, Byron's method resembles that of Euripides, whose "message" similarly cannot be said to rest solely in the views of one character, but, as shown earlier, in relation to *Electra* and to Euripides' choruses, comes out of a synthesis of several partial views, each of which offers a dramatically valuable perspective. A link could also be made to Joseph Conrad, in whose style Ramon Fernandez has identified a technique which he terms "transparent superimposition".⁵⁰ In Conrad's works, it is common for the reader (and often the narrator) to be faced with the problem of discovering what actually happened from several conflicting accounts of a particular event. Each version is, as it were, superimposed on the preceding one (much in the way motion cartoons are made), shifting and blurring its outlines. Part of Conrad's motivation for using this method is his taste for obfuscation, through which he could, like Byron, impress upon the reader the confusing nature of reality, particularly since (as this method suggests) our perceptions of it are so shaped by external circumstances and internal prejudices, that it is almost impossible to arrive at any objective truth. Like Byron in relation to the heroes of the Tales, Conrad also addresses the question of to what extent man has an identity beyond the mass of his circumstantially-influenced actions and opinions; "Lord" Jim goes through his novel, trying to prove to himself and to others that he is not (as others would stamp him) the type of man who would jump ship, merely a man who, on one particular occasion, jumped ship, ie. that this act is something accidental to, not definitive of, his self. Returning briefly to Euripides, one finds that his descriptive passages, like his characterisation, employ a form of transparent superimposition. Euripides habitually takes epithets from Pindar, but his use of these epithets, whereby each takes colour from its opposition to another, is wholly Euripidean.⁵¹

Where Pindar tends to use one adjective epideictically to single out and isolate an object so that it dominates its setting, Euripides...clusters his adjectives so that a final, unified impression arises only after a synthesis of diverse or contrasted effects...an object does not dominate its setting but is defined by it.⁵²

Shirley A. Barlow notices in Euripides' descriptions "a certain visual consistency lacking in the simile or metaphor"; that they rely on the build-up of "perceptually consistent details to create a total impression rather than relying on one incisive word which reveals a



momentary insight before moving on to the next⁵³ (an approach which has parallels in the contemporaneous techniques of the shadow painters⁵⁴). We see an extension of this method in the *Troades* (ll.1060-), where Zeus' destruction of Troy is made to appear almost blasphemous -- but not by the chorus making any explicit condemnation, simply by having them remark that the city was like this, and Zeus destroyed it. It is left to the audience to make the leap between the bare facts of something beautiful being destroyed and actual condemnation of the perpetrator of the deed.⁵⁵ This is surely another variant of the device, mentioned earlier, of "Homeric pathos", whereby pathos is aroused not by overtly emotional language, such as expressions of grief, anger, etc., but by the bare statement of certain "pathetic motifs" which could be depended on to elicit the desired pathetic response from the audience. An example of Euripides' use of this technique comes in his *Hecuba*, where the pathos of the sack of Troy is conveyed by details such as a husband lying on his bed, his spear hung on the wall, watching his scantily-clad wife preparing herself for bed immediately prior to the attack; the detail of the spear hung peacefully on the wall, and the sense of voyeuristic intrusion into these intimate domestic rituals, enhances our appreciation of the sudden, unexpected intrusion that was the sack of Troy. The importance of this structural approach in relation to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is highlighted by Byron in his visit to St. Peter's in Rome, which reads rather like a blueprint for a proper reading of the poem, as well as possibly being the fullest account we possess of a Byronic Theory of Art.

At first, Byron is surprised to find "its grandeur overwhelms thee not" (IV,clv) and goes on to explain,

Thou movest, but increasing with the advance,
 Like climbing some great Alp which still doth rise
 Deceived by its gigantic elegance;
 Vastness which grows, but grows to harmonise...

Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break,
 To separate contemplation, the great whole;
 And as the ocean many bays will make
 That ask the eye -- so here condense thy soul
 To more immediate objects, and control
 Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
 Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
 In mighty graduations, part by part,
 The glory which at once upon thee did not dart,

Not by its fault -- but thine: Our outward sense
 Is but of gradual grasp -- and as it is
 That what we have of feeling most intense
 Outstrips our faint expression; even so this
 Outshining and o'erwhelming edifice
 Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great

Defies at first our Nature's littleness,
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate
Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate.
(*CHP* IV, clvi-clviii)

Here one is presented with a paradigm for the Byronic aesthetic -- there is focus on the detail, the immediate, but this is subsumed within, and indeed leads us to, a greater pattern beyond. Discrete elements remain separate, but contribute to a great whole. To return to St. Peter's, Byron sees it as a celebration of the ability of the artist to so arrange discrete fragments that they fall into some kind of harmony, or that by the magic of his art, a pre-existent harmony is revealed.

What must be constantly stressed, however, is that both "the little shells" and "the great ocean" are present and are important. Although the magnification of the human spirit to almost divine dimensions achieved by St. Peter's, is a consummate achievement, this is not permitted to overshadow the process by which this perspective is reached. The perception of the whole does not detract from the relevance of the parts; it is the synergistic relationship, the balance between the immediate and the distant, the Many and the One, that is paramount.

The importance Byron attached to this dual perspective is also reflected in the dovetailing of the different voices in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Although it has been argued that, as a result of the influence of Greek art, Byron carefully distinguishes different levels of distance and perspective in the voices of Harold, the narrator and the poet, this distinction breaks down or is at least modified as the pilgrimage progresses. Partly this should be seen simply as a process of gaining a truer perspective, a process in which one would expect the poet, as the representative of this higher vision, to take a more prominent role. But it is also that the poet's voice is incorporating, subsuming the other voices. Gleckner posits the explanation that Byron came to see the specificity of Harold and the narrator as precluding the establishment of a vision of the whole. "Yet to be merely poet was to appear disengaged from the world, thus in Canto III, the poet becomes both poet and participant".⁵⁶ Some of the particularity and immediacy of the narrator are retained but they are crucially also related to larger themes in the consciousness of the poet. Thus Harold, previously silent, becomes articulate in conjunction with the voice of the poet "not merely in lamentation of his own personal plight but as the visionary historian of man's eternal lot",⁵⁷ As the poet absorbs his own metaphor of lost and fallen man, "the apparently personal utterance becomes the universal cry".⁵⁸ Rutherford has noted⁵⁹ how Byron uses figures like Napoleon and Rousseau as a means of commenting through them on aspects of his own character. He is revealing intimate details about himself, yet at the same time he is, through projection onto these other personalities, able to attain a certain objectivity, linking his individual sufferings to the eternal lot of Man. Napoleon, for instance, enables Byron to explore the favourite

theme of cursed genius, the figure whose greatness separates him from his fellows, provoking only the jealousy of lesser men. The situation is felt by Byron to be intensely personal, yet it is also generally true; it is a moral fable, yet it has a factual basis, and, importantly, a focus outside the poet himself.

Similarly, at the end of Canto II, we also find an interesting collocation of Byron's own intensely personal loss: "the parent, friend and now the more than friend" (CII,xcvi), with the sense of loss at Greece's decay,⁶⁰ articulated in the preceding few verses. Byron leaves the first half of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* on a tellingly ambiguous note:

Since Time hath reft whate'er my soul enjoy'd
And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd. (II,xcviii)

On the surface, perhaps, the "ills of Eld" would simply refer to the ills of old age, his topic in the earlier part of the stanza, but there is also the implication that "the ills of Eld" are the woes that have now befallen ancient Greece. According to this interpretation, we see again the typically Byronic switch from the universal to the particular, or, more accurately, to a particular within the universal, where each complements and magnifies the other. This recalls the famous "ruin amidst ruins" concept which Gleckner identifies as a uniquely Byronic contribution to the topographical genre,⁶¹ a genre broadly followed in parts of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This is linked too to Gleckner's interpretation of the change between the earlier and the later parts of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as "the poet absorbing into himself his own metaphor of fallen man",⁶² "the personal utterance" becoming the "universal cry",⁶³ so that in Canto III, the poet becomes both poet and participant, seer and sufferer.

This is symptomatic of a change that seems to have affected Byron as a result of the 1816 divorce scandal. Previously, as has been mentioned, it had pleased Byron to envisage himself as a Harold character who "through Sin's long labyrinth had run", but the divorce scandal enabled him to see himself also as sinned against.⁶⁴ This shift is reflected in his characters. Before, Byron had presented to the world the "Byronic hero", a type descended, it has been suggested, from Zeluco. The essence of this type was that Zeluco was unable to feel, shut off from Nature's beneficence by previous dark deeds, ie. the character is cut off from the community of normal people, and from Nature. After 1816, Byron's heroes are of a different type, being both sinners and victims. Manfred and Cain are examples of this new type: both attain forbidden knowledge, but this brings only more pain, not the promised power. That Byron can treat these characters so sympathetically and with such an understanding of their barren victory is symptomatic of this new "post-1816 perspective". Whereas earlier Byronic heroes were silent, their brows darkened by guilt over past sins, and by ennui at having exhausted all their profane pleasures, ie. are self-exiled from happiness, Manfred and the later heroes are victims of some greater

force⁶⁵ which makes a mockery of their little victories, eg. "The ruling principle of hate/Which for its pleasure doth create/The things it may annihilate". Byron seems to have come to a more deeply-felt appreciation of Man's capacity for both the heights of greatness and the depths of degradation; "half dust, half deity, alike unfit/To sink or soar" (*Manfred* I,ii,40-41). These factors lead to a feeling of being "all in the same boat", that all have grand, unattainable aspirations and that all are subject to the same vague threat of an all-powerful force for evil.

"Sympathetic detachment"⁶⁶ is the term given by Joseph to this new perspective, the essence of which is that while previously Byron felt himself, like his characters, cut off from the rest of humanity either by his sins or by his superiority, he now feels a kinship to them because of his sufferings. At the end of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron is thus able to proffer his personal tragedy as representative of all men's - "the apparently personal utterance" has indeed become "the universal cry". Implicit in this, of course, is the Greco-Byronic duality of involvement and detachment, immediacy subsumed within the larger view, and this condition is reflected in the absorption of Harold into his creator. The poet no longer sees himself as exempted, whether by his superiority or by his crimes, from the human condition,⁶⁷ and his embracing of the Harold character is to be seen as an acceptance of this.

The heroes of Greek tragedy often conform to a similar pattern, their suffering finally bringing them back into tune with the universal law. This is the path followed by Oedipus, who, like the poet of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, becomes both "seer and sufferer", and is reintegrated to the community. "Sympathetic detachment" would be a good term to describe Oedipus' state at the end of his sufferings; "detachment" because, with his new vision, he is apart from ordinary mortals, "sympathetic" because, through his own sufferings, he has come to a new sense of solidarity with the rest of suffering humanity. The final words of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, indeed, might have been spoken by the chorus at the end of a tragedy, outlining the moral basis of their art:

...with *him* alone may rest the pain
If such there were--with *you* the moral of his strain.

* * *

Although *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, has been examined here from the point of view of the attainment of perspective (distance and insight), M.K. Joseph has furnished us with an interesting comment in noting that the Tales and the Satires represent two needs of Byron's nature; "the need to recreate experience imaginatively in narrative and the need to comment on that experience in satire".⁶⁸ This duality was necessary because, as noted in relation to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, "to be merely poet was to appear disengaged from

the world", yet to be involved in events was to risk feeling too strongly and giving vent to feelings of which Byron, in another mood, might be embarrassed.⁶⁹ Lady Blessington bears witness to Byron's shame and embarrassment at once having allowed himself to be moved by a scene, recounting how, though he had "sworn against sentimentality", found "the old leaven still in [his] nature and quite ready to make a fool of [him]", and begged the company not to mention anything of this to his London acquaintances "or never again [would he] be able to act the stoic philosopher".⁷⁰ The same source, in an interesting adjunct to Joseph's comment above, pondered how

Byron seems to take a peculiar pleasure in ridiculing sentiment and romantic feelings; yet the day after will betray both, to an extent that appears impossible to be sincere.⁷¹

In the *Don Juan* style, Byron found a way to incorporate into his writing the "social defence mechanism",⁷² his cynical man-of-the-world persona, by means of which he could normally avoid such embarrassment. Although it was in *Don Juan* that Byron found the happiest way of coping with this perennial problem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is interesting for the opportunity it gives of seeing Byron's search for such a solution before he found success with the possibilities afforded by the *Don Juan* style.

The choice of the Spenserian stanza form for *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* can be seen as providing a form of distance. Paul West writes of the Spenserian stanza,

Its special merit is that it sets everything behind thick glass; the sound, as so often noticed, interferes with the activities within the stanza.⁷³

Joseph finds at the description of the bullfight that "the Spenserian colouring allows him to present the bravery and violence of the spectacle with emotional detachment".⁷⁴

The exotic settings of the Tales provide a similar illusion of distance. As West notes, distant both geographically and temporally, "they give Byron a head start in the race to objectify; they put the subject far from home and make it more of a thing".⁷⁵ The same could be said of Byron's occasional adoption of the "Picturesque", defined by J. Ernest Lovell Jr. (who provides a much fuller treatment of the movement's influence) as "that which pleases the eye from some quality capable of being painted".⁷⁶ This helped keep nature at a distance by looking at it as if it were a painting, already in a frame. Largely, Byron's flirtation with the Picturesque Movement was mere fashion, but it might not have made such an impression had not it helped Byron to deal with the recurrent problem of being too strongly acted upon by what is nearest, to the extent that he would, later, when in a different mood, repudiate the emotions he then felt.

At the start of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, then, Byron's solution is to keep everything at a distance, like his hero, who, Zeluco-like, is excluded from Nature's beauty and healing powers because of past sins. But after the divorce scandal, Byron, as noted, feels himself "more sinned against than sinning", and part of what was earlier termed the "post-1816 perspective" is a new attitude to Nature. It seems that, his hopes of a settled existence dashed, Byron was forcibly reminded of the transience in human affairs that had so troubled him in the earlier *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; it is significant that it should be Nature's permanence which attracts him as he embarks on a third canto. Faced by the decay of Man's monuments all around him, Byron notes that, in contrast, "Nature still is fair", and it is this stability while the rest of his world is in such turmoil that attracts Byron to Nature so strongly in Canto III. Notable too is the fact that Canto III is permeated by protective imagery; often Nature is imaged as a loving mother, eg. III, lxxi. To this may be added the image of Byron the father watching over his infant daughter, with which the canto tellingly begins and ends. Again in this image we see Byron's need for security and stability, particularly a stable home life. The image is rendered more potent from this perspective by its position amongst the violent, unsettled weather Byron is experiencing on his flight from England. The image of comfort amidst chaos is a mirror of the care and protection Byron hopes to encounter in Nature. This is clearest in Byron's most Romantic moments, in the Alps, when he dreams of shunning human society and of a communion with Nature, as here:

I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me; and to me
 High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
 Of human cities torture: I can see
 Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
 A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
 Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,
 And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
 Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

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

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
 From what it hates in this degraded form,
 Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
 Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
 When elements to elements conform,

And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not condemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turn'd below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?
(*CHP* III,lxxii-lxxv)

As M.K. Joseph remarks, "in Canto III he is writing close to his original material and attempting to experience a borrowed attitude to it which never becomes entirely his own".⁷⁷ It is more normal practice in this poem to have some time elapse between the the experience of his travels and the process of writing about them in the poem. Thus the poetry of Canto IV is more congenial⁷⁸ to Byron because in it he can "harmonise" his perceptions, allow his mind's filtering power to take effect; as he says,

I can't describe; my first impressions are always strong and confused and my memory selects and reduces them to order like the distance in the landscape, although they are less distinct.⁷⁹

This loss of distinctness may be "congenial" to Byron because it permits him to distance himself, to hide himself more. The power of the poetry of Canto III comes largely from its directness, and the insight that this gives us into Byron's feelings, but this was not something likely to endear the piece to him; he doubtless felt that he had exposed too much of himself, as is suggested by later comments on Canto IV: eg. "there are no metaphysics in it, at least, I think not".⁸⁰ Typically, just as in previous examples, Byron feels it necessary to repudiate an earlier expression of feeling.

In the Alps, Byron found "All that expands the spirit, yet appals"; they are "the palaces of Nature" (*CHP* III,lxii), and not of Man, who is excluded, as in the quotation above, by his "mix'd essence". The Nature Byron finds in the Alps is too sublime, too purely spiritual, as is suggested by the imagery used to describe it. The gentler landscape around Lac Lemane would seem to offer the kind of healing and peace that Byron hopes to find in Nature: it is

...Love's recess, where vain men's woes,
And the world's waste, have driven him far from those.
(*CHP* III,ciii)

Like Byron, Love has sought here "a refuge from worldly shocks"; for Byron, seeking a similar refuge, this would seem to be ideal, but it becomes apparent that the peacefulness is achieved only by exclusion of the larger reality. Like the Alps, Leman is a place too pure, too intense for Man's "mix'd essence", and so Byron turns away from this similarly unsuited paradise to say that such a place is allotted only "To the Mind's purified beings" (*CHP* III,civ), ie. not to those who are a mixture of body and spirit, but only those who, as products of the higher or spiritual portion of the artist, are pure spirit. What began as a new openness, the "post-1816 perspective", as Byron, previously impervious to her charms, opens out to Nature, ultimately leads to still further self-enclosure.

This pattern is reiterated in Byron's treatment of Napoleon. Initially, this examination of Napoleon's career is encouraging, as it allows Byron to explore, through Napoleon, some of the problems he has encountered in his own life, but without the involvement that impairs his judgement. As Andrew Rutherford suggests,

Byron achieves momentarily a sounder understanding of himself and the problems of greatness than he arrives at by consideration of his own predicament.⁸¹

However, Byron too readily slips back into the "shoddy self-approval" for which Rutherford chastises him earlier, falling into the trap, to which Byron was always susceptible, the more so when with Shelley, of seeing himself as a single great-souled individual brought down by the boorish masses. What seemed to be a going-out from self dissolves into self-pity and recriminations. Stanza xlv provides an example of this:

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
 The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
 He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
 Must look down on the hate of those below.
 Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
 And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
 Contending tempests on his naked head,
 And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.
 (*CHP* III,xlv)

Nature and Fame are linked in that they are too strong, too pure to be endured for long by Man's "mix'd essence", "alike unfit to sink or soar". This is communicated in the emphasised prepositions -- the seeker of Fame, like the real or metaphoric mountaineer, cannot ascend to the spiritual "sun of glory", which remains still "high *above*", and "*beneath*" him are the heavy elements, earth and water, corresponding to the "clay" of his body to leave only the unhappy in-between situation of the "icy rocks" and "contending tempests". Fame 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, ...
...a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore. (*CHP* III,xlii)

Its followers die

Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.
(*CHP* III,xliv)

Such imagery of self-consumption is typical of the canto as a whole. Common too is the suggestion of spiralling, centripetal motion, destruction by implosion, caused by too great a focussing in on the self:

...I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame.
(*CHP* III,vii)

Shown in this light, the purity and self-enclosure of Ferney (outwardly, in its peacefulness, exactly what Byron hoped to find in Nature) takes on a more sinister aspect. Nature, whether here or in the Alps, is, like Fame, too pure, too heady, and stirs Byron's emotions too strongly. Harold gains a voice, but after his long silence, it is too strident, too confused after being bottled up for so long. As the opening-out of Harold's sullen self-enclosure becomes at bottom a deeper introversion, what began as a journey away from the self is revealed to have been a round trip, and this is reflected in the centripetal, downward-spiralling imagery. Fittingly, then, this sequence ends with the "spirit of the spot", Rousseau, whose

...love was passion's essence: ...
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
Thus, and enamour'd, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame, ...
But of ideal beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems.
(*CHP* III,lxxviii)

Byron's problem is identified by McGann as a problem of swings between the two poles of Inertia and Frenzy;⁸² either he renders himself somehow impervious to Nature's splendours, keeping himself safe from his own powerful emotion, or else he allows free

rein to his natural responses and loses control, requiring later repudiation. There is no happy medium. Again, as was mentioned earlier in connection with the perspective of the actors and the gods in Greek tragedy, Byron is faced with two poles, and again they can be put in terms of involvement and detachment; passionate involvement or apathetic detachment, as McGann puts it.⁸³ As Harold sets out on his pilgrimage, Byron opts for the latter, hedging himself round with protective measures such as have been outlined. In Canto III, he lets down his guard but is frightened by the forces he unleashes. For not only does Byron find the pure spirit intensity of the Alps too powerful for his mixed essence, but he does not find the stability he sought in Nature, seeing her not only in her creative, but also in her destructive aspect; she is not a nurse or a healer -- she is a great self-healer, and thus rolls on eternally, but she is geared only to the preservation of the grand whole, not individual elements. Byron is awed by the great power in Nature, but the problem encountered here is that

These energies, incarnated [also] in Catherine the Great, seem wholly indifferent to human concerns, and coincide with human feelings only insofar as life's sole aim is its own purposeless self-renewal.⁸⁴

This aspect of Nature is reflected in Catherine's insatiable lust as well as in her appetite for war, implicated with Suwarrow's limited vision: like Nature, he "but saw things in the gross,/being much too gross to see them in detail" (*D.J.* VII,lxxvii)

Nature's indifference and lack of stability is shown in the storm which shatters the calm of Leman, upsetting Byron's view that he has finally found the nurse-nature he sought, and reminding us of the wilder, destructive side to Nature that this view excludes. Byron tries to be enthusiastic about this awesome show of strength, but he can only pray "let me be/A sharer in thy fierce and far delight" (xcii). The thunderous conversation between the mountains (xcii), and the lightning-throwing games of the storm-clouds remain private to Nature, a Nature from which Byron, tiny and earthbound, is excluded.

This exclusion is made more painful by the fact that Byron feels that a part of himself, his soul or spiritual part, can be a part of Nature:

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling... (CHP III,xcvi)

By including his soul in the list of other elements of Nature Byron conveys this idea, though ambiguously, as "soul" belongs with the next line. This doubt is continued, as Byron can only ask if the storms of Nature "are...like those within the human breast" (xcvi). Jerome J. McGann sees this as a turning point realization by Byron that his own swings between "frenzy" and "inertia", between "passionate involvement and apathetic

detachment" are "part of the endless systole and diastole of Nature".⁸⁵ This is true insofar as the principle of a pendular motion, a swinging between extremes, is fundamental to the Byronic conception of Nature, history, and the emotions (a world-view shared by classical writers), but is inaccurate in that it implies a comforting bond between Man and Nature at a time when Byron is stressing how much they are out of step with one another. For Byron is at this stage pained by Man's irrelevance to Nature's unceasingly self-regenerating progress.

We cannot truly talk of Byron's being reconciled to the idea of an "unending systole and diastole of Nature" until the end of canto IV, in the Address to Ocean. This indicates that while Byron came to Nature for its permanence, to attain a godlike perspective which would at some level reveal a pattern beyond the apparent chaos and impermanence of life, he finds no such pattern. It is hard to overstate the importance of this image of the sea, as it crystallizes so many of the issues of canto III and of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as a whole. Largely, the pilgrimage Harold is embarked upon is a quest for a proper relationship with Nature and by the end of the poem, this has to an extent been achieved, in the sense that at the end of Canto IV, Byron stands apart from Nature (as represented by the sea), knowing and accepting that he cannot be fully a part of it. Among other things, this shows a shift in Byron's perception of Nature, the importance of which would be difficult to overestimate. For having moved from a stultifying sense of the transience of all man's monuments in the early *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, to a faith in Nature's permanence, Byron now reaches a major new appreciation of Nature's essential duality; that it represents permanence built on unceasing change. While Man has a finite lifespan, being born, living his life through and then dying, ie. is linear, Nature is cyclical, its greater permanence sustained by the constant changes of self renewal.

Canto III begins with Byron's welcoming the sea like an old friend with whom he feels comfortable: "...the waves bound beneath me as a steed/That knows his rider." (ii). He surrenders himself to it: "...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." (ii). By the end of canto IV, this can be only a memory:

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
I wanton'd with thy breakers -- they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror -- t'was a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane -- as I do here.

(CHP IV, clxxxiv)

In another version of the recurrent myth of the Fall, Byron now finds himself exiled from this childhood state of intimacy with Nature. Byron could at this point exclaim with Gray "where ignorance is bliss/'tis folly to be wise". The speaker of Gray's "Ode to Spring" has the greater knowledge, in that he sees further than those who "frolic while 'tis May", but ultimately he is sadder than they, for he does not frolic at all, allowing the potential for present pleasure to be overshadowed by thoughts of its transience.

Cain and Manfred similarly possess greater knowledge than their fellows, but again this brings what Gleckner describes (in very Grayish terms) "the prevailing sadness of the...poet, who sees what others do not see"⁸⁶ -- in Byron, as in Gray, knowledge must be its own reward, for it brings no other. These characters succeed only in confirming their painfully "mix'd essence"; that Man is "half dust half deity, alike unfit to sink or soar". As an expression of this, neither character can fully be one with the infernal forces which have given them their knowledge, nor can Cain return to the life of submission adopted by the rest of his family who dishonestly try to recreate their pre-Fall existence, or Manfred enjoy the similarly simple and submissive life of the friar or the chamois hunter. Eschewing either the life of knowledge or of instinct, both Manfred and Cain choose the hard middle road appropriate to their "mix'd essence", like Byron standing on the shore at the end of Canto IV. While Nature, whether in the Alps or at Ferney, is characterised by its purity, Man remains a mixture of body *and* spirit, knowledge *and* instinct. Thus it is that Man's concerns are irrelevant to Nature and it is this awesome indifference that we see in the final section of Canto IV:

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean -- roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin -- his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths, -- thy fields
Are not a spoil for him, -- thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth: -- there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make

Their clay creator the vain title take
 Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war --
 These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
 They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
 Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.
 (CHP IV, clxxxix-clxxxxi)

This addresses the vast power and vitality of Nature of which Byron would partake, and also Nature's frightening ability to survive unchanged, or at least "Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play" (clxxxii). As M.K. Joseph concisely and accurately puts it, Ocean is here "the great unchanging, timeless image of change and time".⁸⁷ As mentioned earlier, it would be hard to overestimate the import of the image of the sea; another of its aspects is that it gives visible expression to the idea of the waves of time, the fortunes of history, movements which so fascinated Byron in the first two cantos, as in remarks like "'tis but the same rehearsal" -- here too we find the cyclicity, the swinging motion, the change-within-constancy that are the cornerstones of Byron's view of the cosmos, and ultimately the source of his sense of alienation. The sea gives physical expression to these grand movements that baffled and grieved Byron earlier when he was too involved to see the larger stability within which such movement is subsumed.

So far Childe Harold's "pilgrimage" has been dealt with as a search for a proper relationship with Nature (a crucial question at this pivotal point in his life) but this is grossly to oversimplify a complex poem. This spiritual quest is paralleled by an equally topical literary quest (the two, of course, being connected, as Robert F. Gleckner and M.K. Joseph note, in that Byron was searching for a style "in the sense of a way of looking at the world",⁸⁸ a style that was an expression of his philosophy).

As Byron turns away from the wild Nature of the Alps in its pure spirit intensity, so he turns away from Ferney's self-enclosure and from Rousseau's aesthetics, which are described in the same language. It is significant that the imagery of this section almost entirely concerns the lighter elements, traditionally, and particularly in Byron, equating to the spiritual. Partaking of the purity and exclusiveness of his surroundings, Rousseau is "One, whose dust was once all fire" (III, lxxvi). By concentrating on his mental/spiritual side, his desire for greatness, and neglecting his limitations, Rousseau "burned himself out", as the imagery, typical of canto III as a whole, implies: his words are light and fiery "like sunbeams, dazzling as they past" (III, lxxvii). In love, as in life, he knew no happy medium:

His love was passions essence: -- as a tree
 On fire by lightning with ethereal flame
 Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
 Thus, and enamour'd, were in him the same.
 But his was not the love of living dame,

Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
 But of ideal beauty, which became
 In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
 Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems.
 (III,lxxviii)

"Distemper'd" is a key word here, reiterated in stanza lxxx: "But he was phrensied...". Byron always feared too great shows of emotion as has already been pointed out, "for fear of seeming slightly touched himself". This fear of showing too much emotion in his writing may have been felt the more urgently after canto III, where he experimented with a much more emotional style. Though this parallels and expresses well Byron's overwhelming sense of the power and purity of Nature, and can thus be said to have served its purpose, it is clearly not the vein in which Byron wished to continue, his professed taste being for a much more controlled and classical style. A parallel can be found between Byron's views on man's dual body and spirit nature and the search for a style which involved the expression of true emotion alongside a degree of control which would keep his brain from becoming "in its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought", as had been the case with Rousseau. Rousseau's gifts overpowered him, inspiring him to an unsustainable level till he was "blasted". The extra-terrestrial origins of Rousseau's powers are clear in the mention of "lightning" and "ethereal flame", but equally evident is the destructiveness of this kind of power, which destroys at the same time as it elevates. The idea is here, as it is ever in Byron, of a gift, a fairy gift, which as for Manfred, as for Cain, destroys that which it glorifies; a gift that is too much for the recipient's limited state, as is further suggested by the word "o'erflowing", another image typical of canto III. Byron reinforces repeatedly the folly of attempting to contain the divine, the spiritual, in vessels of clay. Rousseau, like Napoleon, like all seekers after greatness, suffers

...a fire
 And motion of the soul which will not dwell
 In its own narrow being, but aspire
 Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
 ...a fever at the core,
 Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.
 (III,xlii)

lines which may be compared with this extract from Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, surely the origin of much of the imagery of Canto III:

A fiery soul, which working out its way,
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay
 And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
 (A&A ll.156-8)

Like the objects of Dryden's satire, Rousseau goes "beyond the fitting medium of desire", in Rousseau's case by attempting to depict not this world but something beyond, not real but ideal beauty and this is not Byron's theme. In the Alps, Byron had felt the inability to express, indeed to cope with, the sublimity he encountered and so turns away once and for all from the dangers represented by Rousseau and his art. Rousseau is positioned as a warning after one of Byron's most Romantic, pantheistic sections, from which he must "return/To that which is immediate" (III,lxxvi). Byron's aim is to write of and for this world, not retreat into another of his own creating. He is searching for a style that, from the point of view of both producer and receiver, takes account of man's dual nature. By rejecting Rousseau's ideal spirit world in the declaration that this is only for "the Mind's purified beings" (civ), Canto III is a watershed in Byron's artistic development.

The way forward, after this clearer appreciation of some of the pitfalls, is revealed in the calmer atmosphere in which canto IV begins: "waking Reason deems/Such overweening phantasies unsound" (vii). After the excesses of his Romantic explorations in canto III, Byron has recourse to reason, championed by the poets of the previous generation, his heroes, Dryden and Pope. Reason can, then, be seen as a literary counterpart of the body in the body/spirit equation; it keeps the brakes on the aspiration to go beyond what is appropriate, guarding against the danger, in the quest for pure/ideal beauty, of burning out like Rousseau. It irons out, too, some of the fruitless swings between passionate involvement and apathetic detachment. Reason is like the pivot between the philosophic and the aesthetic for Byron: in terms of Philosophy, it indicates that Man cannot be wholly god nor wholly beast, so must be something else. This is the reason that leaves Byron on the shore at the end of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, now only able to be an observer of his instinctual childhood self. In terms of aesthetics, it similarly militates in favour of restraint, midway between sterile formality and shapeless, unformed passion. The key notion is the channelling of energies into their most acceptable form, the classical convention, found in Greek tragedy and elaborated in eighteenth Century neo-classicism that the correct form, by shaping passion, did not deaden but directed and intensified it. In Byronic terms this would mean a tailoring of the elements and passions of the poetry to the human dimensions of Man's mixed body and spirit state, where emotions could be strong, but kept within acceptable limits.

This philosophy of art finds an echo in the shift from the wild "Romantic" Nature of the Alps which appalled Byron because of its indifference and wasteful creative/ destructiveness, to the tamed and fruitful Augustan landscape of the Rhine.⁸⁹ Here, in contrast to the icy purity and barrenness of the Alps' untrodden slopes, where Byron found "All that expands the spirit, yet appals" (III,lxii), we find images of fruitfulness, of co-operation between Man and Nature, reminiscent of the *Georgics*.⁹⁰

Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year"
(III,l ix)

Here Byron sees

A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine"
(III,xlvi)

It is a happy image of bucolic bliss, further elaborated in the song "The Castled Crag of Drachenfels". As well as continuing the theme of the precariousness of Fame introduced with Napoleon and suchlike figures, who are compared to the exposed castles on the rocks above the Rhine, the castles continue the idea of a collaboration between Art and Nature. We find "gray but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells" (III,xlvi) and

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between,
The wild rocks shaped as they had turrets been,
In mockery of man's art.
(III,lxi)

The first of these quotations looks forward to the more confident assertions of the union of Art and Nature in canto IV, eg.

...there is a power
And magic in the ruin'd battlement,
For which the palace of the present hour
Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.
(cxxxix)

Time is the "Adorner of the ruin" (IV,cxxx) and in *Manfred*, the Coliseum is described as "A noble wreck in ruinous perfection" (III. iv, 28), Time and Nature seeming to correct Man's errors of taste. Thus Byron finds the Coliseum, perhaps too grand originally, cleared rather than plundered.

This theme of Man and Nature working productively together characterizes much of canto IV, intensifying the impression that Byron seems, after the anguish and bewilderment of the preceding cantos, to be getting a clearer picture of where he is going, both in terms of his art and in terms of an understanding of what it means to be a man. Both of these themes find magnificent focus at St. Peter's. When talking of the

appreciation of the beauties of St. Peter's, Byron describes it as "Like climbing some great Alp" (IV,clvi), clearly inviting comparison with earlier sections of canto III, though there are clear and fundamental differences. We are presented with the

...haughty dome which vies
In air with Earth's chief structures, though their frame
Sits on the firm-set ground, and this the clouds must claim
(IV,clvi)

Here the lightness of St. Peter's is stressed; its spiritual aspect which contrasts with "Earth's chief structures", ie. mountains, which, though previously described in spiritual terms, now, through a shift of imagery systems, has been demoted to imagery of heaviness, as suggested by the opposition of "earth" and "air" and reinforced in the solidity of "firm-set ground". The dome of St. Peter's is further differentiated from the roughness and wildness of Nature by the words "gigantic elegance": "awesome" or "horribly beautiful" would be the more usual Romantic words used in mountain descriptions. Another -- and perhaps the most telling difference -- is that its vastness is a "Vastness which grows, but grows to harmonise" (clvi). "Harmony" was a feature of the fruitful Rhine landscape where Harold gazed "on a work divine,/A blending of all beauties" (III,xlvi), man-made and natural. "Discordancy" might be a word more apt for Byron's treatment of the nature of the Alps, as is suggested by the term "horribly beautiful". Mountain-tops are portrayed as another world, cut off from the rest of Nature and closed to Man, as is suggested by the hard, unwelcoming exclusivity of the following lines:

...Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnaced in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche -- the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.
(III,lxii)

Here Earth pierces to heaven, as if only Nature can reach the spiritual heights that Byron craves, but at St. Peter's, whereas before Byron was hampered from Nature-like communion with the Infinite by the encumbrance of his body, now it is Nature which seems heavy and clumsy when put side by side with the airy elegance of the dome of St. Peter's. Indeed, St. Peter's, fittingly for the very heart of western religion, teaches "how Man may pierce to Heaven" and transcend the nature that drags him down. In the quotation above, Byron talks of "all that expands the spirit". This idea of expanding the spirit is continued at St. Peter's but, whereas with wild Nature the expansion was too

sudden, too extreme for Man's limited capabilities, leading to imagery of "overboiling", of "blasting" (as here in the idea of the "thunderbolt"), here, at St. Peter's, it is more gentle. There is religious feeling in the Alps, but in contrast to that at St. Peter's, it is not mediated to Byron's dimensions. Initially, St. Peter's seems "o'erwhelming", recalling the imagery used for the Alps, and it "defies at first our Nature's littleness", but the great structure, it seems (here departing markedly from Byron's experience of Nature), is conscious that "our outward sense/Is but of gradual grasp", so that,

Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break,
 To separate contemplation, the great whole;
 And as the ocean many bays will make
 That ask the eye – so here condense thy soul
 To more immediate objects, and control
 Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
 Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
 In mighty graduations, part by part,
 The glory which at once upon thee did not dart.

(IV,clvii)

Worthy of particular attention is the recourse "to more immediate objects", after the failed attempt to take in the grand whole. This provides a telling parallel with the earlier "But this is not my theme; and I return/To that which is immediate" (III, lxxvi) which follows another failed communion with wild Nature. This notion of the immediate is one which has far-reaching consequences for Byron on the interlinked levels of philosophy and art. In the stanza quoted above, the emphasis is on taking things "part by part", as this is all that "our Nature's littleness" can take in. This McGann takes as a revelation of what a pilgrimage means, and in particular, what the method of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has entailed;⁹¹ a breaking down into smaller pieces since life cannot be grasped all in one go, the more so since it is always happening to us. Uniting aesthetic and philosophical considerations, he notes that

the basilica...is...a symbol of a mode of experience and perception; the poet eventually comes to see that comprehension is achieved only in successive and relatively ignorant perceptions ... He finds the truth he has discovered is not The Truth, but the way to Truth.⁹²

This reiterates the principle of change, of continual development, and dovetails neatly with Byron's perception of the confusing nature of life and a need, intensified by his own "mobility", to find a stable self.

Here at St. Peter's, however, there is a sense of completion, at having obtained at least a partial insight into the workings of the cosmos. So important to Byron is the principle of gradual perception that Byron returns to it in stanza clviii, which broadly repeats the content of the preceding stanza, quoted above. But it is not merely the "more immediate"

objects which are important -- perhaps this is a failure of McGann's reading -- part of Byron's considerable achievement is not to lose sight of that quintessentially Greek appreciation of the larger world beyond, within which the smaller elements are subsumed. To remind us of this duality is one of the main purposes of St. Peter's:

...this
...o'erwhelming edifice
Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great
Defies at first our Nature's littleness,
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate
Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate. (IV,clviii)

...its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
And why? It is not lessen'd; but thy mind,
Expanded by the genius of the spot,
Has grown colossal. (IV,clv)

Although the individual elements must be taken only "piecemeal" due to the limitations of the senses, there is always this expanding, ascending motion to a greater understanding, an understanding that, like the building itself, is much greater than the sum of its parts. Not only does this show the path to a higher perspective, imaged here as to "See thy God face to face.../nor be blasted by his brow" (IV,clv); something impossible with Nature, but it prepares us for the final revelation of this new perspective in the Address to Ocean. The sea, as noted, is also marked by small elements subsumed within larger and by a greater permanence above the unceasing change on which it is built. St. Peter's thus becomes a man-made counterpoint to the great, if wild, wasteful and unharnessed, vitality of Nature.

One reason for the triumphalism of this assertion of the superiority of art over Nature is its position at the end of a sequence which indicates a way of breaking out of the fruitless swinging motion reflected both in Byron's psyche and in what seems to be a governing principle of the world as a whole. This is reflected in history in that the desire for freedom only seems to bring greater tyranny. Disappointed in Napoleon, he muses, "Can tyrants but by tyrants conquer'd be" (IV,xcvi) and recalls how France "got drunk with blood to vomit crime" (IV,xcvii). Hope is maintained, however, though tentatively, in the images of freedom in the next stanza -- of Freedom's banner, which "tom, but flying,/ Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind" (IV,xcviii) and of the battered tree of freedom:

Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
But the sap lasts, -- and still the seed we find
Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.
(IV,xcviii)

Bearing in mind past experience, and the cyclical nature of Byron's cosmos, these seem futile hopes -- that "the same rehearsal" should somehow not be repeated -- and this is reflected in the improbability of the images, such as a banner flying "*against* the wind".⁹³

The image of the tree is an important symbol of hope; like Catholicism as represented by St. Peter's, it has a firm basis in earth, but from this earthly basis, it has a part which belongs with the lighter elements of air and light. However, this hopeful image, conforming to the Byronic ideal of duality, taking account of Man's body/spirit split, is counterbalanced by the negative image of the upas tree. This, like the tree of freedom, has its roots in earth, but its leaves and branches are "the skies which rain their plagues on men like dew -- /Disease, death, bondage" (IV,cxxvi), ie. instead of light there are heavy elements, and instead of dew, normally a symbol in Byron of freshness and purity, we have the same age-old scourges which recur like the cycles of tyranny alluded to above.

In the next stage of the sequence, Byron significantly relates the external cycles of suffering and destruction to his own personal life (perhaps here McGann would be justified in seeing Byron's own woes as part of "the unending systole and diastole of Nature"), moving from the convulsions of history and of Nature to the convulsions of his own mind (cf. IV, cxxxiv), paralleling the earlier "ruin amidst ruins" idea. He then begins a lengthy crescendo, calling on "Time the avenger" (IV,cxxx) and Nemesis to support his terrible curse but when, dramatically, the curse finally comes, it is "forgiveness"⁹⁴ (IV,cxxxv). Byron then goes on to list the dreadful injustices he has suffered and the execrable creatures who are responsible, leading to what one feels must again be a terrible pledge of vengeance. But this in turn leads to the famous "*Caritas Romana*" sequence in which an old man is kept alive in prison with milk from his daughter. This is described as rendering back "the debt of blood" (IV,cli). A "debt of blood" would normally refer to vengeance for a death, but here it is transformed into life-affirmation⁹⁵ -- it is the debt of life that is owed. The *Caritas Romana* section is described in terms of warmth, softness, and tenderness, and this contrasts with the cold purity of "the starry fable of the milky way" with which stanza cli begins. The proximity and small scale of this great act of love are worth more than the abyss "where sparkle distant worlds" (IV,cli), reflecting Byron's bias for the immediate. But the key lines of the whole section are these:

And sacred Nature triumphs more in this
Reverse of her decree.

(IV,cli)

Here is revealed the central idea that only by going against what is "natural" can we break out of the fruitless cycles which have resulted in successive wars, the destruction of empires, and Byron's own internal "convulsions". This phrase reveals in bare statement the significance of the unnaturalness of Freedom's banner flying "against the wind"; the

hope that Freedom's tree will bring forth less bitter fruit (an image alluded to again in cxlix). It is at this revelatory point, the end of a sequence that has stretched over some fifty-three stanzas, that we have the triumph of St. Peter's, which again, of course deals with the channelling of Nature. This sequence is, however, more significant than a mere lead up to a celebration of mediated, as opposed to raw, Nature; I have long suspected that it is Byron's *Eumenides*.

* * *

In the *Eumenides*, it will be recalled, the Furies pursue Orestes after he has killed his mother in retribution for her murder of her husband, his father, Agamemnon. T. James Luce describes the Furies as "the objectification of the fury of the victims of outrage; not primitive demons but expressions of the psychological fact that violence breeds violence".⁹⁶ This clearly accords with the Byronic view of history revealed in his comments on the passing of civilizations and on the French Revolution in particular. The problem of the *Oresteia* is the same one that troubled Byron; that any point of balance can only be notional as we do not see balance so much as a swinging between extremes, as each breach of the moral order seems to elicit an equal and opposite reaction. The Furies share with Byron's Nature this dual aspect, creative and destructive; they are children of earth and as such represent the cyclical character of Nature, as both guardians of the dead and nurturers of the living⁹⁷ -- sterility in their role as eye-for-an-eye avengers and fertility as in their role as regulators of the earth's bounty. *The Eumenides* tells of their shift from the former aspect to the latter.

At the beginning of Aeschylus' play, their role is very clearly that of avengers from the underworld, dressed in black, driven by the exhortations of Clytemnestra. In this they are opposed by Apollo, who is associated with light -- the light of reason -- and with a new order, represented by the new court of the Areopagus and the "new" gods (the Furies being associated with the elemental forces which ruled the world in earlier times).⁹⁸ The movement of the play is, then, away from the old, destructive retributive form of justice, towards a new system more suited to the contemporary world of Aeschylus, just as is Byron's hope in canto IV (or Homer's in *The Iliad*). If one ignores Apollo's spurious biological arguments for Orestes' exoneration, we find the principal reason for this to be the spirit in which he carried out the killing of his mother; he did it in obedience to the will of Zeus, as conveyed through the oracle of Apollo, not in an emotional state of vengeance aimed at personal satisfaction or gain (as in Clytemnestra's killing of Agamemnon) but in a mingled spirit of vengeance and innocence, as an unpleasant duty.

But what is most important, at least from the point of view of the Byron scholar, is the fact that the Furies are given recognition by the very power that has vanquished them. They seem helplessly, even unfairly and ruthlessly beaten, and yet their defeat becomes a triumph as they are transformed from destructive avengers to the "The Kindly Ones", thus signalling a breaking out of the cycles of retributive justice that have been the keynote of the trilogy up to this point. In this, as in the organic imagery of fertility, the pattern resembles that of the Forgiveness Curse section of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* -- Nature rejoices in the reverse of her decree, her constructive side emphasized, the destructive side exorcized. The dark emotional side has been tempered by reason, heralding in a new era of peace and prosperity with as topical a message for Aeschylus as for Byron, hoping for an end to the cycles of "hereditary rage" that had ravaged his times.

Such parallels are clear but they remain only parallels, however close and well-sustained. What points to Byron's intention to use the Greek play in this way is his use of specific references to the Eumenides in his own poem, which, like the allusions to epic in *Don Juan*, act like signposts, directing the reader back to the source work. Here, calling down his awful curse, he invokes "great Nemesis", "who never yet of human wrong/Left the unbalanced scale" (IV,cxxxii), hereby showing his knowledge of the workings of the Greek cosmos as they relate to his own situation. Nemesis was of course linked with revenge and in some sources is credited with having laid the egg from which hatched Clytemnestra. Byron further points the allusion with specific reference to the case of Orestes, hounded by the Furies "for that unnatural retribution", a phrase which also introduces the theme of what is natural, to be developed elsewhere and culminating in Nature's triumph in "the reverse of her decree". There is the suggestion that added strength is given to his invocation by calling on Nemesis "in this thy former realm", suggesting, as in Aeschylus, the intrusion of a code, awesome in its primitiveness, into a world where it no longer has a place, as is shown in the case of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, by its ample examples of the destructiveness of such vacillation between extremes.

It is Pallas Athene who brings a new solution to the deadlocked opposition of Apollo/Zeus and the Furies/Nemesis/Clytemnestra and it is a "Pallas" who offers some hope for Byron's world in the form of Washington, a hope that comes as fragilely as the idea of Freedom's banner flying against the wind, just after the suspicion, "can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be" (IV,xcvi). It is of interest too that Byron refers to the method of Pallas' birth: Columbia has "Sprung forth a Pallas...undefiled" (IV,xcvi). It will be recalled that one reason why Athene could arbitrate so effectively in the apparently irresolvable conflict was that she was a freakish outsider in that she had sprung fully-armed from the head of Zeus, ie. she had not been born of a woman and thus was entirely external to the debate over who was blood kin, father or mother.⁹⁹ Washington's Columbia is another of

Byron's idylls suggestive of a pre-Fall state where Man enjoyed a complete oneness with Nature; "where nursing Nature smiled/On infant Washington" (IV,xcvi). The implication is that America (whose constitution was a causative factor in the French Revolution) can succeed because it is a new country free from the taint of Europe with all its weight of history and old scores. Thus Washington is Pallas-like because he is born "undefiled", away from the old cycles of "hereditary rage".

But although this may give some indication of just how closely Byron was influenced by Aeschylus' play, even to the extent of writing his own *Eumenides* in this section of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, such allusions are by no means limited only to this small area. As might be expected, they pervade, albeit in a less sustained manner, Byron's dramatic works. Firstly, one may note, despite dissimilarities of form, an atmosphere not dissimilar to that of many Greek tragedies, eg. in the sense of foreboding, the weight of destiny, and the idea of a curse continuing down through generations. This last idea is particularly relevant to Werner, where Werner's road to happiness is barred by, as Josephine puts it, "these phantoms of thy feudal fathers" (I.i,138). At the start of the play, we find Werner held "at bay" by Fortune (I.i,62-3), initiating a series of hunting metaphors, particularly of animals at bay, eg. II.ii,367; III.i,5-8 -- Werner has been hunted down by his past which in this play has caught up with him. Stralenheim has tracked Werner like a bloodhound (II.i,267), an image used in *The Eumenides* as the Furies finally catch up with Orestes "like a hound pursuing a wounded fawn, we track him out where the blood-drops leave their trace" (p.113). Werner uses another classical reference when he says, "My passions were all living serpents, and/Twined like the Gorgon's round me". This could refer to Medusa, who for her passion for Poseidon, was turned from a beautiful woman to a winged monster with serpent hair, and this would fit with Werner's troubles being caused by his headstrong passion for Josephine. It should be recalled, however, that the Furies are also conventionally depicted with serpent hair, and this would fit with the idea of Werner's being hunted down by past crimes or errors. Among much more serpent imagery, the Gorgon/Fury image is reprised when Werner thinks of the fateful coin stolen from Stralenheim:

Methinks it wears upon its face my guilt
For motto, not the mintage of the state;
And, for the sovereign's head, my own begirt
With hissing snakes, which curl around my temples,
And cry to all beholders, Lo! a villain!
(III.i,181-5)

Here the imagery is more suggestive of the Furies, as accusers of the guilty.

There is more serpent imagery in *Marino Faliero*. The Hydra is repeatedly mentioned, its many heads yet only one body serving as a useful metaphor for the dreaded "Ten", whom it is necessary to kill all together or else the evil will live on. This idea of the self-perpetuating nature of evil is developed as the image of the Hydra blends in with that of the serpent whose teeth Cadmus sowed, and from each of which sprouted a warrior. Faliero's last words (V.iii,101) are a curse aimed at "Thee and thy serpent seed" and at III.ii,30, Calendaro, speaking of pity towards "The Ten", says:

...Why, I should think as soon
Of pitying some particular fang which made
One in the jaw of the swoln serpent, as
Of saving one of these: they form but links
Of one long chain; one mass, one breath, one body;
They eat, and drink, and live, and breed together,
Revel, and lie, oppress, and kill in concert.

The emphasis, typically for Byron, is on the self-perpetuating nature of evil, and the difficulty in breaking out of these cycles. Werner is trapped in his father's curse, Marino in the Bishop's. These characters seem, like those of classical tragedy, inextricably tied up in the web of Destiny (an image which indeed occurs with some frequency in *Werner*, eg. IV.i,307-9). This marked classical tinge to Byron's tragic universe is made explicit in the mention of the Furies in *Marino Faliero* IV.ii,92, or II.ii, where Bertuccio says the Doge is

...so full of certain passions,
That if once stirr'd and baffled, as he has been
Upon the tenderest points, there is no Fury
In Grecian story like to that which wrings
His vitals with her burning hands, till he
Grows capable of all things for revenge. (II,ii,168-173)

There is no doubt in the pragmatic mind of Bertuccio about the Doge's motivation, and the Furies' significance, but Byron cleverly uses the duality in the Furies to highlight the Doge's capacity for self-deception; while Bertuccio sees the Furies as bloody avengers, the Doge sees himself in the Furies' other aspect as impersonal righter of wrongs, as he reveals when he says:

I cannot pause on individual hate,
In the absorbing, sweeping, whole revenge,
Which, like the sheeted fire from heaven, must blast
Without distinction.

(III.ii,419-22)

But in this, to put it in classical terms, the Doge appears guilty of *hybris* in assuming for himself the role of judge and fury, and the larger forces, be they the cosmos, or "The Ten", take action to thwart this usurpation of their authority. The direct reference to the Furies

pinpoints Byron's artistic aspirations, but these are also expressed more generally throughout *Marino Faliero*, not just in the dragon's teeth image of evil living on to beget new evils, but in the many references to disease and pollution: Faliero sees that Steno's offence "Was a mere ebullition of the vice,/The general corruption generated/By the foul aristocracy" (III.i,403). Steno's words are "the blighting venom of his sweltering heart,/And this shall spread itself in general poison". Faliero is clear about his duty:

...Yes, proud city!
 Thou must be cleansed of the black blood which makes thee
 A lazar-house of tyranny: the task
 Is forced upon me, I have sought it not;
 And therefore was I punish'd, seeing this
 Patrician pestilence spread on and on,
 Until at length it smote me in my slumbers,
 And I am tainted, and must wash away
 The plague spots in the healing wave. (III,i,7-15)

Bertram too sees the risk and wants "to take off some stain/Of massacre, which else pollutes it wholly" (III.ii,74-5). This idea of pollution attendant on improperly executed acts of vengeance will be one familiar from Greek tragedy, particularly the *Choephoroe*, as is the idea of cleansing in black blood (an idea repeated at III.ii,166-7, where the state of Venice is "this spectre,/Which must be exorcised with blood"). Again these images, evocative of the dark atmosphere of Aeschylean tragedy, serve here the same purpose of reminding us of the self-perpetuating, cyclical character of evil, and how those who would remove the corruption often become corrupted in their turn. This expresses the basic cyclicity which underlies the Byronic cosmos, and also leads us to see the similarities between Byron's world-view and that of his classical predecessors. In addition, the imagery acts as a pointer to Byron's artistic aim of re-creating, as a reflection of their shared world-view, a form of Greek tragedy valid for his times.

Though this is perhaps not as clear as in his modernization of epic, possibly because of other influences, eg. Shakespeare, Byron does seem to be trying the same approach, that of rejecting the form of the original work with only such references as would indicate his imitative intentions, and to concentrate on reproducing the spirit of the original. This much is suggested by Byron's own comments on drama, eg. the advocacy of a return to the unities in the preface to *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*. As noted, Byron was aware that such features of classical drama as the chorus and the *deus ex machina* could not be revived (although, as Martyn Corbett observes, the irregular Pindaric form of the choric passages in *Heaven and Earth* seems a glance at the chorus of classical tragedy¹⁰⁰). Byron did, however, find other methods of conveying the sense of a larger world beyond the limited sphere of the actors. So while Byron adhered more or less stringently to the unities, adding to the effect of concentration, of tension-building, this takes place against a

much wider backdrop. This is literally true in *Sardanapalus*, where we find the brief flicker of Sardanapalus' pleasure party surrounded, and finally engulfed by, the larger darkness of the quasi-biblical storm and flood and the rebel armies. This physical scenario has its temporal parallel in Sardanapalus' comment on his wish for "a green spot amidst desert centuries" (IV.i,513), and just as the faltering lights of his revelry are engulfed in darkness, the long legacy of his past returns to crush his dreams of a life lived only for the present, in the form of nightmares of his bloody ancestors, Semiramis and Nimrod.

A similar case is that of *Marino Faliero* stood before the portraits of his ancestors, or indeed of his recollection of the Bishop of Treviso's curse. The play is ambivalent regarding the curse -- the curse is, of course, fulfilled (within the broadest of outlines given in the best traditions of curses), insofar as the things happen that are prophesied, but we are also furnished with the suggestion that this is mere self-dramatization, Eliot-style, of the tragic hero at the moment of his death.¹⁰¹ This is, in fact, implicit in the Doge's own words,

...and yet I find a comfort in
 The thought, that these things are the work of Fate;
 For I would rather yield to gods than men...
 ...-- they could not be
 Victors of him who oft had conquer'd for them.
(*Marino Faliero* V.ii,65-74)

The Doge, indeed is prone to such delusion, equating himself to the last with Brutus and his fellow conspirators against Caesar (III.i,74-5), and with Agis, King of Sparta (V.iii,21). While this historical perspective does not always serve him well, his vision is to some extent validated in his final words, a curse against Venice, which we, as a contemporary reader, would see as having been fulfilled and which thus illustrates, as does the curse on the Romans for their killing of gladiators, the futility and destructiveness of a desire for vengeance. Worthy of a passing note is the form of the Doge's curse; it displays some of the features typical of curses in classical tragedy, eg, in that his blood will not sink down into the earth but "Reek up to heaven" (V.iii,36-7) for vengeance (an allusion that accords with the Doge's earlier desire to cleanse Venice of the "black blood which makes [it]/A lazar-house of tyranny"). But to cry vengeance, as we see here, as Byron saw at the Coliseum, is merely to perpetuate the old cycles of "hereditary rage". The idea of disease admirably conveys this; those who try to excise the disease become themselves infected. One of the hallmarks of the Signoria, a fault made clear from the start, is secrecy, yet of necessity, the conspirators must assume the same secrecy.¹⁰² Similarly, coldness and lack of human sympathy condemn the Signoria, yet we find Israel Bertuccio ironically prophesying the coup's failure in the words:

...Such ties are not
For those who are call'd to the high destinies
Which purify corrupted commonwealths;
We must forget all feelings save the *one*,
We must resign all passions save our purpose.
(II.ii,84-88)

This would appear to validate McGann's comments on Byron's dramas:

As in Aeschylus, Byron's characters are often pawns of the poetry in which they are involved. Like Agamemnon or Clytemnestra, they perform acts of their own free will, but the continuum in which these acts are caught up is not subject to human manipulation.¹⁰³

As I have been arguing, however much Byron concentrates our attention on the tense world in the foreground, there is always something beyond, an overarching cosmic order, though exactly what this is, is more difficult to identify. In *Marino Faliero*, one would assume it to be the Signoria, but they too may be victims of a greater power, as is suggested by Faliero, when he refuses to deem the Signoria to be "more than instruments/Of an o'erruling power" (V.ii,71-72), a claim given credence by the imagery of the undying nature of evil in the mention of "vampires" and "serpent seed", and, most tellingly perhaps, the Hydra, which, as one head is cut off, sprouts even more. The Signoria themselves may be subject to "The ruling principle of Hate/Which for its pleasure doth create/The things it may annihilate" (*Prometheus*, II,20-22). There is, particularly in *Cain* and *Manfred*, the suggestion, voiced by Corbett, that

Man's destiny is never in his own charge. That which he most delights in, most cherishes, is only given him by a hostile force so that it may better desolate when that pleasure...is taken away.¹⁰⁴

Certainly in *Cain* we are left in little doubt that the world is being continually destroyed and re-created just to amuse a bored god. These cataclysms give physical expression to one of the few constants in Byron's universe, and that is change, a constant swinging between extremes, controlled either by celestial whim or by some preordained but incomprehensible pattern, functioning mechanically, like the Greek cosmos inexorably moving to right any deviation from the pattern. The one constant, and this applies no less to the rhythms of Nature, or to the waves of history in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, is indifference; the lack of concern for the individual life. In each case, one is dealing with a huge, overarching phenomenon which subsumes smaller parts irrelevant to its larger progress. Thus the Doge and the conspirators are doomed from the outset, the conspirators doomed to become tainted by the very disease they would cut away, as in the case of the French Revolution. It is perhaps apposite to recall T. James Luce's comment on Greek tragedy:

The pity and fear of Greek tragedy arise in part from its demonstration of how inevitably, and without regard for the cost in human suffering, the gods move to expel pollution and restore order. The system rights itself with a certain grand impersonality to which human victims are merely incidental.¹⁰⁵

Given this, the question then becomes how is it possible to escape from these fruitless swings between extremes. It has already been seen how, for both Byron and for Aeschylus, this entailed a reversal of "Nature's decree". Earlier, in relation to the *Eumenides*, attention was drawn to the opposition of Apollo, as representative of the forces of light and reason, and The Furies, associated with darkness, disease, and the emotions. There is, however, another dimension to the conflict in that Apollo is male and, a mouthpiece for Zeus, speaks with the voice of male patriarchy,¹⁰⁶ while the Furies are allied to female deities and are sent by Clytemnestra to defend the marital rights of women. Herington notes that "it is significant that in this play, Aeschylus differs from all other recorded Greek genealogies of the Furies to make them the daughters of Night who is Fates' sister".¹⁰⁷ What is at stake is not merely justice, but a dislocation in the relationship between the male and female principles in the universe; no wonder there is no fertility and crops do not grow. The unnaturalness of the solution, because of such a dislocation, resides not only in the "Forgiveness Curse"-type recognition of an enemy by the victor in the dispute, but also in the arbiter, Athena. After the deadlock and insults between Apollo and The Furies, Athena is possibly the only personage who could satisfactorily resolve the volatile situation,¹⁰⁸ since she is neither male nor female, and was not "born of woman"; as Apollo observes, she was not conceived "in the darkness of the womb" (l.665), darkness being here (as in *The Aeneid*) associated with the female, and she is often depicted as a slight woman in the armour of a heavy infantryman. Thus Athena is admirably suited to decide the issue and re-integrate the male and female principles.

Another dimension of this fascinating and complex culmination of the *Oresteia* is the political. Aeschylus is concerned to give added validity to the Areopagus and also, more generally, to establish a mode of justice workable within the new environment of the city states. Clearly, the old system (represented by the physically old Furies, who are allied to the earth and to such primeval forces as predated Zeus and the Olympian gods), of eye-for-an-eye retribution was showing its shortcomings in this new social setting, and so the *Oresteia* is about finding, or at least validating, a new judicial system. A similar quest has already been examined in relation to Homer, where the old, glory-seeking hero-type embodied in Achilles seems to give way to a new, more domesticated type in the form of

Hector, a type more suited to life in a modern city state. Byron, who elsewhere shows a keen interest in, and understanding of, the Homeric opposition between Achilles and Hector returns to these issues in his Venetian plays, where the conflict is often stated, as in the *Oresteia*, in terms of a conflict between "male" and "female" values.

BYRON'S GRECIAN HEROISM

As Corbett notes,

Adah, like her sisters in the Ravenna dramas, presents a realistic, humane, practicable ethic as opposed to the extravagant, abnormal passions of the men they love.¹

These "extravagant, abnormal passions" are clearly in evidence in Jacopo Foscari's improbably obsessive relationship with his mother city. The image of a "mother" city, though a casual one, is apposite since his view of Venice is tinged, as we see when first we meet Jacopo, by nostalgia for the innocence and simplicity of childhood, indeed for a return to the womb, in his memories of diving down into an underwater world at once natural and fantastic, a world entirely shut off from the above-surface world and its concerns which now crowd in upon him. It is an escape from the murky machinations of the Venetian state apparatus, captured in the imagery of its mechanical instruments of torture² and in the cold, hard marble of which it is built, imagery opposed to the limpid and liquid environment Jacopo longs for. The cold, hard sterility of the marble which makes up the halls of government we find personified in Loredano, as is reflected in his final gesture of striking off the Foscari's debt from his marble tablets. He is also described as having a "marble brow". Byron's use of marble imagery has its roots, as has been shown, in his reading of *The Aeneid*, and thus invariably expresses the crushing weight of empire or the state, and its destruction of personal relations.

The Doge unites in his person the two extremes represented by Jacopo and Loredano, operating within the state apparatus, rigidly adhering to the letter of the law (shown pointedly when the only words he has for his son are "that he obey the laws"), yet trying to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's", and preserve the capacity for human feelings.³ The Foscari, father and son, are both patriots, though in very different ways, and this is where they show their "extravagant and abnormal passions". In Doge Foscari, patriotism takes the form of a devotion to honour, family, and to the illustrious heritage of Venice. In this devotion, however, he seems to take on some of the coldness and

hardness associated with the state itself, eg. when he finally breaks down at the death of Jacopo, Marina bitterly asks: "Where is now/The stoic of the state (IV.i,213-214). Although devoted to his family, we see it as a qualified devotion which seems too cold, as when Marina introduces herself timidly: "I have ventured, father, on/Your privacy", to which the Doge replies "I have none from you, my child./Command my time, when not commanded by/The state" (II.i,46-9); private life is always subordinate to the duties of state. This punctiliousness shows its obsessive side when he applies it even at his son's death (IV.i,203-206), as if the Doge is clinging to the letter of the law as a means of keeping in check his obviously strong emotions. That he has come to regard his office and its duties in this way is suggested by his speedy collapse once these are withdrawn. Even then, he still insists on keeping public and private separate in leaving not by the private staircase but by the Giant's Stairs.

The concealment of one's true feelings in a world as treacherous as that of Venice is, indeed, one of the themes of this play, and of *Marino Faliero*. Marina, on the other hand, goes against this path of prudence, freely giving rein to her strong emotions (her link to her husband in this is obvious), even when it is unwise or dangerous to do so; while others cower in fear of giving offence to The Ten, like Memmo at IV,i,64-75, Marina speaks clearly her contempt for Venice and its institutions, to the extent that she offends the Doge (II.i,108-137). Even her normally outspoken husband urges greater caution in her speech with Loredano, whom she fearlessly assaults verbally, despite the fact that with his power and influence, he is a dangerous man to offend (III.i,252-339). Although soon she is to urge caution, this is only to warn Jacopo and his father against any show of emotion that might give pleasure to their tormentor, Loredano, who wryly notes that this -- caution -- is "The virtue which this this noble lady most/May practise" (III.i,346-7), spurring Marina to retort:

Wretch! 'tis no virtue, but the policy
Of those who fain must deal perforce with vice.
(III.i,348-9)

As in *Marino Faliero*, the good, the natural, must become tainted by the corruption engendered by the state of Venice. Normally Marina is not so restrained. She stands up for a deeply-felt natural law in the face of the harsh, unnatural laws imposed by the Venetian state, and which are metonymically suggested by the instruments of torture⁴ spoken of in hushed tones of dread throughout the play. When Memmo talks to her of the guards' duty to prevent her intruding upon the trial, she explodes:

..."Tis *their* duty
To trample on all human feelings, all
Ties which bind man to man,
(I.i,261-3)

and after Doge Foscari's explanation of his allegiance to the great heritage of Venice, Marina remains unawed, saying only "Accursed be the city where the laws/Would stifle Nature's" (II.i,419-20).

In this unerring loyalty to a natural law intrinsically felt rather than one unnaturally imposed from without, Marina bears a striking resemblance to Sophocles' Antigone. She too is a lone voice in a world whose values make her seem mad; she herself at one point exasperatedly exclaims: "my piety is impiety deemed" (l. 385). She upholds the same emotive outspokenness as Marina, "the eternal laws of Heaven" intuitively felt, as against Creon's coldly-reasoned and harshly-imposed "justice". Robert F. Goheen speaks of this conflict in terms of an opposition of "*nomos*" (custom, law, convention), and "*physis*" (origin, nature, regeneration).⁵ The correct relationship between these two terms was just becoming a major philosophical controversy at the time Sophocles wrote his play, as thinkers debated questions such as "what is nature?", "what is law?", and "to what extent should nature be lawful, or law natural?".⁶ Early on, Ismene posits the theory that law (*nomos*) is what a ruler decrees and that obedience to that law is the role of human nature. This is given support by Creon's view of the hierarchy of power: that he is subordinate to the gods, as his people are subordinate to him, as animals are subordinate to Man. Creon's pragmatic and empirical reasoning seems correct, and is further rendered plausible by his forthright setting out of his beliefs with concrete images.

Antigone employs remarkably few images which utilize as their vehicles sensuously concrete and stable referents. Whereas Creon's metaphors consistently employ sensory phenomena and so have an immediate aura of measurable fact, Antigone draws heavily upon direct terms of emotion and direct emotionalism ... Antigone is, in fact, marked by a strong tendency to think emotionally and feel her judgements as likes and dislikes, love and hate, pain and pleasure.⁷

In contrast to Creon's more readily-apprehensible imagery and reasoned arguments appealing to the subordination of individual inclinations for the benefit of the *polis*, Antigone's ideas seem selfish, fuzzy-minded, or even crazed.⁸ Her direct emotionalism, directly expressed, coupled with her reluctance to use concrete, external referents, gives her a certain untouchability. This difficulty in understanding Antigone (when added to the chorus' initial siding with Creon) is related to the fact that no-one with whom she comes in contact seems fully to understand her; "she moves in her own realm, self-knowing, and self-legislating".⁹ This "*noli me tangere*" air she shares with Byron's Marina, who is similarly too uncompromising, too vehement, for other characters -- even her husband -- to relate to.

And so in the Sophocles play, Creon's version of reality becomes the accepted one. He would reduce human relations to his hierarchy of power – his relation to his people is akin to a farmer putting animals to use and this is indicated in the frequency of imagery concerning the yoking of animals.¹⁰ As noted earlier, Creon is "betrayed" by his own imagery, however, as, through the imagery, we see the shortcomings of Creon's reasoning; that he has overlooked the differences between animals and men, and between men and gods. Creon, in his logical (but earthbound) approach, is contrasted with Antigone, who, before court, can justify her position with reference to Zeus (the defender of the laws of burial and of family duties) although her prime reality is the blood bond to her brother:¹¹ she feels what is correct, it comes from inside her. The laws by which Antigone lives are natural, unwritten laws in tune with the correct and harmonious running of the world, in contrast to Creon's idea of law as an externally-imposed "yoke". Antigone favours what Goheen terms "a *nomos* within *physis*",¹² a law given validity by being "pegged in the nature of things", and recognised by her piety. She indeed identifies herself with Nature in a larger sense as she invokes the springs and groves of Thebes to witness by what "nomoi" (laws of men) she's being doomed (ll.842-56, 937-43).¹³

A similar opposition is achieved by Byron in *The Two Foscari* when Jacopo is contemplating the names of his predecessors inscribed on the wall of his cell; he notes that

...the poor captive's tale is graven on
 His dungeon barrier like the lover's record
 Upon the bark of some tall tree, which bears
 His own and his beloved's name.

(III.i,21-4)

The difference between the cold, hard sterility of the laws which have put Jacopo in prison and the natural, organic, love imagery of the outside world he dreams of, is obvious. Jacopo identifies himself metaphorically with the natural, organic world when he observes two lines later that his life has been "blighted". Part of the same pattern is that earlier fantasy of Jacopo, that of a return to the comforting, liquid world into which he dived as a boy in the Grand Canal, a world contrasted with the intransigence and falseness of the marble world above the water's surface. Similar in its opposition of Nature/life/liquid, and cold, hard minerality is the idea of the "young blood" of Jacopo's children being frozen "in its natural current". The suppression of tears is another manifestation of this unnaturalness imposed by the state, an unnaturalness that has its focus in "the Question"; "such inhuman artifice of pain" (I.i,336). Jacopo, as perhaps befits one imprisoned, is associated with natural imagery of freedom, eg. a sea-bird (I.i,121), a dove longing for its young (III.i,11-3), and, of course, with the sea (IV.i,129-150). Marina contrasts the youth, love and fertility represented by herself, Jacopo, and their children

with the sterile age of "The Ten": "the old, human fiends,/With one foot in the grave, with dim eyes strange" (II.i,108-123). She, like Antigone, looks to Nature and to Heaven for what she feels to be correct and curses a "city where the laws/Would stifle Nature's" (II.i,419), upholding in particular the bond between man and wife, "the holiest tie beneath the heavens" (II.i,68). And it is to Heaven that Marina looks for the justice that has been denied her in the play, eg. V.i,361.

Even Loredano's ally, Barbarigo, concedes that "The Ten" "have gone beyond/Even their exorbitance of power...and...stung humanity will rise to check it" (V.i,146-50), echoing earlier reservations at IV.i,257-8. Part of the inhumanity of Venice resides in its considering material value above human value, as when it is assumed that the Doge can be "bought" out of office with a generous pension while the Doge, like Marina, imprudently as Venice might judge, stands up for principles whatever their cost. This Venetian mind-set has its focus of course in Loredano and his accounting books. These bring in, with the simple act of closing the account, the warped values of a state which allows a man's life to be considered thus, on the same level as a financial transaction, as well as being the culmination of the imagery of marble and sterility. That they should be written on marble tablets also carries connotations of the new law of God, similarly written on tablets of stone and designed to replace the old law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There are other images from commerce to be found in the play; Loredano says of the Doge that "the account were fearfully against him" (IV.i,319) if the number of cities won by Foscari were to be balanced against the number of lives lost. Marina cries out against the injustice that she "must purchase by renewal of the rack/The interview of husband and wife" (II.i,67-8).

The origins of this imagery are perhaps to be found in *Antigone* where Creon had the same tendency to reduce everything to profit and loss, and where such a view is similarly opposed by a more humane set of values. While for Antigone, the unnegotiable principles of life are paramount, Creon, through the imagery he uses, displays a tendency to reduce things to a question of material advantage. When Tiresias opposes him, he claims he has been bribed (II.1033-9),¹⁴ likewise his guards (II.310-2; 322, 325-6). This reduction of all motives to that of financial gain, shows the limits of Creon's perceptions, and of the state he represents, laws which neglect the extra-terrestrial dimension; *nomoi* which neglect the dimension of *physis*. A measure of the confusion of Creon's priorities is that when he thinks of "*physis*", he thinks only of physical generation, with a value to be measured by whether one's offspring help one or not (II.641-60).¹⁵

While Marina and Antigone are united in their respective dramas in the quest for natural justice, for "a *nomos* within *physis*", Creon's version of *nomos* is summed up in the issuing of his edict. According to his erroneous analysis, based on human reasoning, this, as the order of a ruler, is law, but Antigone only refers to it thus as an "edict", a "decree";

something tyrannically imposed from without, with no real basis in natural law.¹⁶ Such decrees are a typical feature of the Venice of Byron's plays, handed down from "The Ten" amidst an atmosphere of dread and secrecy. And these decrees are treated with the same contempt as those found in *Antigone*. Loredano, of course, bearing in mind how he manipulates the already congenially hard laws of Venice,¹⁷ uses the word somewhat triumphantly, even gleefully, when, as a messenger, indeed a symbol, of "The Ten", he uses the word, eg. II.i,260; III.i,258. It invariably represents a blow to the upholders of human values – Marina recognizes as much and attacks Loredano for his ironic use of "pleasure" to mean the customary suffering which she equates dismissively with "decrees" (II.i,286). The Doge, with his long experience of Venice's political institutions, seems similarly sceptical about the validity and justice of the judgements handed down by "The Ten" (and hence uses the word "decree", [III.i,427; V.i,61]), but equally, knows that resistance is futile. Even the head of "The Ten" implicitly concurs in this analysis of the Ten's decrees, when, knowing he is speaking to someone well-acquainted with the political workings of Venice, he pays no regard to the Doge's mention of his oath to remain in office, and urges him: "Reduce us not/To the alternative of a decree" (V.i,48), ie."an offer he can't refuse". In *Marino Faliero*, an earlier head of The Ten refers in exactly the same way to the sentence on Faliero. Angiolina pleads for her husband, recalling all the benefits his reign has brought to Venice, and urging mercy, despite his proven guilt. But humane considerations count here for no more than they do in *The Two Foscari*, and Benintende's reply remains simply and unchangeably, "'tis a decree", implying that regardless of the rights and wrongs of the case, these counted for nothing, as it had been decided already, and was hence as unalterable as if (to use an appropriate image) it had been handed down on tablets of stone.

Marino Faliero is a play that works in substantially the same way as *The Two Foscari*, at least as regards the opposition of the intuition of women and the hardness of the male state. Here, as in *The Two Foscari*, it is not only the state which is inhumanly cold and out of touch with intuitively-apprehensible reality, but also the central character, even though he recognizes the State's shortcomings. The heroes of both plays wrestle with split allegiances and are marked by their loyalty to the Venetian state, and her heritage, and to their own family heritage. Both are betrayed by the state they have done so much to protect, and illustrate the harshness of the state apparatus unmediated by human feelings and true, natural justice. Doge Faliero is first presented to us "as rapt in duty" but all the time beset by human feelings at odds with his duty. He is "Placed at the ducal table, cover'd o'er/With all the apparel of the state; petitions,/Despatches, judgements, acts, reprieves, reports" (I.i,7-9), an excellent image of the stifling effect of state concerns on the

Doge, with the verb "placed" conveying *Macbeth*-fashion the idea of someone unproductively occupying a position that does not fit him. And as in *The Two Foscari*, "the sentence of the Forty" is something dreadful and mysterious, even arbitrary.

As he rebels against the externally-imposed restrictions of the state, however, like Doge Foscari he is weighed down by his own internal sense of honour, and it is this, expanded to the dimensions of an "extravagant passion", that leads to his downfall. He demands of the calmer Bertuccio Faliero, if he has "no deep sense of honour" (i,ii,152) and claims that in insulting his wife, Steno has touched "The nearest, dearest part of all men's honour" (I,ii,159), but he can quickly elevate this sense of personal grievance to talk of "The violated majesty of Venice/At once insulted in her lord and laws" (II,i,407-8) and turn personal vengeance onto a crusade. As Angiolina says, "all things wear in him the aspect of eternity", and he delights to see himself in terms of other great historical figures, even to the last comparing himself to Agis, King of Sparta (V,iii,21 cf. also III,ii,157) and eager to adopt Israel Bertuccio's equation of their conspiracy to that against Julius Caesar (V,i,178-9 cf. II,ii,105). It is, however, Israel Bertuccio's comment, whether shrewd or accidental, concerning Steno's very personal slight, which finally steels the Doge to the act after his feelings for his fellow patricians threaten to weaken his resolve. Significantly, the Doge says at this point: "Man, thou hast struck upon the chord which jars/All nature from my heart" (III,ii,540-1). While the Doge acts in accordance with his feelings, which seems natural, these are wild passions, completely divorced from what is sensible or according to Nature, stemming, as they do, from his devotion to concepts like duty and honour, fostered by the state for its own self-preservation.

Angiolina, in contrast, has an inherent sense of rightness -- she looks inside herself for her rules of conduct, like Antigone, who knew that the laws of her pure and pious heart were the laws of Nature and of the gods. When the Doge queries her about having married an old man, she replies with disarming candour "I look'd but to my father's wishes...and to my heart" (II,i,342-3). In this purity and simplicity, the rather too appropriately-named Angiolina displays the same other-worldly aspect as Antigone, the more obviously in the false and corrupt world of Venice. We see this again earlier in this scene when Marianna, her maid, questions her about her thoughts of men other than her husband, or regrets at having married an older man; Angiolina typically replies: "I knew not of such thoughts" (II,i,132). She seems not to operate like other human beings; even the Doge seems scarce to believe her devotion. But Angiolina, with her intuition, can instantly recognize that "Something has stung your pride, not patriotism" (II,i,205). As befits such a person, she is not troubled by any external notions of honour. What she herself knows to be true is more important for her than what others may think -- "what is virtue if it needs a victim?/Or if it must depend upon men's words", she tells Marianna (II,i,56-7), who wants Steno punished as an example. And to her claim that the slander

will affect all Venetian women: "and less rigid ladies...would be loud/And all-inexorable in their cry/For justice" (II.i,63-5), Angiolina replies, "This but proves it is the name/And not the quality they prize" (II,i,66-7). She talks of Steno being already punished by his own shame and conscience, which is enough for her. To the Doge's demand that she be avenged, she insists, with all the force of her simple integrity:

I am too well avenged, for you still love me,
And trust, and honour me; and all men know
That you are just, and I am true.

(II.i,281-3)

For her, Steno's insult has no significance "But for the effect, the deadly deep impression/Which it has made upon Faliero's soul" (II.ii,34-5). C.M. Bowra suggests that what count for Sophocles' Antigone are "holy domesticities"¹⁸ and this could also be said of Angiolina; for her it is the human bonds, the family bonds, and the bonds to heaven that count.

* * *

From this I think one is justified in making the connection to points made earlier, concerning the opposition between male and female values, and between the values of Hector and the values of Achilles. Of Hector, too, could it perhaps be said, that in contrast to the glory-driven Achilles, what count for him are "holy domesticities". As noted, the battle between Hector and Achilles is portrayed as a struggle between old and new forms of heroism, or of philosophy. In *Marino Faliero*, "this strange disproportion" in the ages of the Doge and his bride suggests a similar schema. As Corbett notes, "the women of the Ravenna dramas present a realistic, humane, practicable ethic as opposed to the abnormal passions of the men they love"¹⁹ and, not surprisingly, it is this female ethic which is proposed as the way forward and vindicated by the action of the play, although it is ostensibly the forces of the old order which triumph. If in *Marino Faliero*, Angiolina is to be taken as representing the "holy domesticities", a looking within oneself to uncover universal laws, Doge Foscari is too concerned with external matters. Even when the Doge talks of the violation of the sanctuary of his private life: "I had one only fount of quiet left,/And that they poisoned!" (III.ii,261-2), it is not clear that he has any sense of a home life except as a haven from his public life, ie. only another facet of public life, not as anything intrinsically valuable. He is cynical about love, and seems to regard Angiolina less as a wife than as his ward (II.i,327-366). He reacts to Steno's slander as a reflex reaction to any attempt to wrest from him that almost tangible thing, his honour, and when Angiolina, who knows him so well, gets to the bottom of things, he admits to what is really troubling him so:

The violated majesty of Venice,
At once insulted in her lord and laws.
(II.i,407-8)

It is externals – his sense of duty to Venice and to his own (and his family's) honour – that really concern him, and of course his grand passions sweep this outward-looking tendency on far beyond the original insult until nothing less than revolution will suffice. In his precipitateness, his absorption in his overblown fantasies of revenge, the Doge overlooks practicalities. This is seen in his encounters with Angiolina and with Bertuccio Faliero, who tries to calm the Doge when he hears news of Steno's lenient sentence, explaining matter-of-factly,

We will ask justice; if it be denied,
We'll take it, but may do all this in calmness.
(I.ii,138-9)

The Doge's self-deception is evident also in the historicizing tendency which sees him as one of the two Brutii, and in his belief that he can put behind him

...individual hate,
In the absorbing, sweeping, whole revenge,
Which, like the sheeted fire from heaven, must blast
Without distinction, as it fell of yore.
(III.ii,419-22)

The Doge has flashes of insight when he seems more aware of what he is in fact doing, as when he contemplates going to the church where his noble forebears are buried "to hold a council in the dark/With common ruffians leagued to ruin states" (I.ii,581-2) and also when, asked to be the leader of the conspirators, his pride battles with the sordid reality to which it has led him:

...I was general at Zara,
And chief in Rhodes and Cyprus, prince in Venice:
I cannot stoop – that is, I am not fit
To lead a band of – patriots.
(III.ii,218-211)

But soon he blinds himself to this and returns to his comforting delusions which he maintains defiantly to the last. In this blindness, voluntary or involuntary, he resembles the Juan/Wordsworth figure of *Don Juan*, who, after his "longings sublime and aspirations high", loses his dinner. Indeed in the *Don Juan* form generally, the final couplet is always ready to undermine the high sentiment of the other six lines,²⁰ serving well Byron's aim of highlighting the folly of Man's forgetting his limitations.

The Doge's honour-motivated behaviour is akin to that of the soldiers at the siege of Ismail engaged upon their will-o'-the-wisp chase after glory. They chase something apparently spiritual, insubstantial, that may never be possessed. They would be better, Byron claims, seeking the immediate tangibility of a love-relationship; a self-justifying situation which has intrinsic -- not merely an anticipated -- worth. In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas opts for the latter, fighting down his love for Dido to found Rome, an action which brings about the destruction of Carthage and the death of Dido, to offer only a glimpse of the goal of these sacrifices. Byron implicitly criticizes the Aeneid's valuing The State/Duty above love when he uses Vergil's epic as the basis for parts of *Don Juan*. In doing this, he uses the image of the marble of which Rome is to be built as a shorthand for the imperialistic delusions that crush the life out of Aeneas. Marble is similarly used in *The Two Foscari*, in the marble that weighs on Foscari's chest, and in Loredano's marble brow and accounting tablets, to express the crushing weight the state exerts upon human bonds.

In *Marino Faliero*, the Doge repeats Aeneas' mistake to lose the (implicitly more precious) female joys of private home life with his devoted wife, reiterating the destruction of these values by the state and its agents in *The Two Foscari*. The results of following unreservedly this external male path of state/duty/glory seem always to be destructive, as they were for Aeneas in Byron's reading of that epic, and opposed to the creative potential of the female path of love. Had Doge Faliero followed the eminently sound, pious advice of his wife, or even the calm pragmatism of Bertuccio Faliero, tragedy could have been averted. These lesser, non-tragic characters are perhaps intended to embody the Greek virtue of "*sophrosyne*", or "keeping one's head down", as distinct from the Doge's *hybris*, a conflict of which qualities forms the basis of many Greek tragedies, eg. *Oedipus the King*, where Oedipus' desire for truth is set against Jocasta's desire to hide from it. Of Oedipus, Lesky says, "he becomes a hero because his will is inexorable, even when it leads to destruction", but "by the side of these great tragic figures, who take up the fight and whose concern is human dignity, not mere existence, we find, as the embodiment of temptation, those average persons who want to be secure and to stay alive at all costs."²¹

Had the Doge followed his heart, the true feelings of the heart, as they are nurtured by Angiolina, instead of following the delusions of a heart weighed down by male notions of state, duty, and honour, he would have been able to go on living happily with Angiolina, caring no more for Steno's insult than she does, secure in the knowledge of its falsity. He would thus have had a creative relationship rather than bringing the destruction that always seems to follow such a choice. The creative side of The Doge's marriage to Angiolina, in the sense of its fertility, is not stressed in this play, but in *The Two Foscari*, in the relationship of Jacopo and Marina, this aspect is very important. As noted, there is an

opposition, more or less explicit, throughout the play, of the fertility of the young couple and the age and sterility (literal and metaphoric) of The Ten, who dare to legislate on the productive relationship of Jacopo and Marina.

This opposition between imagery of fertility and barrenness is carried over into *Cain*. Cain and Adah, most especially Adah, tend to be linked to such imagery particularly in relation to their child. Adah informs Cain that "the fruits/Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens" (I.i,335-6); Cain's offering is to be "The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful/Blossom and bud, and bloom of flowers and fruits" (III.i,105-6). Enoch, termed "our young, blooming sleeper", lies surrounded by rose leaves. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that much of Eve's curse on Cain concerns sterility, eg. "May...Earth's fruits be ashes in his mouth" (III.i,428). The angel's curse, too confirms that

Henceforth, when thou shalt till the ground, it shall not
Yield thee her strength.
(III.i,474-5)

Cain himself acknowledges, "I/Have dried the fountain of a gentle race" (III.i,557). Indeed the imagery of fertility attaches mainly to Adah and her child, dividing the opposition along male and female lines.

Fertility is related to love and to the female earth and thus stands in neat opposition to Luciferian knowledge. This opposition between a life close to Nature, governed by love, and Lucifer's exhortations to "form an inner world/In your own bosom...and war triumphant with your own" (II.ii,463-6) is highlighted by the repetition of "unnatural" in Abel's comments when he meets Cain immediately after his converse with Lucifer:

Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light --
Thy cheek is flush'd with an unnatural hue --
Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound.
(III.i,185-7)

It seems justified to use the term "unnatural" to describe the Cain-Lucifer ethos, since it does go against the natural law as defined by God and as explained by Adah when she opposes the devil's contrary view with the idea of a chain of love emanating from God the father. At the start of the play, Cain pictures himself as having often lingered by the gates of Paradise "to catch a glimpse of those/Gardens which are my just inheritance" (I.i,86-7). Cain seems backward-looking; this is echoed in Adah's question "why wilt thou always mourn for Paradise?/Can we not make another" (III.i,37-8), which in turn makes her seem the forward-looking one. But, in fact, it is Adah and the rest of Cain's family who are really backward-looking, for they, having defied and been punished by God, have sunk

back into a submissive state where they meekly accept the punishment and hardships they now endure, trying meantime to recreate the pre-Fall innocence and unthinking life they had before. As Cain says,

...My father is
Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk
Of an eternal curse,
(I.i,176-9)

And when Cain muses "Were I quiet earth,/That were no evil: would I ne'er had been/Aught else but dust!", Lucifer replies, "That is a grovelling wish,/Less than your father's, for he wish'd to know" (I.i,287-90). It seems Lucifer, with his offer of more knowledge, represents the way forward, capitalizing on Eve's daring which has already brought them closer to the spiritual, from which they now retreat in their immersion in a more bodily, earthly existence. Adah, in her identification with procreation and with the earth, represents the bodily, and Lucifer the spiritual, influences on Cain. When Cain is surprised that a spiritual being should leave his world and "walk with dust", Lucifer replies that he knows "the thoughts of dust" "as they are the thoughts of all/Worthy of thought; – 'tis your immortal part/Which speaks within you" (I.i,99-104).

Cain follows Lucifer far enough in his quest for knowledge to realize his nature's littleness; finding himself dwarfed by the huge perspectives, spatial and temporal that stretch out before him. Through this however, Cain finds he has but learnt a knowledge that recoils upon the adept who practices it. This knowledge depresses him further, and further alienates him from his family, which, of course, is part of Lucifer's strategy. He emphasizes the misery through space and time (I.i,146...) and paints the picture of a god who, maliciously, or at best indifferently, creates and destroys to relieve his own boredom. But whether one accepts this view of God or Adah's view of an omnipresent, and wholly loving God, diffusing love and joy throughout his creation, the point is that Lucifer represents isolation; a withdrawal into the world of intellect from a cruel world, and Adah represents a going out from self in love, in work, in social co-operation. Stated thus, there would seem to be no comparison; Byron would choose Adah's way, just as he has apparently vindicated this "female" devotion to human ties and to the intrinsically worthwhile action in the other dramas discussed. But whereas in the other two dramas, the high thoughts of the male characters were plainly negative, in *Cain* things are not so clear cut. Firstly, Adah's pious submission has about it the taint of dishonesty; a dishonesty in trying to go back to a simple, unthinking, earthly existence, plainly impossible since the effects of the Tree of Knowledge cannot be undone, nor can the intellect, once awakened, be so easily lulled into quiescence. And, also, the "serpent's words" of Lucifer, carry too much force to be so easily ignored; we are left doubting that

perhaps Lucifer's description, coming as it does from a creature longer and better acquainted with that being, may have more than a little truth. Lucifer's argument that having once defied God and gained Knowledge, Man should continue along that path of defiance and develop his immortal or spiritual portion, is also attractive to Byron.

These two positions seem to represent, as well as a philosophical/ideological problem, a contemporary literary one, since both Adah and Lucifer's points of view can be seen as representing different, though related, types of Romantic fallacies against which Byron rebelled. In this schema, Adah's way would represent the back-to-Nature trend in poetry, the move away from the stylized, city-based neo-classical poetry of wit, to simpler language and rural subjects, coupled with moralizations like Cowper's "God made the country, and man made the town" (quoted approvingly in *Don Juan* VIII, lx). Lucifer's position resembles that of Shelley (an identification of which Shelley might not have entirely disapproved) in his mountain-sublime mode or even of Wordsworth (who would less have relished the comparison). One key feature of resemblance to this strain of Romanticism is that to the Romantic theory of the transforming power of the mind or imagination, suggested in *Cain* by Lucifer's words:

...Nothing can
Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself
And centre of surrounding things -- 'tis made
To sway... (I.i,209-13)

and the previously quoted:

...form an inner world
In your own bosom -- where the outward fails.
(II.ii,463-4)

and also in the faith that

...there is
A wisdom in the spirit, which directs
To right. (I.i,489-91)

But the resolution of this conflict in the philosophical field, as well as in the literary, lies in a compromise. This we have seen, in canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (where the battle is fought in more detail), culminating after all the swings between frenzy and inertia, in the calmness of St. Peter's where Art has tempered Nature, body mingled with spirit, and dust can be lifted up to heaven. Byron might have a sneaking desire for the quiet, simple life, as indicated by his plans "to pass his time in studying the Oriental languages and literature",²² and by his obvious affinity with Daniel Boone's backwoods existence,

yet he also talks in his letters of trying to shun too strong stimulants,²³ an acknowledgement of his natural propensity to be too easily "carried away", like Shelley, like Doge Foscari, on the wings of the mind, to his personal and artistic detriment. His solution to the problem, in thought, in art, and in *Cain*, is that a compromise must be reached; as an anguished Manfred remarks, Man is "Half dust, half deity, alike unfit/To sink or soar" (I.ii,40-1). Neither wholly spirit nor wholly body, Man must strive to cope with what he is; something uniquely positioned between the two. For Cain, this means that he can choose neither Adah nor Lucifer as his guide. Lucifer's way initially seems attractive since Lucifer is the first person Cain has found to relate to at the spiritual level:

Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum
 In visions through my thought: I never could
 Reconcile what I saw with what I heard....

...and my Adah, my
 Own and beloved, she, too, understands not
 The mind which overwhelms me: never till
 Now met I aught to sympathise with me.
 (I.i,164-87)

In comparison to the rest of the family, who have tried to go back to a material, pious, pre-Fall state symbolized by their links to the earth, the clay that comprises their lowest part, Lucifer seems to offer a sympathetic and liberating way forward. Flaws in Lucifer's way soon become apparent, however, as at II,ii, when Lucifer seems to consider things more beautiful far off, whilst Cain insists "Distance can but diminish glory...The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest (II,ii,247-251)". Lucifer is adamant "Then there must be some delusion (II,ii,252)", and when he discovers that Cain is talking of Adah's face, comments cynically,

...'Tis fair as frail mortality,
 In the first dawn and bloom of young creation,
 And earliest embraces of earth's parents,
 Can make its offspring; still it is delusion
 (II.ii,269-72)

To this Cain makes the telling reply, "You think so, being not her brother". Here Cain asserts his humanity (and his godlike portion) in the importance of love, in that it is the loving bond of family that makes Adah so beautiful to his eyes. This throws into relief the huge gap between man and Lucifer -- love. This was the point where Lucifer and Adah collided earlier. With the intuition characteristic of Byron's females, Adah argues:

...I have heard it said,
 The seraphs *love most* -- cherubim *know most* --
 And this must be a cherub -- since he loves not
 (I.i,417-19)

Lucifer puts the opinion bluntly:

Choose betwixt love and knowledge -- since there is
No other choice: your sire hath chosen already:
His worship is but fear.

(I.i,426-8)

Lucifer is urging a continuation of the way taken by Eve when first she defied God in taking the apple of the Tree of Knowledge, but Adah, in opposition, pleads "Oh Cain! Choose love (I,i,428)". Cain shows his isolation from this perspective when Adah urges him to close his mind to the depressing thoughts of Man's misery and be happy, as she is. By rejecting this with "Be thou happy, then, alone (I,i,461)", Cain shows his complete lack of understanding of what his wife offers, as is made clear in her reply:

... Alone I could not,
Nor *would* be happy; but with those around us
I think I could be so.

(I.i,463-5)

As a remedy for the misery of the Fall, Adah holds out love, which goes out to others as it goes out to God. Cain, leaning towards Lucifer's point of view (and adopting his proud speech), at this stage refuses, bravely (or proudly) declining to turn his back on the misery he has seen:

I will have naught to do with happiness,
Which humbles me and mine.

(I.i,462-3)

Later, however, as Cain, departing from Lucifer's view, expresses his materialist love of things close up, Lucifer says that if he loves, it is only "some vast and general purpose/To which particular things must melt like snows" (II.ii,314-5). Lucifer, as befits his antipathy to the material, has also an antipathy to the transient, shown in his "I pity thee who lovest what must perish" (II.ii,337), which is met by Cain's "and I thee who lov'st nothing" (II,i338). Again, what separates them is love. Though Lucifer seems to offer an expansion of the mental faculties, as is implied by the boundless perspectives of Space and Time that he shows Cain, his is, after all, a centripetal journey; a journey into the self. Lucifer asks "And have I not, in what I show'd,/Taught thee to know thyself" (II,ii,419-420). It is from this starting point that Lucifer delivers his final message:

Think and endure,-- and form an inner world
In your own bosom -- where the outward fails;

So shall you nearer be the spiritual
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.
(II.ii,463-6)

He speaks a message of alienation and complete self-centredness, whereas Adah, who seems to represent a narrow and claustrophobic way, really speaks a message of warmth and going out from self.

Yet, despite the obvious attractiveness of Adah's way for Byron, both Adah's way and Lucifer's entail some degree of intellectual dishonesty: Adah asks him to turn his back on knowledge, his spiritual side, and Lucifer asks him to turn his back on love, on human bonds and on the material. If he is to be true to his "mixed essence", like Manfred (who rejects both the dark powers of the spirits, and the comforts of conventional religion, in the form of the friar), he must bravely accept that these are two extremes at war within himself and that he must reject the consolations of both. Thus, Corbett, pointing to Lucifer's exhortation to "form an inner world...and war triumphant with your own", can say:

it is in following these private impulses rather than the external demands of family, love and fidelity, social co-operation and composure, that Cain becomes the first murderer.²⁴

But Jerome J. McGann provides a better analysis when he notes that

Cain is told by Lucifer that he must choose between heaven and hell, or matter and spirit, but he refuses to make such a choice for the very good reason that to do so would be to deny half his own personality....Cain kills Abel because Abel says "I love God far more than life" (III.i,315-6).²⁵

It should be remembered that Cain kills Abel not as his aim, but merely as a means of destroying the altar and ending the unwarranted pain and destruction of sacrifices ordered in God's name. Certainly, the violence is directed at Abel's worship of God, and Cain is cast out, a lone wanderer, thus bringing about the need to "form an inner world". This would fit with the pattern of the other Venetian tragedies, where the feminine values of human ties and piety are defeated by the external, male world of the intellect. *Cain*, however, is more complex than these much more formally-arranged dramas, and McGann's explanation does more justice to these complexities.

* * *

But if Cain's murder of his brother is not merely dismissable as the necessarily evil product of his corruption by infernal forces, what is it about Cain's mixed, human state that he fights so violently to defend? Is it simply that he fights for intellectual honesty?

Surely such an abstract concept was not sufficient motivation to become the first murderer. Abel's crime was that he loved God more than life, ie. that he had not appreciated the great value of life. For one of the things that does come out of this play, though it can be easily overshadowed by other, more negative elements, is (the very Greek notion) that human life, for all its contradictions and limitations, is more than just the sum of those contradictions, and in fact something positive. We get some idea of this from the gulf of understanding between Cain and Lucifer, regarding the beauty of things seen far off or close up. Lucifer lives in the vast, cold and lonely world of ideas, not in the warm and loving world of particulars where Cain can think of nothing more beautiful than the nearness of Adah's face. Lucifer does not understand love as a warm, human bond, only as an appetite which will pass when the beauty which has provoked it fades. Because it is transient, Lucifer seems to argue, it has no value -- however striking Adah's beauty, "still it is delusion" (II.ii,272), Lucifer repeats, because it is doomed to pass away. As representative of the powers of the mind, Lucifer can only view such things rationally and as an outsider, and as such it would seem only foolish to appreciate something so transitory, so Lucifer says "I pity thee who lovest what must perish" (II.ii,337). But Cain can see value beyond mere rationality; though he enumerates all the miseries that will befall his son, Enoch, he would still seem to agree with Adah when she says "Talk not of pain!/The childless cherubs might envy thee/The pleasures of a parent!" (III.i,152-4). This is also significantly one point where Cain feels he has the upper hand of Lucifer, when he can pity him for loving nothing, and when Lucifer proudly states "My brotherhood's with those who have no children", Cain boldly replies "Then thou canst have no fellowship with us" (II.ii,274-5). Against the cold rationality of Lucifer which is opposed to Cain's material, animal side, Cain seems to be standing up in praise of irrationality, something almost mystical, unanalysable, beyond the reach of Lucifer's barren reason, and which will love even things that will perish.

As noted earlier, the things Cain loves tend to be associated with organic imagery. When, musing of the hold Adah's beauty has on him, Cain gives a list (II.ii,256-67) of other beautiful things that are not quite equal to her beauty, the things he lists could almost be taken as illustrations of transience: he thinks first of the moon (a traditional image of transience) and of sunrise, but mainly of sunset, that romantic time beloved of Byron which speaks so eloquently of the beauty inherent in transience (a beauty enhanced by the proximity of its disappearance) -- indicative of the affinity for, and importance of, this mood, is the fact that when Cain thinks of birdsong, it is the song of the "vesper bird". As mentioned, Byron is here merely projecting onto his character, Cain, his own love of the twilight hour, a love we find reflected for example, in the Haidée idyll of *Don Juan*, an episode also notable for its sense of transience, which at the same time as it gives an air of foreboding, gives a particular beauty. Haidée, too, it is perhaps worthy of note, is

constantly linked to flower imagery, which adds, as in *Cain*, to the air of transience, as it adds to the impression of freshness and fertility. Byron's description of Lady Melbourne belongs to this same category -- he describes her as more beautiful because her beauty is fading. The crucial factor here -- and it is one that a being such as Lucifer cannot appreciate -- is the fact that because something will not last forever, it is more and not less precious. Lucifer cannot understand this because he lives a life without limits, or at least limits of time, being immortal. Such a life, from our limited perspective seems an awesome and an awful prospect. That it is so also for Lucifer is suggested by his description of God's existence:

...let him
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
Creating worlds, to make eternity
Less burthensome to his immense existence
And unparticipated solitude.

(I.i,147-51)

Thinking of the afterlife, Byron once mused that he believed in hell but could not believe in heaven, as he could not conceive of any state which would not eventually lead to ennui. Ennui in the life of the gods is one of the most memorable impressions we have of the life of Homer's gods. While men have an unhappy life as those who "plough the earth and perish", living life at the whim of the gods, the gods themselves lead a kind of aimless existence, in which, having everything they could want, they get into petty squabbles and intrigues.²⁶ They seem inexorably attracted to the mortal sphere for their excitement, be it in love or in war. For them, there is clearly something valuable, something exciting in mortality. Byron christianizes the Greek gods' communings with mortals, founding his "mystery" *Heaven and Earth* on the passage in *Genesis 6:2*:

The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

The angels choose mortality and love rather than an immortality of solitary bliss. McGann defines *Heaven and Earth* as

the story...of angels who break away from Jehovah, not, like Lucifer, out of a need to establish their primal integrity, but out of a desire to fulfil themselves with the virtues that are peculiar to corporeality.²⁷

The "virtues that are peculiar to corporeality" would certainly seem to involve the sense of urgency mortality gives as opposed to the aimlessness of the gods, and this underlies the very important Greek concept of "*arete*", meaning "the innate quality that defines any object".²⁸ The term is applied to the epic warrior's "last stand", the moment at which, as defeat overcomes him, he becomes not less, but more noble. It is then that he

receives the greatest description of his prowess from the epic poet, his reward, his "aristeia" including, importantly for someone seeking to transcend mortality, individualizing details, eg. a genealogy, and a reference to his geographical origins. The key point I wish to take from this is that, as the realization of the inevitability of defeat increases, the warrior fights all the more ferociously and gloriously to preserve life, just as, for the Greeks, mortal life in general is lived with a great thrill and impetus that "springs from the realization that a man can commit an extraordinary act while still remaining limited".²⁹ J.C. Opstelten, in *Sophocles and Greek Pessimism*, finds that

the realization of Man's limitations exerted on the Greeks rather a stimulating than a laming influence, and this outcome strengthened the impression of pathos.³⁰

Recurrent in Greek literature is "a tragic conflict between reason, ruling that Man should abstain from action, and the vital force which drives him on".³¹ The great heroes of Greek literature are not "reasonable" men, eg. in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the tragedy is caused by Oedipus' burning desire for the truth – had he been "reasonable", as Jocasta advises, he might have hidden, like her, from the truth. But Oedipus searches tirelessly for the truth, the more frantically as the full awesomeness of his position becomes apparent, just as the Homeric warrior fights all the more ferociously as he feels death approaching. Similarly, it would seem more prudent, more reasonable, for Antigone not to oppose the powerful Creon, but she stands up for her principles, which in the end are vindicated, though at great cost, including her own death. J. C. Jebb writes of Sophocles:

He sets before us a person determined on some striking action, and subjects him to all conceivable assaults of reason and preachments of expediency... That these heroes of the will so often come to misery or death matters little; they have saved their souls alive instead of sinking themselves in a sordid acceptance of a second-hand morality. Over against these figures, to emphasize their defiant grandeur, the poet loves to set persons admirable indeed, but more commonplace.³²

Achilles too, in *The Iliad* is a character beyond all assaults of reason and preachments on expediency, (such as he receives from the archetypal pragmatist, Odysseus, who reminds him of simple necessities like the need of his men to be fed). Even the defeat of the Achaeans does not greatly bother him, so significant is his wounded pride: it is only when his beloved Patroclus is killed that he goes into battle, thereby sealing his own fate. It is often said that the tragic characters of Greek drama are destroyed not so much by their faults as by their greatness. It is their godlike portion, their "spirit" which leads them on to tragedy. Supporting what Jebb says above, T. James Luce says of the Sophoclean hero:

Commitment to a dominant idea brings the hero into painful, sometimes fatal, conflict with society, loved ones, the limitations of human existence itself. Forced to a choice, the hero refuses to sacrifice personal integrity to survival or avoiding pain. Most of Sophocles' heroes are torn between an aspiration to an almost godlike autonomy and a dependence on the rhythms of Nature, on loved ones, on family and society. The tragic conflict often involves time, change, and process: the unbending laws of mortal existence versus the inflexibility of a great spirit that would break through to wider horizons and less conditioned possibilities.³³

This resembles the pattern followed by Byron's heroes, and Byron's own personal journey in pursuit of an equilibrium within himself between the active and the passive, reason and vital force, body and spirit.

But also interesting in connection with this is the frequent appearance in Greek literature of titans and demi-gods, characters which very obviously unite in themselves aspects of the mortal and the divine. The common occurrence of such characters can be viewed as an attempt to express the body/spirit duality which also impressed itself so strongly upon Byron. A very important figure in this respect both for contemporary Greeks and for later Romantics, was that of Aeschylus' Prometheus. Though, as a Titan, and thus immortal, he is not strictly speaking a mix of mortal and divine (being one of the older immortals overthrown by the Olympians), he does, in the theft of the gods' fire, form a link between mortal and divine since though not mortal, he is exiled from his kind by this act of compassion to mortals. It should be noted that the Prometheus myth also forms a parallel with the Christian myth of the Fall, since the fire stolen by Prometheus can be interpreted as the light of knowledge, in particular the knowledge involved in crafts (since fire would facilitate many crafts, such as metalwork). Thus fire represented a key enabling knowledge which unlocked many areas which Zeus had wished kept the sole preserve of the Olympians, thereby making an obvious parallel with the Tree of Knowledge.

Prometheus is also associated with powerful, enabling knowledge in that he knows when Zeus will die. But knowing the power that this knowledge will give Zeus, Prometheus defiantly withholds this knowledge, despite the tortures imposed on him, and his struggle is the more noble for his knowing the inevitability of his defeat. Indeed, as in a warrior's *arete*, Prometheus displays his tragic nobility, becoming ever more defiant and disregarding of the consequences of his outspokenness. He goes beyond all that is reasonable; reason might dictate that he kowtow to Zeus in an attempt to secure his release, but Prometheus, like a true tragic hero as defined above, will not compromise himself and continues to insult Zeus even as he is being cast down into Tartarus. Here Albin Lesky is talking about Sophoclean tragedy, but it is substantially relevant to *Prometheus* (a very "Sophoclean" tragedy):

Real tragedy evolves where there is a tension between the... forces to which man is exposed and his determination to struggle against them. This is never a pointless struggle; it may involve the hero in still greater suffering, and often

lead to his death. But man must fight it out; he may not give up. The tragic hero stands out against a background of those who yield or avoid a decisive choice, his absolute determination is pitted against an overwhelming power; but in him the dignity of a great human being remains intact in defeat.³⁴

This is why Prometheus' significance for Byron can be summarized as "a symbol and a sign/To Mortals of their fate and force" ("Prometheus", III.45-6) – "fate" signifying inevitable defeat and "force", the spirit to defy the limitations of mortal existence, as Byron goes on to explain in the remainder of the poem. This is confirmed in stanza II of the same poem, where Byron, addressing the Titan says, "to thee the strife was given/Between the suffering and the will", again the same opposition between the inevitable and the defiance of the inevitable. Like Lucifer in *Cain*, who defies a similarly harsh and unforgiving god, Byron's Prometheus teaches men the value of the mind's own "concenter'd recompense/Triumphant where it dares defy" (III. 57-8).

It is interesting to note that, although, following the classical story, it is Zeus who is responsible for Prometheus' torture, there is a sense, and this would be supported by other works of Byron, that this should be taken more metaphorically, as in the phrase "the ruling principle of Hate"; that here Byron is only using the classical view of Zeus in this myth as a ruthlessly vengeful and destructive god as a way of representing the way the cosmos works. This would be in line with Byron's usual practice of using the framework of classical myth to express ideas of contemporary relevance (which is what, incidently, the Greeks did with them too). For instance, the God of *Cain* is viewed as a similarly vengeful god who wished to keep mankind "in the dark" in the full, ambiguous sense of the phrase, a god who casts down Lucifer – or Man – as Zeus casts down Prometheus. The parallels continue. In *Cain*, at least we do have the figure of a god, but in, eg. *Manfred*, or the Venetian plays, there is no such figure; rather we have a more general sense of "the ruling principle of Hate" alluded to in Prometheus³⁵ – Manfred, indeed claims "all hateful things conspire/To bind me in existence" (II.iv,128-9). In another of the many Promethean parallels to be found in this play, Manfred wants to die but seems purposely kept alive to be tortured more. Of Manfred's contemplated suicide, Corbett has this to say: "Byron wishes us to see Manfred as the infinitesimal focus of a stupendous malice which can employ agencies as benign as the hunter".³⁶ A similar "benign agency" might be Bertram in *Marino Faliero*, who tries to do good but destroys the very people he would help; there does seem to be some force which manipulates everything to its own seemingly evil ends, as Corbett suggests when, talking of *Manfred*, he claims that

the realm of Arimanes is the first study of that incomprehensible power that drives our fate, whose later paradigms are the invisible political nexus of Venice and the "inexorable Heaven" of the biblical mysteries.³⁷

The imagery of disease and of the deathlessness of evil suggested by the reference to the Furies, further reinforces this sense of transcendent malice,³⁸ which does not appear "*in propria persona*", but merely operates through, in this case, the political apparatus of Venice, tainting all those who come near it with its pollution. Like Zeus in *Prometheus Unbound*, the Furies can be taken metaphorically to help us understand Byron's meaning, and become thus another instance of Byron's using a classical framework, given new relevance by its use in modern literature, to express a continuity in the truths of the universe. That we are talking of something beyond mere individuals or institutions is attested by Marino Faliero when he muses on how his old friends abandoned him when he became Doge:

What fatal poison to the springs of life,
To human ties, and all that's good and dear,
Lurks in the present institutes of Venice (III.ii,316-8)

This would seem to endorse fully Corbett's useful analysis of Byron's tragic vision, which he finds to be marked by

his acute sense of evil operating through human and superhuman agencies; of Man's destiny being determined by hostile forces, transcendent or mundane which cannot be resisted but must constantly be defied.³⁹

Corbett then adds, talking of another aspect of Byronic drama, "this is a formula for despair not tragedy: what converts it to the life affirmation of tragedy is the endurance and defiance of the victim"⁴⁰. Such a comment is also relevant to Greek tragedy, for there too, particularly in the *Prometheus*, do we get a sense of the potential greatness of the spirit, and, though Prometheus "loses", he shows himself, even in his defeat, to be so much greater than the forces that destroy him. This is a pattern repeated throughout Greek tragedy; characters tend to be destroyed by their own greatness. This is perhaps particularly true of the Sophoclean hero of whom Opstelten says,

despite the fact that he mostly strives after the achievement of some morally good purpose,[is] unconsciously led to ruin by forces other than his own will and insight.⁴¹

But rather than leave us with sadness that such admirable characters should be destroyed (this would be "a formula for despair, not tragedy"), it leaves us with "what converts it into the life affirmation of tragedy...the endurance and defiance of the victim". This is what we take away from Greek tragedy, and wherein lies the great humanistic achievement of

Greek art. It is the essence too of the "Greek pessimism" identified by Opstelten, that tragic conflict between "reason, ruling that men should abstain from action [the reason that governs Jocasta] and the vital force which drives them on".

This is one explanation for the powerful influence the Prometheus myth exerted on Byron (to the extent that his works, particularly the pre-*Don Juan* ones, are littered with allusions to the legend). The Prometheus myth also struck a chord in Byron in that it depicted a greater being brought down by a lesser one, a scenario congenial to Byron, particularly at the time of the greatest proliferation of Prometheus allusions, around 1816. The Byron/Harold figure of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is frequently depicted in Promethean terms, in his silent suffering, the wounds which never heal, etc. Napoleon, too, another Byronic alter-ego, is described thus:

When Fortune fled her spoil'd and favourite child,
He stood unbow'd beneath the ills upon him piled,
(III,xxxix)

a fantasy image of Byron's own situation at the time of the divorce scandal. Byron found that he had unwittingly sinned against the codes of British society (possibly in this can be traced the prototype of what Corbett called "that incomprehensible power that directs our fate, whose later paradigms are the invisible political nexus of Venice and the "inexorable heaven" of the biblical mysteries") and this rapid reversal of fortune paved the way to what has earlier been referred to as the "post-1816 perspective", part of which concerned the shift from the Gothic hero of the Tales, who, based substantially on Milton's Satan, was merely sinner, to characters like Manfred and Cain who, being based more on Prometheus, are both sinners and victims. Remember that Prometheus was subject to the pollution/purification laws of the Greek cosmos, whereby, encountering any disturbance in the natural order, "the universe swings to right itself with a certain grand impersonality",⁴² irrespective of individual desires and possibly of the gravity of the original offence. Prometheus' punishment from a vengeful god seems to outweigh the crime, but, like Manfred, Prometheus could shout with a measure of triumph; "I...was my own destroyer and will be/My own hereafter" (III.iv,138-140). Had he kept to the course of prudence urged by his cowed visitors, Prometheus might not have been cast by a furious Zeus into Tartarus, but Prometheus is a tragic hero, not one of the survivors and so he defies Zeus to the last. And is not the defiance the more noble as more pure, since it is from a position of weakness, indeed of inevitable defeat.

That this Promethean defiance should have been so much to the fore at this time is due to a combination of circumstances. Firstly, as noted, there was Byron's ignominious departure from England. This in turn, as I have explained earlier, led to an opening up, eg. to Nature, which, due largely to Shelley's presence, took on the aspect of a Promethean struggle to transcend the limits of Man's mix'd essence. Byron was thus

particularly susceptible at this time to the idea of "concenter'd recompense", to Lucifer's exhortation to "form an inner world where the outer fails", an impulse which also led him to try for himself Shelley's brand of mountain mysticism. And while at this time Byron adopts a Shelleyan emphasis on the Promethean/Luciferian power of the mind, ostensibly a transcendence of limits, the feelings are too strong and the "concenter'd recompense" resolves itself, as seen, into images of whirlpools and overboiling, which soon remind Byron of his limitations. *Manfred*, and the Alpine stanzas of canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are works from the height of this period, when the emphasis, initially at least, was on the spirit's power rather than on the inevitability of defeat. But as Shelley's influence waned, the pain of the divorce lessened, and Byron came down from the mountains, the true Greek spirit asserted itself to take account of the other side of the equation; the limitations, the inevitability of defeat, and even the wisdom of submitting rather than defying. J.J. McGann argues that as early as the *Tales*, Byron had "formulated the idea of the ambiguity of human heroism and argued the fact that heroism was intimately related to personal and social destructiveness".⁴³

In *Manfred*, arguably the most thoroughly Promethean of Byron's major works, although Manfred is destroyed, the impression we take away from the play is not of defeat but of the victory of Manfred's defiant will -- he preserves his integrity like Prometheus, even when, bearing in mind the powerful forces arrayed against him, it would have been more prudent to submit. In *Cain*, though we encounter a similar refusal to submit, at the expense of his integrity, to either God or the devil, body or spirit, the way of the body begins to look more attractive. In *Manfred*, this way was represented by the simplicity and piety of the chamois hunter's life; a life lived close to Nature and in accordance with its rhythms, but in *Cain*, it takes the form of Adah, the full, and appropriately female form that it will have from now on. Although Byron makes clear, as in *Manfred*, that Man must resist the temptations of both extremes, body and spirit, and follow the hard and lonely path mapped out for Cain, Adah's way, focussing on the near, the tangible, looks increasingly attractive. The passive, female principle is taking over from the active, male principle. As is suggested by the "natural" imagery of fertility and transience that links her to them, "Adah, like her sisters in the Ravenna dramas, presents a realistic, humane, practicable ethic as opposed to the extravagant, abnormal passions of the men they love".⁴⁴ If questioned, on the point, I am sure Byron would still have asserted the stance adopted in *Manfred* and *Cain* and in the Address to Ocean section of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, that Man must steer the difficult path between the poles of body and spirit, yet there is a shift from the emphasis on Shelleyan spiritual transcendence to a more bodily acceptance of limitations, and it is this difference of emphasis which largely sets Byron apart from other Romantics. Partly this seems due to changes in Byron's circumstances -- from a need for "concenter'd recompense" and an "adopted stance of defiance" with the

divorce still fresh in his mind, and from Shelley's intellectual input, Byron had sunk to a much more physical existence (dominated, significantly, by women) in Italy. Byron's residency in Venice may also have had a part to play in this since, because of the strange, ever-changing light there and the fleeting joys of *Carneval*, for Byron transience was ever a part of Venice's essence, and charm. Now at least at the start of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the transience that for Byron so characterized Venice, was a source of pain for Byron. Descriptions of its fading splendour accorded with the laments on the dissolution of once-great cultures, and spurred Byron on in his quest for some more privileged perspective that would show some consistency at a higher level, a consistency beyond the waves of time and history and beyond also his own internal swings between frenzy and inertia which affected not only his peace of mind but also his art. At St. Peter's, we find a new sense of calm in the discovery that through art (rather than through raw nature) it is possible to achieve an elevation of Man's spirit in transcendence of the heavy, bodily portion. St. Peter's does this so successfully since, like the religion it represents, it takes full account of Man's "mix'd essence" and balances the two poles of clay and spirit, shaping spiritual contemplation to our dimensions.

But after the sublime peace and sense of order afforded by St. Peter's, and the impression of having at last reached the goal of the pilgrimage, we are confronted with the death of Charlotte. This sudden, unexpected, and apparently arbitrary death ("peasants bring forth in safety", clxx, Byron dazedly observes) meant for Byron the death of many hopes, and comes as a cruel blow after the triumphal revelations at St. Peter's. The poem could have ended on that triumphant note, but Byron's aim seems to have been to show that in life nothing stands still, or, as J.J. McGann puts it, Charlotte's death is "a final sign that life has no permanent paradises to offer".⁴⁵ However much one may want things to stay still, or to turn out a certain way, the universe marches to its own tune. If, indeed, it has a tune, one might add, since Byron never really attains an insight into the workings or purpose of the cosmos. St. Peter's lifts him up to a proximity with the spiritual that raw Nature could not, but the only real insight afforded us is that Nature is everchanging and cyclical while Man is linear, and thus excluded from this pattern. Charlotte's death gives a timely reminder that there are no fixed points, that nothing is sure.

But the pain at transience and at Man's exclusion from the patterns that govern the natural world is now more distant – Charlotte's death is a big disappointment, but there is the feeling that Byron is more reconciled to such upsets, having achieved the knowledge that Man's hopes and wishes are not taken into consideration in the great scheme of things.⁴⁶ With this, however, comes the bitter-sweet realization that transience gives life its special preciousness; in lamenting the death of Charlotte, Byron conveys the idea that without death, life wouldn't be the exquisite thing it is; "death defines transience and it is

this very quality of evanescence which gives to earthly existence its spiritual dimensions",⁴⁷ dimensions denied to Lucifer and to Homer's Olympians. J.J. McGann writes, in *Fiery Dust*,

Denied death, neither the Gods nor the Natural/animal world can have "the highest knowledge" which even Lucifer is forced to admit may be contained in death...The animal and vegetable orders are caught in endless cycles of reproduction and hence are not subject to death. Only man will die and it is this extreme mystery which establishes his divinity conclusively.⁴⁸

Writing of Haidée and Sardanapalus, he finds

Their glory is precisely their humanness and their sublimity depends upon our melancholy understanding of the impermanence of the wonder that is the human person.⁴⁹

That "the wonder that is the human person" should be so fragile and so impermanent is a source of melancholy, but also a peculiar kind of magic denied to the gods or to the animal and vegetable orders. Yet besides this preciousness-from-evanescence, there is another consolation in that loss is always balanced by gain.

Byron was earlier troubled by Nature's great self-renewing energies which carried on relentlessly, disregarding of human tragedies like Waterloo, but increasingly he sees the positive side of this energy; that recurrence means that, whatever is lost, life is forever creating new opportunities, not the same as were lost, but equal in value.⁵⁰ This adds to the sense of urgency already noted. Mortal life, while finite, allows little time to mourn over what is lost lest one misses a new opportunity. "Where there's life, there's hope" could be a motto for the Byron of *Don Juan*, and this contributes significantly to the boisterous exuberance of the piece. This impression is increased by the journey metaphor of the poem, whereby Juan has a fresh start with every new adventure, though each one adds a few lines to his "*tabula rasa*". There is much laughter, but also pathos, yet as we follow the ups and downs of the plot we, like Byron, enjoy the exhilaration of the ride as we are to enjoy the "unbearable lightness of being" itself. Thomas Greene finds that

the energy of epic breathes a kind of excitement which is like the basic human excitement of living bodily in a physical world.⁵¹

This is surely part of what Byron meant when, barely able to contain his glee, he writes to Douglas Kinnaird "but is it not life, is it not the thing -- could any man have written it -- who has not lived in the world". The world of *Don Juan* is one where nothing is fixed; a supreme celebration of transience. What once brought pain is now embraced as a source of limitless possibilities.

The turning point between the melancholy and the celebration of transience is surely the Address to Ocean which ends *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. This sequence recalls the sadness of earlier sections in its reminiscences of how Byron once felt a more intimate connection with the sea and, synecdochically with the whole of the natural world. There is regret that Byron, standing on the shore, can no longer participate in this natural communion, but also comfort that he has now realized his proper place; behind him now is the anguish of trying to recapture that childhood intimacy as at canto III, and the more general pain of exclusion from Nature's plan. Byron's position on the shore is symbolic of a new, more relaxed and detached attitude. In his mixed essence, Byron has now found the source of the problem, and there is a comfort in knowing what one is instead of trying to be what one cannot. In surrendering himself to the sea, Byron seems to be trying to take on some of the sea's ever-renewing vitality. But this would suggest that Byron is trying to go back to the old relationship he had with Nature as a child, which is plainly absurd -- it is the conquering of this impulse that this section celebrates. One does see, however, in embryo, the exuberance in transience which characterizes *Don Juan* and other later works, and this is the vitality that Byron hopes to take on. This is why the Address to Ocean is such a turning point in the Byron *oeuvre*; it signals Byron's coming to terms with his own existence, leaving behind the pain to leave only "the moral of his strain", ie. a sense of the possibilities of his new realization.

The sea itself is important for many reasons, but not least because, as noted, it is "the great unchanging and timeless image of Change and Time", ie. it contains frequent minor changes within a larger stability. Much of the calm which characterizes the final Address to Ocean stanzas of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* stems from the fact that Byron seems to have given up his quest for a final, fixed meaning beyond the surface change noted in Nature, history, the whole of the universe. He comes closest to this truth at St. Peter's, where, as McGann notes, "the poet tells us not only what the pilgrimage means, but also what the method of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has entailed",⁵² so that he "eventually comes to see at St. Peter's that comprehension is achieved only in successive and relatively ignorant perceptions".⁵³ "The basilica is not a place of fulfilment, but a symbol of a mode of experience";⁵⁴ the poet "finds the truth he has discovered is not The Truth, but the way to Truth".⁵⁵ This would correspond to *Don Juan*, where each new experience turned up on the journey of life contributes in some way to Juan's character and how he will react to future adventures. One never reaches full knowledge, however, as life is always happening, new experiences are always forcing us to modify, to recreate ourselves.⁵⁶ Only -- and this is one reason for the preciousness of mortality -- at death, as Lucifer knew, can anything be fully known, as only then has the possibility of change ceased.

And so, with a measure of relief, Byron can relinquish his quest for any ultimate meaning and surrender to the preciousness of the present moment, taking individual experiences as they come, like the waves on the sea's surface.

This naturally invites comparison with the recurrent Byronic image of Newton (for his modesty one of Byron's heroes), picking up pebbles "by the shore of that great ocean, Truth". Byron was always sceptical of "system" and notoriously reluctant to try and assemble one himself. He had tried throughout *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* to attain some higher perspective that would enable him to see where everything fitted in, but his experiences there, particularly in canto III, show that

The more one tries to soar beyond the actual and the variety of experience of the world into coherent mentalistic ranges, the lower one falls and the more restricted one becomes.⁵⁷

This we see reflected in images throughout the canto of overboiling, centripetal motion and other similarly self-destructive imagery. In this, Byron is like his alter-ego Cain rejecting the arch Romantic Lucifer's injunction to "form an inner world" and to complete the spiritual/intellectual quest begun by Eve. Such knowledge is destructive, bringing only feelings of worthlessness and of the futility of life which serve to make it more difficult for Cain to live in society. As for Manfred, as for Doge Foscarei, as for Marino Faliero, the rewards of striving in the masculine world of knowledge and fame prove empty, and ultimately destructive. These characters are all destroyed for neglecting their material, female side which would have enabled them to surrender themselves to "the blessedness of the present moment".⁵⁸ They are tragic heroes because they, like Aeneas, embark on a self-destructive quest for some distant and illusory Good, closing their eyes to the immediate, tangible and productive good offered by their women. A blindness to the little things, to the exact nature of the deed he was contemplating, and to his own petty motivations, was the down-fall of Marino Faliero, blinded by his historical perspective. A considerable part of the significance of *The Iliad* for Byron (and this is, tellingly, something Vergil misses) lies in the fact that, as mentioned, Achilles must finally come down from his destructive identification with his godlike portion and acknowledge also his humanity.

Of course, as Sophocles shows us, it is the independence of normal human limitations such as common sense which is part of the greatness of tragic heroes; we are left with the sense that for all the destruction they cause, they are greater than the characters who survive. Byron might seem from this to be advocating a relinquishment of the Promethean struggle for the spiritual side. Certainly Byron was aware of the destructiveness of such struggles in his own life, eg. in his swings between frenzy and inertia, exhorting himself at the start of *CHP*. III to

...think less wildly: — I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame. (III,vii)

Bearing in mind Byron's natural tendency for such "convulsions", which disrupt both his life and his art, it was natural that Byron should be attracted by the material, instinctual life represented by his female characters; a life constructively surrendered to transience, as suggested by the organic imagery of fertility which surrounds them. But Byron is well aware that a full surrender to such a purely physical existence would be as bad as the convulsions occasioned by too spiritual thoughts, since Man is a mixture of body and spirit and so can be wholly neither one nor the other. If Byron tends more to the female, the physical as a means of correcting a natural tendency for overpowerful thoughts, this is not to say that he has abandoned the Promethean struggle, but that he has channelled it less destructively. Byron's tragic heroes generally come to grief through stretching themselves too far in the external, male world of glory and empire. This is what blinds Doge Faliero to the little things which cause his eventual downfall. Cain and Manfred come to grief through their quest for unlimited knowledge (or at least a knowledge too great for their "mix'd essence"). The tragedy that surrounds Achilles stems from his pursuit of glory. The destructiveness of such an honour-code is here seen quite clearly, since the sphere in which Achilles must win glory is war; the more — and more famous — people he kills, the greater will be his glory and thus his memory will live on in the words of the poets. But, as noted earlier, Homer proposes a way to break out of this code which clearly shows the destructiveness of this masculine chase after immortality. The way out is represented by the Trojans, and most specifically by their figurehead, Hector, who fights, not like the Greeks, solely for honour, but to save his family; he fights out of love. In the Greek world of the time, it will be recalled, there were two ways to live on after death: through martial glory, recorded in epic, or through one's offspring. Homer is advocating a shift to the more constructive and socially containable way. That this is, in fact, the way forward is indicated by Achilles' finally coming down from his godlike isolation to reaffirm human bonds as he again sleeps with Birseis and eats and weeps with Priam.

Byron similarly proposes love as another and a better way to immortality. That this is a spiritual quest no less serious than that for knowledge or for glory as indicated by the many descriptions in Byron's work of love as something spiritual; a phantom, something fiery, or airy, the same language used for other spiritual quests. So similar, indeed are love and glory that Byron can address them together at the beginning of *Don Juan* Canto VII:

O Love! O Glory! what are ye who fly
Around us ever, rarely to alight?
There's not a meteor in the Polar sky
Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.
Chill, and chain'd to cold earth, we lift on high
Our eyes in search of either lovely light. (VII,i)

But there are perils in the pursuit of both love and glory. At the siege of Ismail, Suvarrow is described as

...like a wisp along the marsh so damp
Which leads beholders on a boggy walk.
(VII,xlvi)

Glory is airy, spiritual even, yet the consequences of its pursuit may be deadly and the image of the random movement of an *ignis fatuus* admirably captures the madness and chaos of battle as well as the notorious treachery of Fame. Stating this in terms of the Athene Principle-Poseidon Principle opposition of *The Odyssey*, glory is here imaged as Athene Principle; airy, spiritual, yet the pursuit of glory does not here elevate but drag down to the mud of a bog (a mixture of the heavy elements of earth and water associated with Poseidon, god of earth forces). Also love, similarly fleeting and also described in spiritual terms, often ends disappointingly in the merely physical, eg. *D.J.IX,lxix*, where the fiery, airy sun of male sexuality is quenched in the female sea, the heavy element of water, or *IX,lxxv*, where Byron talks of

Those movements, those improvements in our bodies
Which make all bodies anxious to get out
Of their own sand-pits, to mix with a goddess,
For such all women are at first no doubt.
How beautiful that moment! and how odd is
That fever which precedes the languid rout
Of our sensations.

If love and glory are alike in this element of risk and rarely-fulfilled promise, they differ in one important respect: while fame (usually in Byron, following Homer, seen as destructive, martial fame), is attained by unpleasant acts, and even then is uncertain, having only a tenuous connection with the acts by which it is acquired, love is intrinsically worthwhile; offspring, and thereby immortality may result, but that is not why people make love. Thus love, as a self-justifying act, rather than glory or knowledge is to be the field of operations for Byron's spiritual quest.

Much of what *Don Juan* is "about" (if indeed it can be said to be about anything), is the search for an ideal love relationship. Such is glimpsed in the Haidée idyll, for here we see a perfectly pure and innocent love after the intrigues and deceptions of the Julia episode. But the corruptions of the external world creep in again at the end in the form of

Lambro, once a Greek patriot now "stung...from a slave to an enslaver" (III,liii). The Haidée idyll was a private paradise, and, as such, doomed, since it could not be sustained in contact with the larger reality outside. *Don Juan*, then, is largely the story of Juan's quest to revive the magic of that idyllic state, but in a form sustainable in the real world. There are many farcical disappointments and distractions along the way, but beneath the buffoonery, one senses that it is a problem that seriously engaged Byron's mind. In *Don Juan*, XVII, we get a tantalising suggestion that Juan has finally reached his goal in Aurora Raby.⁵⁹ Her very name suggests the magical, mysterious light of the Aurora Borealis, linked at the start of canto VII with the twin aims of life -- love and glory. This train of imagery continues as she is compared to "a young star who shone/O'er life, too sweet an image for such glass" (XV,xliii). She seems to have the innocence and vulnerability of Haidée:

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower.
(XV,xlvii)

a description which picks up the key Haidée image of a flower, a symbol of beauty-in-transience as well as the natural fertility of Haidée. But while Haidée is linked to sunset, Aurora suggests the hope of dawn.⁶⁰ Aurora's spirit is "strong in its own strength", and when Byron explicitly links her to Haidée, it is to emphasize the difference:

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

One difference between a flower and a gem being that of durability,⁶¹ the implication being that while both women hold out the possibility of an ideal love relationship, it is only Aurora's which has the strength to survive contact with the outside world; Juan meets her, after all, not alone in a tropical island paradise, but in that falsest of false paradises, English Society. McGann, indeed, terms her "Haidée's atavar in English society"⁶².

The Haidée idyll is revisited again towards the end of Byron's life in *The Island*. Here, the idyll is preserved, though again Byron is at pains to show that this is a rare piece of good fortune, caused by a unique set of circumstances. Torquil survives through Neuha's love, while all the other mutineers are killed, apparently because, as island-dwellers with a special relationship to the sea, Torquil and Neuha can have a special bond denied to the other "civilized" sailors. The others are killed when the forces of their world come to take

revenge for their mutiny, apparently an externalization of their mental struggle to throw off the limitations of their "civilization", another version of the knowledge which prevents a return to Eden. Such an attempt is a dishonest attempt, doomed to failure as are all such attempts in Byron since knowledge cannot be un-known. Torquil, it seems, has not lost his natural, instinctual self and still lives in the state of the Byronic boy at the end of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* who "was, as it were, a child of thee" [the sea]. So it is after the mysterious period of gestation – or purgation – in the undersea cavern, he can be reborn or rebaptized into this paradise of Nature and love.

Although Byron's depictions of ideal love are hedged around with qualifications, it is remarkable to find Byron's faith in a perfect love relationship still alive even at the end of his life. This is not mere sentimentalism or wish fulfilment; Byron is too honest, too much the realist for that. Hirsch says,

these recurrent visions of an earthly paradise bear witness to the power of Byron's persistent faith in the possibilities of life. It was a faith that suffered from attacks launched continually by his own invincible honesty, but it also prevailed to the end.⁶³

Byron certainly never suggests that such a love relationship is easy to find: love, like glory, "flies around us ever, rarely to alight" and is as dubious and ethereal as the Northern Lights. Nor is there any shortage of examples in Byron's work where love goes wrong; the one moment of bliss in the Haidée episode is surrounded by instances of false love. Byron is generally famous for his cynicism about love. He was under no delusions, facing this problem as he faced others, with honesty, with open eyes. Ernest J. Lovell Jr. indeed, as an explanation of Byron's self-contradictoriness, argues that Byron's respect for fact "kept him from throwing out inconvenient evidence which might be prejudicial to a unified world-view".⁶⁴ Never one to hide from evidence that did not fit with his view of life, or with his desire for what might be, he was, by the time of writing *Don Juan*, inured to the idea that the external world was chaotic, or, at best, indifferent, and certainly not made to measure for his dreams. But he kept hoping against all the odds, hoping against hope, in defiance of all the evidence, that it might be possible to pluck, out of the absurdity of life, Ideal Love. This is why Byron's quest is still a Promethean quest; despite all the odds in this crazy world, he still does not give in to despair in his quest for this spiritual dimension to life. In this he conforms to Opstelten's model of Greek pessimism: "the pessimism of the Greeks remained restricted to their reasoning faculty and neither broke their will nor darkened their emotional life".⁶⁵ Love thus was one way of channelling constructively the quest for the spiritual which gave rise in Greek tragedy to

"the tragic conflict between reason, ruling that man should abstain from action, and the vital force which drives him on". But the search for love was not the only direction in which Byron channelled this often destructive force.

In the *ignis fatuus* simile mentioned earlier, Byron showed the duality of war -- it holds out the promise of Athene Principle elevation, but is more likely to drag men down to Poseidon-style baseness and brutality. A similarly *Odyssey*-influenced thought process would seem to underlie the frequent linkage of battles with volcanoes, eg. VIII, vii, xvi, the key point here being the uneasy and destructive union of Athene (and Prometheus)-implicated fire with Poseidon-implicated earth. Again Byron is suggesting, through his imagery, that though war may have the potential for elevation, its noble aspect is linked with abasement, in the chaos and brutality of the battlefield. As noted previously, love has a similar duality, and a similar potential for elevation or abasement, and it too is connected to lava in Byron's mind: as when a kiss turns the blood to lava (II,clxxxvi). The reference to poetry as "the lava of the imagination" indicates that Byron sees poetry in the same light as love and war, as intensifiers of Man's consciousness of a painful split between his bodily and his spiritual dimensions

But while the pursuit of love and glory (martial or literary) is painful, love and glory are themselves described in Athene Principle images of lightness, airiness -- love and glory "fly round us ever, rarely to alight", while "chill and chain'd to cold earth, we lift on high/Our eyes in search of either lovely light". Similarly, *Don Juan* is "a versified Aurora Borealis,/Which flashes o'er a waste and icy clime". Love, glory and poetry in themselves have no taint of the Poseidon Principle. While, for instance, poetic creation may resemble boiling lava, where the mental or spiritual faculties battle with the physical, the resultant poem is free from such a taint; it is pure spirit, and it is also an artifact, both of which qualities would identify it with the Athene Principle. Though literary glory may be no less elusive than martial glory, the main difference between the pursuit of glory in each of these two fields is that while martial glory comes out of destruction and brutality, the pursuit of literary glory is harmless, like love, and like love it is a self-justifying act; literary glory may result, just as children may be the product of love, but this is a bonus to an act itself intrinsically worthwhile. Robert F. Gleckner highlights this aspect of poetic creation in *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, arguing that poetic creation was for Byron a way of ordering the chaos of existence so as to prevent that outer chaos from being absorbed into himself; "the act of creation rather than the created artifact itself, or its meaning is what sustains the artist".⁶⁶

Relating this argument to *The Odyssey*, one finds poetry occupying a position in Byron's work similar to that occupied by ships in *The Odyssey*. As mentioned earlier, boats are viewed in Homer as one of the highest expressions of Man's craft (a tellingly ambiguous term, embracing both "guile" and "handiwork"). The comparison of boats and

poems may be less far-fetched than it sounds, since both ships and poems are artifacts, both products of a civilized, cultured people, and both are ways of triumphing over chaos. Although previously identifying craft with the Athene principle, craft was also associated with Prometheus' gift of fire. Thus, it can be seen that boats were regarded as one of the highest expressions of Promethean knowledge and that this Promethean knowledge has turned a chaotic force of Nature to constructive advantage. The turning of a chaotic or destructive force of Nature to constructive advantage was, of course, the essence of the Forgiveness Curse and *Caritas Romana* episodes of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. These, it was claimed, had their classical forbears in the *Eumenides*, where Athene gives the Furies a new, constructive role in Athenian society.

The image of a boat must be one of the oldest images for a poem and thus we find Byron bringing *Don Juan* Canto V to a close with the words: "'tis time.../To slacken sail, and anchor with our rhyme"(V,clix), and at XI, xxxiii, he declares, "it is time that I should hoist my "Blue Peter"/And sail for a new theme". Inspired by Newton, Byron

...would skim
The ocean of eternity: the roar
Of breakers has not daunted my slight, trim,
But *still* sea-worthy skiff. (X,iv)

Significantly, the Address to Ocean section of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* ends with the image of a boat. Here, juxtaposed with the vast power of the sea, it presents, at the end of the poem, like the above reference to the "slight, but still sea-worthy skiff", a very appropriate image, since not only does it suggest a typical modesty at the fragility of the work being sent out from its harbour in the mind of the author, but it also makes clear that the poem is Byron's way to ride out, and productively use, the wild swings of Nature and his own emotions. The idea of poetry as something fragile cast out into a hostile environment also underlies a series of images comparing his poetry to a bubble, eg. "a bubble not blown up for praise,/But just to play with as an infant plays". This image captures perfectly the Byronic sense of the self-justifying, intrinsically valuable quality of poetry. Similar is the metaphor used here for publishing:

And what I write I cast upon the stream,
To swim or sink -- I have had at least my dream.
(XIV,xi)

Fame would be nice, but, like the lion says, *ars gratia artis*.

This is not to be seen as a relinquishing of the Promethean struggle, however; one reason for the use of the sea image is, as noted, as a symbol of flux, and there is always the fear that the "boat" may "sink", the poem not win glory, and be forgotten. This fear is intensified in the modern age, when literary fashions change so quickly. This is one

reason Byron so hates "the Blues" and "the Lakers", who trim their sails to whatever wind is blowing, whether in politics or in literature: they all represent an intensification of the transience already so discomfitingly present in the natural world. Byron uses fashion as an intensification of natural change in order to stress the great difficulty of achieving lasting fame. The quest for literary fame is also, then, a battle, as is suggested here in Byron's admission that he himself

was reckon'd a considerable time,
The great Napoleon of the realms of rhyme
(XI, lv)

or when he draws parallels between his literary career and Napoleon's military career:

Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
My Leipsic, and my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain.
(XI, lvi)

Another simile, apparently a straightforward pastoral image, reveals itself to be part of Byron's military imagery when its origin is traced back to Homer. This image is particularly interesting for the light it sheds on how Byron connected the quest for martial glory in *The Iliad* with his own quest for literary glory. Poets are imaged as "gleaners, gleanings/The scant but right well-threshed grains of truth". Homer twice (at p.105, and p.389) likens the battlefield to a threshing-floor, and when an arrow hits Menelaus' corslet, we are told that it rebounds and,

as the beans or chickpeas on a broad threshing-floor leap from the flat shovel,
with the whistling wind and the winnower's force behind them, the deadly
arrow bounced from the corslet of the illustrious Menelaus. (p.250)

The idea of battle as a harvest with men being cut down like corn is traditional (Byron uses this at VIII,xliii), but Homer adds an important detail to the convention when he has Odysseus say, "the sword is like a sickle that strews the field with straw for very little grain". The same sense of great effort for little gain is appropriate to the threshing-floor imagery, and hence to Byron's simile for poetic creation. It is likely that Homer's use of such a complex of ideas influenced Byron in his choice of the threshing-floor image

The Promethean quest to give a spiritual dimension to life is so difficult because of the falsity in the world: "fashion/...serves our thinking people for a passion" (XI,xxxiii). This is what makes it especially difficult both for Juan, who, in his quest for love, must find the fire that (as suggested in the famous frozen champagne simile) lies beneath the icy reserve of English women, and for Byron as the poet who must hack his way through to "truth, the great desideratum". It is worthy of note, while making this connection, that Byron's best chance for literary glory is *Don Juan*, "a versified Aurora Borealis", and Juan's best

chance for love is Aurora Raby, linked to the poem obviously by her name, and also by her heavenly, or otherworldly aspect; just as Byron's poem is "a versified Aurora Borealis/Which flashes o'er a waste and icy clime", Aurora Raby is "a young star who shone/O'er life, too sweet an image for such a glass". More striking still is the fact that she seems to take no taint from the negatively-imagined world around her:

The dashing and proud air of Adeline
Imposed not upon her: (XV,lvi)

She is in this world but not of it, and in this represents a literary as well as a romantic ideal, for *Don Juan* too must be of this world, and relevant to it, but not be tainted by its falsity. This problem is stated by Byron when he says "The difficulty lies in colouring.../With nature manners which are artificial"(XV,xxv), a more specific reiteration of the difficulty of "dignifying the commonplace". Byron revels in using imagery taken from his world, an implicit criticism of both the world of fashion and of modern poetry (which targets coincide in the figures of "the Lakers") for trying to create a cosy, artificial, exclusive world which hides from the physical, the sordid, or the merely mundane (an attempt not to dignify the commonplace, but exclude it altogether). Byron claims to sketch the world "exactly as it goes", emphasising his conviction that "the world is a curious sight/And very much unlike what people write".

It is Byron's belief that poetry should be involved with life, the mirror of "such a life as was/At once adventurous and contemplative" (IV,cvii), and this suggests a further connection with *The Odyssey*. Odysseus, too, is a man who makes poetry of his life;⁶⁷ a large portion of *The Odyssey* is an account of his adventures in his own words, and indeed Alcinous remarks at one point:

You have told us the story of your compatriots and of your own grievous
misadventures with all the artistry that a ballad singer might display

and Eumaeus tells Penelope,

To have that man by me at home with his enchanting tales was like sitting
with one's eyes fixed on some bard inspired to melt one's heart with
song.

Athene, patroness of the arts, is twice compared to a goldsmith overlaying silver with gold. When she beautifies Odysseus, first for Nausicaa and then for his wife, we are told,

Just as craftsman trained by Hephaestus and herself in the secrets of this art
takes pains to put a graceful finish to his work by overlaying silver-ware with
gold, she finished now by endowing his head and shoulders with an added
beauty.

One of the most important aspects of the simile is that it involves giving "an added beauty" to something already beautiful. This, as Carroll Moulton points out,⁶⁸ is analogous to the role of the poet who chronicles already-noble deeds, but further ennoble them with his language. Odysseus is his own poet (as the words of both Alcinous and Eumeaus suggest), not only performing noble deeds but also ennobling them further by his words. This is restated in the imagery used to describe Odysseus' stringing of his great bow:

And now, as easily as a musician who knows his lyre strings the cord on a new peg after looping the twisted sheep-gut at both ends, he strung the great bow without effort or haste and with his right hand proved the string, which gave a lovely sound in answer like a swallow's note. (p.326)

There are two important similes here. Taking the second first, Odysseus is linked to Athene by the sound of the plucked bowstring (she is at this time looking on in the guise of a swallow). In the first simile, Odysseus stringing his bow is likened to a musician stringing his lyre. Since the bow is the means by which he shows his superiority to the suitors and restores the values of civilisation, ie. the instrument of his heroism,⁶⁹ it is highly appropriate that the description of the bow-stringing should involve imagery suggestive of the Athene Principle. In addition to this, however, the bow is also a focal point where action and poetry converge. Odysseus' particular brand of heroism has always involved words as well as action; he is a kind of con-man who relies on his "nimble wits" more than on his sword to get himself out of scrapes. Whereas *The Iliad* may be viewed as a poem of brawn, *The Odyssey* is a poem of brains.

Like Odysseus (a character to whom he likens himself, as noted, in the dedication to *Don Juan*), Byron too makes poetry out of his own life, out of the world he knew, and does so in his own words: both Joseph and Rutherford note that, in the *Don Juan* style, Byron was finally able to express, if not his real personality, then at least the Byronic persona that he liked to present to the world; the Byron of the letters and journals.⁷⁰ With this persona came "Byron's natural social defence mechanism";⁷¹ the irony, the sudden quirky changes of subject, often with the purpose of exploding a serious topic. This allowed Byron to keep the brakes on his powerful emotions in his poetry as he normally did in conversation, and meant that his poetry was no longer something he had to repudiate as an embarrassing display of emotionalism. *Don Juan*, in addition, is not just a product of Byron's world, but as satire, it is also directed at that world. Rutherford proposes that satire satisfied Byron as an alternative mode of action,⁷² a way of uniting word and deed.

Byron's early poetry was a form of escapism and thus an attempt to flee from his world rather than confront it or take up a useful role in it. As a satirist, Byron found such a role. So anxious is Byron to prevent his readers from becoming absorbed in *Don Juan* in an escapist way which would permit them to dismiss the poem as unrelated to their

situation, that, as well as taking his images from his own world, including that not normally considered "poetic", he constantly explodes the poetic illusion by references to the poem as a poem, eg. in his advice to the prudish reader to "shut the book" at the point where it deals with Juan and Haidée's premarital sex, or the suggestion that he will add further detail "in an appendix/To come between mine epic and its index". Similar are references to the writing process: "this old song and new simile hold good", "my similes are gather'd in a heap". Such references do not only prevent *Don Juan* from being dismissed as escapist entertainment, but also impress upon us the poem's artificiality; that it is something put together word by word by a craftsman. This makes a further link with *The Odyssey*. It is not enough for Homer that he treats boats as the supreme mark of civilization, a triumph of the Athene Principle over the chaotic Poseidon Principle; he must also show in detail the actual shipbuilding process, eg. in the simile describing the drilling of the Cyclops' eye (quoted earlier) or the account of Odysseus' building the boat which enables him to escape from Calypso's isle:

Twenty trees in all he felled, and lopped their branches with his axe; then trimmed them in a workmanlike manner and trued them to the line. Presently Calypso brought him augers. With these he drilled through all his planks, cut them to fit across each other, and fixed this flooring together by means of dowels driven through the interlocking joints, giving the same width to his boat as a skilled shipwright would choose in designing the hull for a broad-bottomed trading vessel. He next put up the decking, which he fitted to ribs at short intervals, finishing off with long gunwales down the sides. He made a mast to go in the boat, with a yard fitted to it; and a steering-oar too, to keep her on her course. And from stem to stern he fenced her sides with plaited osier twigs and a plentiful backing of brushwood, as some protection against the heavy seas. Meanwhile the goddess Calypso had brought him cloth with which to make the sail. This he manufactured too; and then lashed the braces, halyards, and sheets in their places on board. (p.94)

Corresponding to this in Byron is his habit of letting us see his writing process.

Far from relinquishing the Promethean struggle, then, Byron has used his Promethean spark to find a workable and sustainable solution to problems of life and art that had long plagued him. Whereas his writing poetry and his strong sensibility had always been something of an embarrassment, here we see him finally slotting things into place, finding a purpose for his art. That Byron viewed poetic creation in this way is indicated by several references, eg. *CHP*.IV,clxiii:

And if it be Prometheus stole from Heaven
The fire which we endure, it was repaid
By him to whom the energy was given
Which this poetic marble hath array'd
With an eternal glory – which, if made
By human hands, is not of human thought.

Here we find the clear identification of Prometheus as patron of the arts and also fiery images of an unearthly force which express the Byronic truth that though we are a mix of body and spirit, we can produce art which, like love, is all spirit:

The beings of the mind are not of clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence: that which Fate
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied,
First exiles, then replaces what we hate;
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.
(*CHP.IV,v*)

Here, the spiritual dimension is made clear in the light, airy imagery of "a brighter ray", and also in that artistic creation imparts the only immortality that we as mortals can know. That artistic creation enables us to bear existence more easily is suggested in the mention of "a more beloved existence" and "with a fresher growth replenishing the void".

CHP.III,vi restates the idea that art is a way to give safely a spiritual dimension to life, thereby making it easier to cope with:

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' death

which furthermore shows that Harold, as a distancing technique, was another, less successful attempt to cope with the same problem of outward chaos and too strong impressions.

Byron always had this fear of too strong emotion, leading to frenzy and to frenzied writing such as in *CHP.III,lxxviii* "o'erflowing teems/Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems". One problem with canto III in this respect seems to have been that it was written on the spot, under the immediate impressions of the moment:⁷³ Byron always maintained that he wrote better when his mind had time to absorb, to mellow and to harmonize his impressions.⁷⁴ Yet *Don Juan* one would not consider a terribly "harmonized" work. For Rutherford, it is "a huge, baggy monster",⁷⁵ an apt description, since far from any harmony, it seems to contain all kinds of disparate and barely-containable material, stuffed incongruously together. It is a poem made of raw material (undigested material, one might even say), thrown all together, willy nilly, apparently as

the thoughts came to the author. And yet in *Don Juan* there seems no risk of "overboiling". This may be due in part to the development, already discussed, of Byron's philosophy; he is now more sure of what he is (or at least what he is not), leaving him free to enjoy the richness of life. Yet alongside the "bagginess" of *Don Juan*, one must consider the poem's strict formalism. This may seem a strange comment to make of *Don Juan*, but it is all too easy to forget, given the great liberty that the *Don Juan* style gives Byron (or that he takes with it), the strict stanza form used. The ottava rima form, designed, as is obvious by the sustained sequences of rhymes, for Italian, produces in English a jingle with an intrinsic comic bias, a bias fully exploited by Byron as he stretches words to make the rhyme. Through this method, Byron ensures that the sound of the stanza is intrusive; we can never wholly surrender ourselves to the "story", as, alongside the comic interpolations from the narrator, in the poem, we also have comic interruptions from "without" in the form of some absurdly far-fetched rhymes. Byron refuses to let his stanza form fade into the background as we read on; he repeatedly foregrounds it. This process constantly maintains our awareness of the artifice of the poem. The increasingly long and intrusive digressions also have this effect; we are never allowed to forget that what we are reading is not reality but an artifact, the product of a particularly brilliant craftsman who can't resist peeking out from time to time to remind us of his achievement.

But what we are presented with in the *Don Juan* style is not mere Byronic bravado (though, of course, there is plenty of this); it has a more serious purpose. It implies that, in a chaotic world, the only order there can be is one imposed from without. *Don Juan* imposes order on its disparate contents at the same time as it protects its creator from the outer chaos. "The remedy for a world in which one can connect nothing with nothing is to impose an imaginatively created order".⁷⁶ That this is an artificial state of affairs there is never any doubt, indeed the poem flaunts its artificiality. Perhaps this is due to Byronic honesty; part of *Don Juan's* *raison d'etre* seems to be to show that life is far too disorganized for it to be worth looking for any (probably non-existent) larger patterns. Or it may be simply due to Byronic bravado, Byron's showing off his ability to make a poem out of anything. In this case the poem's artificiality would be like the boats of the ancient Greeks, a triumph of the mind of Man over the chaotic forces of Nature, and a tribute to Prometheus who passed on that skill.

An appreciation of such artificiality is suggested by Byron's love of Venice and her masques. In *Beppo*, Byron tells us that he intends to go to the Ridotto:

Just to divert my thoughts a little space,
Because I'm rather hippish, and may borrow
Some spirits, guessing at what kind of face

May lurk beneath each mask; and as my sorrow
Slackens its pace sometimes, I'll make, or find,
Something shall leave it half an hour behind.
(lxiv)

This may seem a false and futile pastime -- in all probability he knows what face is beneath each mask⁷⁷-- but he is content to play along with the game, in the full knowledge that it is only a game, if he may escape for half an hour from his sadness. In a similar spirit, Byron seems to have played along, albeit rather sheepishly, with the rules of "serventismo", bemused at the way Italians could manufacture such a dainty set of rules around such unruly passions. The artificiality of Italian society was one of Italy's attractions for Byron, and particularly that most elaborately artificial of cities, Venice, though he could also see the negative side of this and mutter along with his character, Marina, "accurs'd be the city where the laws would stifle Nature's".

Eventually, this seems to have been pretty much what happened; he got tired of playing games, tired of his too material life of ease and detachment. He felt embarrassed at what he saw as a rather effeminate and too-settled existence as Teresa's lover, and his poetry seemed no longer to satisfy his need for the exercise of his Promethean spark. Having successfully conquered the strong emotions in his poetry, and diligently avoided too strong stimuli in real life, he found he needed to feel more strongly again -- to do something.

However much Byron worked at his poetry, and craved the public's praise, he always voiced contempt for mere "scribbling", and reckoned it no profession for a gentleman, or indeed any kind of man, writing to his publisher, "if one's years can't be better employed than in sweating poesy -- a man had better be a ditcher". So, finally rejecting all arguments of reason which would dictate that he stay in his comfortable, ordered life, where, it seemed, he had finally calmed the strong passions that so troubled his youth, he surrendered once again to those passions, the folly of which he had condemned (or celebrated) in so much of his poetry, and went off to his own *aristeia* in Greece.

It was a poetic ending in all senses; his final grand gesture, truly an *aristeia* in that it fixed his memory in the minds of future generations, was, like his poetry, an attempt to impose meaning on a world without meaning. It was a meaning as artificial as that imposed in his poetry, as all the indications were that Byron knew the futility of his action: unlike many of his contemporaries, Byron harboured few illusions about the people he was going to help. Like his hero, Prometheus, he stood "a symbol and a sign/To mortals of their Fate and Force", Fate in that the outcome was inevitable and recognized as such, Force in that he is driven by that godlike portion which refuses any and all limitations.

Like Prometheus, like Manfred, like Faliero, Byron defied Fate to the last, when resistance could only hasten the inevitable destruction. Byron's ignominious and unromantic death, by fever, rather than on the battlefield, is a fittingly futile end to this knowingly futile venture.

However, as mentioned, it was a kind of *aristeia*; I have lost count of the number of times when, upon telling people of the subject of my research, the reply has come back: "Byron? Didn't he die in Greece?" Byron, who believed poetry should be the mirror of "such a life as was/At once adventurous and contemplative" (*D.J.IV,cvii*), would have been happy with that.

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58. McGann, *Fiery Dust*, p.137.
59. M.K. Joseph, p.247.
60. Ibid.
61. "
62. McGann, *Fiery Dust*, p.200.
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65. Opstelten, p.212.
66. Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, p.252.
67. Greene, p.62.

68. Carroll Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems*, p.146.
69. *Ibid.*, p.147.
70. Joseph, p.190; Rutherford, *op. cit.*, p.112.
71. Rutherford, *op. cit.*, p.165.
72. *Ibid.*, p.7.
73. Joseph, pp.70-1.
74. Lovell (Jnr.), pp.99-100.
75. Rutherford, *op. cit.*, p.140,
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