"The Torrent With the Many Hues of Heaven":

The Replacement of Traditional Morality in Works of Lord Byron

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The first years of the nineteenth century were, to put it mildly, a turbulent time. In the Americas, the old colonial empires were crumbling into new nations; in Europe, the most powerful countries in the world reeled under the rapid dominion and equally rapid fall of Napoleon Bonaparte; and in England, literary Romanticism began to flower with the works of George Gordon Byron, Lord Byron. Strangely enough, it was the last that gained, in the words of John Wilson, a contemporary reviewer, the "sudden and entire possession," (Wilson, quoted in Beatty, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Cantos I and II in 1812," paragraph 1) of English and European consciousness. Critic Bernard Beatty believes that this occurred because "Byron presents the same torrential change that his readers had been forced to recognise [sic], a world out of control…They were excited and appalled by visions of apocalyptic destruction in contemporary history, art, religious movements and poems…but Byron, like them, also embodied a yearning for return to the old vivifying centres [sic] of stability." (Beatty, "1812," paragraph 25).

While Beatty identifies an important, even fundamental, tension in Byron's political views, which often seem to embrace relics of the past while simultaneously taking an unprecedented moral stance, he resolves it incorrectly. Byron is no herald of the apocalypse, but quite the opposite. He explores the consequences of an eternal world in his plays *Marino Faliero, The Two Foscari, Manfred,* and *Cain,* as well as his epic poems *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In these works of Lord Byron, the forms of classical tragedy are consistently used, subverted, and examined. This expanded tragic framework rewards balance between the divine and the earthly, as the mental state of a triumphant Byronic hero mirrors the cosmological state of the world; ultimately, this asserts a revolutionary moral code rooted in the individual rather than apocalyptic metaphysics.

In general, Byronic literature is highly self-conscious of its place in the Western literary canon, and characterized by allusions, parodies, and even direct refutations of historical or contemporary works. This intense self-awareness invites the application of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the definitive work on literature for thousands of years, to classify the frameworks Byron's works consciously utilize. Aristotle identifies Comedy, Tragedy, and Epic as the three genres of poetry. Regardless of his sarcasm and use of satire, Byron is not, according to the classical definition, a comic poet, because "Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life," (Aristotle, *Poetics,* Part II). All Byronic heroes are larger-than-life figures and not at all farcical, placing Byron – at least to himself and his contemporaries – firmly in the double realm of Epic and Tragedy; therefore, it is these structures of which his works have a profound awareness. As Aristotle contends that "all the elements of an Epic poem are found in Tragedy, but the elements of a Tragedy are not all found in the Epic" (Part V) because Epic is an "extension" (Part XVII) of the Tragic form with more liberties, it is natural that Byron worked with both forms together. His awareness of the forms is again illustrated by his adherence to Aristotle's idea that Tragedy will "confine itself to a single revolution of the sun" (Part V) in its temporal frame, showing a snapshot of the critical dramatic period. Shakespeare, two hundred years earlier, did not use this convention: Hamlet makes a sea voyage halfway to England and back, Othello travels from Venice to Cyprus and waits several days before his tragedy culminates, and Richard III is crowned and deposed over a historical span of three years within one play. Byron's choice to observe the Aristotelian temporal unity was clearly not required of an English playwright of his time; his rigid adherence in the case of *Manfred, Cain, Marino Faliero,* and *The Two Foscari* therefore draws attention to his other uses of the classical tragic form.

Byronic heroes also conform to the Aristotelian model, in that they are the sort of "characters of a higher type," (*Poetics,* Part V) Aristotle recommends for Tragedy and Epic. Whether by a "lineage long" (Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, I.3.20), "more than Roman fortitude" (Byron, *The Two Foscari*, I.i), or comparisons with Caesar and Catiline (Byron, *Marino Faliero*, I.ii), they acquire an air of antiquity and power. The classical allusions draw attention again to the classical poetic models, as well as invoking the ancient strength of the Roman Empire in order to ennoble the hero. These empowered characters, however, seem to invite tragedy as well; they "live, but live to die," (Byron, *Cain,* I.i.109-110) are "sent to the devil," (Byron, *Don Juan*, I.1.8) and even when alive "walk the rocks / and forests like a wolf, [and] turn aside / from men and their delights," (Byron, *Manfred,* III.iii.23-25). They suffer or are poised to suffer, and often are acutely aware of the fact. The overall effect of this setup is a conventional tragedy involving the destruction of a noble hero.

This tragedy is, at least on the surface, often played straight with no obvious modifications to its traditional structure. Harold "fades away into Destruction's mass" (*CHP,* IV.164.1476) at the end of his poem, dragged down by his ennui and lack of purpose. Cain's Biblical tragedy plays out its inevitable end, and he is convicted by his "slain brother's blood [crying] out / even from the ground, unto the Lord!" (*Cain*, III.i.469-471). They are punished, not only for their failings and sins, but by the logical extension of them. In this form of adherence to tragic frameworks, there is a resolution to one of the most immediate paradoxes in Byron's works. As Alan Rawes puts it, "“…if the Byronic aspiration to freedom is real, and Byron does champion (or at least celebrate) the 'strong and bold and free', [sic] why do so few of his characters achieve any kind of freedom…?" (Rawes, paragraph 3). Rawes explains this tension by tracing what he calls a Calvinistic view of sin and punishment where transgression

leads inevitably to predestined damnation; while this is not inaccurate, perhaps a more general view would be to see that the celebrated "strong and bold and free" heroes are also tragic figures, though no less admirable because of that. The ideals of a better world are illustrated in the men the flawed contemporary world pulls down, the men who achieve no freedom precisely because they actively seek it. This allows the "Byronic aspiration to freedom" in the future to coexist with, and even enhance "the epitome of [his] *Weltschmerz*," (Rawes, paragraph 3) or world-weariness, for the present.

In the works of Byron, however, subtle subversions of the classical tragic themes are present, demonstrating an expansion of the ostensibly obeyed framework. While Manfred is condemned to be his own "proper Hell" (*Manfred,* I.i.251) on account of his guilt and desire for forgetfulness, his pride and arrogance are the failings he demonstrates within the work itself. His guilt is merely an informed aspect of his character – we do not see the sin he punishes himself for. In a classical tragic plot, his pride and arrogance would destroy him, yet those same qualities are what allows him to subjugate the spirit world and speak with his dead lover Astarte. Without his failings, he could not have reached the point in Act III where he can "deem / the golden secret, the sought 'Kalon,' found, and seated in [his] soul," (III.i.13-14) and be at peace before his last trials. Don Juan, a reinvention of a stock character, is also saved by his traditional failings when his love affair with Catherine the Great leads to his life being saved from a Russian illness (*Don Juan*, X.44.345-351). These aversions of seemingly inevitable tragedy indicate the presence of a tension between the traditional morality which condemns these traits and a Byronic morality which applauds them.

In addition to avoided tragedies, the actualized ones are often presented in a way that calls into question the justice or rightness of the tragic event. The biblical Mark of Cain "burns"

Cain, but is “nought to that which is within” his guilty spirit (*Cain,* III.i.500-501). For the same reason, Adam refrains from censuring his fratricidal son, saying “his spirit be his curse,” (III.i.451). Cain considers the punishment of God to be outside of the punishment of his own spirit, as does Adam. The justice comes from within; the Angel of the Lord only adds insult to injury and is not the actual minister of justice. No outside force has an impact within the Byronic tragic form; Manfred dismisses a Mephistophelian demon, saying his “past power / was purchased by no compact” (*Manfred,* III.iv.113-114) in which he would have forfeited his soul. While Manfred rejects Christianity in the form of the Abbot and Chamois Hunter, he found his sacrilegious power within himself and is therefore saved from externalized Hell – though not, as mentioned above, from his own internal hell of guilt. No external judgment is valid; when the senators tell Doge Faliero he will “within an hour be in [God’s] presence,” the Doge replies “I am already,” (*Faliero*, V.i) rejecting their authority over his internal spiritual life. By adding external forces who try and fail to mete out a tragic punishment that can only truly come from within, Byron rejects the notion of an external judge, whether God or society.

This rejection of an external judge removes one of the most fundamental keystones of traditional morality. Tragedy is an inherently moral system, revolving around sin and punishment, yet Byron’s tragic framework, in its expanded form, replaces its parent morality with new actions that receive moral weight. In this new morality, the tragic flaw Byronic heroes suffer for is imbalance; if they stray too far to one extreme or another, they are destroyed.

When a tragedy is not averted and plays itself out, it is the result of an imbalance between celestial and earthly elements within the hero. If Byronic heroes are only concerned with the spiritual, they are often overwhelmed by it, such as when Childe Harold “fades away into Destruction’s mass” (*CHP,* IV.164.1476) where “the midland ocean breaks on him,”

(IV.175.1571). To Byron, the ocean is a "glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form / glasses itself in tempests" (IV.183.1639-1640) and closely associated with the divine. Cain, confronted with an "Abyss of Space," says "I tread on air, and sink not; yet I fear / to sink" (*Cain*, II.i.1-2). In either of the two abysses, the mortal is helpless in the face of the divine. Harold is completely destroyed, and Cain "sink[s] not" only through the power of Lucifer, who is preparing his mind for fratricide. Neither hero is ready to confront the power and immensity of the abyss of divinity, and therefore in it they lose what Bernard Beatty calls "grounding identity" to contrast with the fact that "a-byssos means 'without ground' or 'bottomless'" (Beatty, "'The Glory and the Nothing of a Name,'" paragraph 4). Seeking the power of the abyss without "grounding" – without *balance* – leads inevitably to a tragic end.

Conversely, if a Byronic hero seeks power without balance by earthly means, they suffer because of their excessive earthly ambitions. Doge Faliero admits the priests "have hated" him "since that rash hour" when he struck a bishop who was slowing down his army (*Faliero*, I.ii). He regrets his decision, calling it "rash," but the priority is clear; material conquest is more important than reverence for the spiritual or sympathy for a priest probably unaccustomed to strenuous marching. His downfall is the result of the jealousy of all the enemies he has accumulated in similar ways, which unites them against him; since his victories were material, he can be defeated by equally material opposition. Loredano, who hates another Doge, Francesco Foscari, complains of his family's "accelerated graves" and declares they "marshal [him] to vengeance" (*Foscari*, IV.i). Earthly ambition, characterized by rush imagery, causes intense earthly opposition in Beatty's "world out of control," ("1812," paragraph 25). Ambition throws the world even more out of control in its rush, and in reaction to this Faliero and Foscari are

ultimately both deposed by their nobles. A Byronic hero with more spiritual aims could not have their entire life thus destroyed by material vengeance.

When tragedy is partially or completely averted, it is because the heroes avoid the double trap of the spiritual abyss and grounded jealousy by achieving some kind of balance. Sometimes, the balance is internal and comes from self-knowledge. Manfred, when asked to grovel to Arimanes, the Zoroastrian primordial darkness, responds "bid *him* bow down to that which is above him / the overruling Infinite – the Maker / who made him not for worship – let him kneel / and we will kneel together" (*Manfred,* II.iv.46-49) Manfred equates himself with Arimanes as a being defying God, and because of his power over spirits, divine powers cannot force him into submission like a less prepared hero. One of the ways he defies God is through what is heavily implied to be incest with his sister Astarte. Though Heather Stansbury emphasizes the guilt Manfred feels over "the central crime of the play and the cause of profound remorse" for him (Stansbury, paragraph 20), Manfred is ultimately absolved by Astarte, allowing him to be happy in Act III despite his defiance with the infinite. The similarity to Adah telling her brother and husband Cain she will love him "though thy God left thee" (*Cain,* III.i.94-95) is striking; in Byron, incestuous love is a doubled form of love combining family and romance, even perhaps the Platonic ideal love of "male and female halves of a single entity seeking to be reunited." (Stansbury, paragraph 26). This heightened form of love serves as a grounding that can counteract the divine abyss and allow the hero to embrace spiritual concerns and defy gods freely.

Sometimes, however, the balance is less internally dramatic and more found in the external actions. Juan's two women in the Turkish court, the fiery Gulbeyaz and serene Dudu, fail to attract him wholly because they are each only a part of the characteristics of his true love,

Haidee. She has “auburn” hair, “but her eyes / [are] black as death,” (*Don Juan,* II.117.929-930) combining the later antithesis Gulbeyaz and Dudu present of fire and dark serenity. Juan’s time with her has a “distinct dreamlike quality which separates it from the rest of the poem, a quality which makes the passing of time seem nebulous,” (Gayle, paragraph 9) because he is with a personification of balance and thus at peace with the world. It does not avert tragedy in the short term, but, before she dies, Haidee and her elemental balance save Juan’s life twice. Manfred, who defies Arimanes, does not need a “mortal / to be [his] mediator” (*Manfred,* III.i.53-54) with heaven, but also finds it “not so difficult to die” (III.iv.151). Nonetheless, he dies happy because of his balance between his spiritual and earthly self; he has overcome the “conflict between spirit and clay” and the “expression of Manfred’s Manichean consciousness [which is] essentially tragic.” (Hubbell, paragraph 6.) In short, tragedy is averted when the Manichean idea of war between “spirit and clay” is refuted, and the Byronic hero unifies and embraces the full power of their “mix’d essence,” (*Manfred,* I.ii.42).

It is all very well to examine the success of Byronic heroes in light of a balance-oriented morality, but this alone does not prove the total absence of traditional morality. Byronic heroes, after all, are generally in some violation of traditional morality, from Cain’s fratricide to Faliero’s revolution to Juan’s womanizing. Yet their elevated state as protagonists and powerful men does not exempt them from traditional morality; instead, it allows them to be exemplars of Byronic morality. By applying the same values to nature’s “mix’d essence” as to that of a Byronic hero, Byron generalizes the values of his heroes -- centered around balance -- to the entire world, making them paragons instead of pariahs.

It is perhaps fitting that Byron frames this climax of his subversion of Aristotelian tragedy in terms of Aristotelian elements, and especially water. Waterfalls, which inspire some

of Byron's most beautiful ecphrases, are where "the flashing mass foams shaking the abyss / the hell of waters!…while the sweat / of their great agony…returns in an unceasing shower, which round, / with its unemptied cloud of gentle rain / is an eternal April to the ground," (*CHP*, IV.69-70.616-625). The waterfall is an "abyss," but at once combines a "great agony" with "eternal April" to the ground around it. The antitheses are not only coexistent, but codependent, as the rainfall could not happen without the waterfall proper. In waterfalls, heaven and hell are found simultaneously, as in Manfred's observations on an alpine cataract:

It is not noon – the sunbow's rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular
And fling its lines of foaming light along
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death
As told in the Apocalypse… (*Manfred,* II.ii.1-8)

In this speech, light imagery unifies "the hell of waters" of *Childe Harold* with the "many hues of heaven" found in the "sunbow's rays." Despite the celestial light above, the "lines of foaming light" in the cataract proper are "like the pale courser's tail…to be bestrode by Death." Heaven at the top of the waterfall plunges down to Apocalypse at the bottom, but they are in balance and codependent. Above all this, the day still goes on, with no sign of the end, giving an irony to the invocation of the Apocalypse in the perpetual waterfall.

Also associated with water is the city of Venice, which figures in many of Byron's writings. Venice, in a way, is also a tragic icon, as Byron declares its "thirteen hundred years of

freedom done" (*CHP,* IV.13.113) when it passes under the Austrian Empire. Venice is a place of seeming contradictions; Byron sets many of his works on the Bridge of Sighs, with "a palace and a prison on each hand," (IV.1.2). Jacopo Foscari, confined in the prison, "could endure [his] dungeon, for 'twas Venice" and speaks of "something / in [his] native air that buoy'd [his] spirits up / like a ship on the ocean toss'd by storms," (*Foscari*, III.i). There is a profound mysticism to Venice: "from out the wave her structures rise / as from the stroke of the enchanter's wand," (*CHP,* IV.1.3-4) and this helps these phantasmagoric structures embody at once Jacopo's prison and his father's palace, the ancient freedom and the Austrian dominion, the storm and the air that "buoy'd" Jacopo up. Because it is so closely linked to the ocean, God's "glorious mirror," (IV.183.1639) Venice in a way is a mirror to the world at large; tormented, contradictory, and ultimately eternal, even under the worst excesses of humanity.

Metaphysical conflicts of Aristotelian elements work their way into the personal choices of Byronic heroes between balance and excess. Juan's experiences at the Turkish court in Cantos V and VI are an excellent example. Essentially, he becomes involved with two women: the Sultana Gulbeyaz and the odalisque Dudu. Gulbeyaz is "half voluptuousness and half command" (*Don Juan*, V.108.864), "beauty scarce of earth" (V.112.893), "perpetual motion" (V.112.896), and "her eyes flash'd always fire," (V.134.1066). Dudu is a "kind of sleepy Venus" (VI.42.329), "like a May-day breaking" (VI.43.338), "quiet, inoffensive, quiet, shy" (VI.49.389), and "a soft Landscape of mild Earth," (VI.53.417). Gulbeyaz has associations with unearthliness, motion, and fire, whereas Dudu is subdued, "sleepy," and associated with earth. Juan, however, is still in mourning for his previous lover, Haidee. He rejects Gulbeyaz, and though he dallies with Dudu the extent of their involvement is ambiguous. Furthermore, he proceeds to the Siege of Ismail, which is characterized throughout by fire, motion, and a quest for glory, showing he has not

renounced what Gulbeyaz represents completely, but instead strikes a balance between two extremes. This balance allows him to escape his Istanbul adventure with his life.

This unity of nature and hero in balance is the highest ideal in Byronic morality, and through use of the tragic structure shows its difference from traditional morality. The heart of the difference, however, is the reason why balance is glorious. In short, Byron's conception of the world has no end, making his morality fundamentally anti-eschatonic. Because of this, even his use of Christian motifs is changed and reflects the perpetuity of nature rather than the inevitability of the Book of Revelation.

In addition to tragic structures, Byron explores Christian themes and imagery in a similar way, paying lip service to the past while altering its meaning and expanding the existing framework. Especially in *Cain*, Byron made "as little alteration" of "actual *Scripture*" as he could, but framed his scriptural quotations in such a way that he confessed himself "prepared to be accused of Manicheism," (*Cain*, Preface) a religious compound of Zoroastrianism and Christianity that makes the Devil an anti-God rather than a rebellious angel. Byron's religious views are more complex than the simple good-evil duality of traditional Manicheism, however. Lucifer, in *Cain*, warns against "tyrannous threats to force you into faith / 'gainst all external sense and inward feeling" (II.ii.461-462) and extolls the value of human reason, the gift of the Tree of Knowledge. While the words of the Father of Lies should perhaps not be taken at face value and Lucifer certainly has ulterior motives, the use of the word "tyrannous" is significant. The longing for and defense of freedom is a theme throughout Byron's work, yet in *Cain* God has uncomfortable associations with tyranny, putting a very different spin on an ostensibly Christian story. In fact, Byron subverts and expands Christian motifs to complement and complete his similar expansion of Aristotelian tragedy.

The questioning of Christian ideas which is so prominent in *Cain* raises another question, that of identity. Cain rebels against his family when he refuses to join the prayer opening the play, and as Bernard Beatty points out, “familial identity is a grounding identity” (Beatty, “Name,” paragraph 4) of a kind that keeps the hero from the abyss of namelessness and lack of identity. This proto-Existential crisis was historically resolved “by name, mother’s and father’s names, place of birth, and characteristic attribute or occupation” (paragraph 10) as opposed to a private identity, but a Byronic hero finds such external labelling insufficient. It is only after his resolution to “lean no more on super-human aid” (*Manfred,* I.ii.1-4) that Manfred can express his own “super-human” power and defy Arimanes, the Zoroastrian primordial darkness. On the other hand, Berintende, head of Doge Faliero’s judges, boasts that “in the very punishment [the Giunta] acknowledge” (*Faliero*, V.i) that the man they are judging is, somehow, still their sovereign. Defining himself in the traditional way, Berintende comes off as either a hypocrite or a man who does not understand the true import of his actions. Byronic heroes seek individual identity not from larger powers but from within themselves; this sets them apart from common people who do not dare to stand on their own.

This independent mindset is expressed through a Byronic hero’s role in the many Christian themes in Byron’s works. Manfred despises his own humanity in the beginning of the play, referring to himself and all mankind as “mix’d essence,” as well as “half dust, half deity, alike unfit / to sink or soar,” (*Manfred,* I.ii.40-41). Yet “Manfred, with his mix’d essence, commands spirits; spirits are helpless and powerless on their own…” (Hubbell, paragraph 17); in fact, Manfred derives his power from his dual human and spiritual nature in a way reminiscent of the dual nature of Christ. The twisted Communion in *Don Juan,* Canto II, reflects another Christian-inspired event where the starving sailors eat Pedrillo’s body and drink his blood; but

"they, who were most ravenous in the act, / went raging mad…" (*Don Juan,* II.79.627.628) and only Juan, who did not eat him, survives. Juan, even in the extreme of life and death, cannot define himself by another man's sacrifice, Pedrillo's or Christ's. Byronic heroes find themselves in the role of the "bleeding pelican" (*Faliero,* II.i) who (according to early Christian thought) suffers to feed her young, far more comfortably than as one of those who benefit by the sacrifice and therefore tie themselves to the martyr in a form of external identity. The use of Christ imagery to define Byronic heroes does not make them Christian figures; in fact, it emphasizes that Byron's expansion of the Christian moral framework allows some men at least to find their own salvation within themselves.

Furthermore, the Byronic concept of balance is fundamentally opposed to the Christian concept of the apocalypse. Byron's nature imagery is inextricably tied to the theme of eternity. In his barely disguised persona as the narrator of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Byron reflects that "there are wanderers o'er Eternity / whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be" (*CHP,* III.70.669-670). The "bright [morning] star / is leader of the host of Heaven," (*Cain,* I.i.501-502) according to Lucifer; this (and the use of "Lucifer" as opposed to "Satan" or another name) is indicative of a notable lack of resolution. Lucifer is treated as if he never fell from grace, precipitating original sin and the need for the end of the world; he is still "leader of the host of Heaven" and essentially unchangeable. There simply is no end or destination to Nature and Eternity, and this is the heart of the Byronic rejection of an apocalypse or ending.

In this way, Byron rejects not just the doctrine of the apocalypse, but any moral system involving an end of days. That traditional morality does not govern the Byron canon is immediately apparent. Byron's narrator mocks Juan as "exceedingly ill-bred" (*Don Juan,* V.124.988) for his hesitation to immediately sleep with Sultana Gulbeyaz because of his memory

of Haidee. His continence is immediately understandable and sympathetic, but not expected from a traditional Don Juan character. The narrator's critical opinion on this sudden attack of virtue satirizes the bizarre sexual mores of (especially Southern) Europe at the time, where "overt sexuality" (Hurst, paragraph 5) and ritualized adultery coexisted with devout religious belief that praised monogamy and celibacy. During the Siege of Ismail episode, Juan is moved by the fate of a Muslim orphan; "her friends, like the sad family of Hector, / had perished in the field or by the wall" (VIII.141.1123-1124) of the doomed fortress. By the comparison to Troy and Hector, Byron celebrates the Turkish defenders of Ismail and mourns the fallen, rather than highlighting the Christian victors and the glory they have been seeking to win. Juan's eventual adoption of the girl underscores a conscious choice to focus on the cruelties of war rather than the heroics, on the individual rather than the nebulous higher cause.

Byron's religious references also do not stem from a single source, but are highly eclectic. The supernatural play *Manfred* provides perhaps the best example. Manfred conjures spirits (*Manfred,* I.i), speaks to a witch, (II.ii), meets Nemesis, the Greek goddess of revenge and Arimanes, the Zoroastrian Principle of Darkness (II.iv), speaks to the shade of his lover Astarte (II.iv) – Astarte is the Greek name for the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar – rejects the Abbot's Catholicism (III.i and III.iv), announces the Protestant idea that he is his own mediator with heaven (III.i.54-55), references the ancient Roman custom of suicide (III.i.88-98), and repels a demon coming to take his soul (III.iv) in a clear allusion to the Faust legend. In *Cain,* Lucifer explains the divine as "double Mysteries" (*Cain,* II.ii.404), as part of a Zoroastrian and Manichean idea that God is not his superior. Yet, according to Alan Rawes, Byron tempers his Eastern mysticism with a "Calvinistic lens: his famous gloom and world-weariness come from a reading of human attempts to exercise or win freedom that sees these as precisely the way in

which damned individuals enact their own predestined damnation," (Rawes, paragraph 12). The somber irony of Calvinism, the duality of Manichaeism, and wild energy of paganism are all part of the Byronic ethos, and it is a mistake to try to separate any one of them. Byron does not hesitate to collage various sects and beliefs, because he understands their emotional appeal and their power without respecting their sanctity. He uses a belief as a "lens" to teach his own lessons, which are not in accordance with any preexisting morality even when they are presented with the associated imagery.

By rejecting the apocalyptic doctrines and strictures of traditional morality, Byron becomes able to construct a parallel moral structure that allows the ordered forms and conventions of the past to retain their full power, while simultaneously redirecting that power to his vision of the future. In all the "apocalyptic destruction" (Beatty, "1812," paragraph 25) of his contemporary world, Byron sees the perpetual struggle that leads to his gloom and *Weltschmerz*, but also a chance to strive for freedom. This is reflected in the balanced antitheses found in his heroes, and also in Byron's political views: the present is bleak, but the distant past can serve as an example for the future. To resolve his personal mixture of despair and hope for the world, Byron rewrites the traditional strictures that make personal antithesis untenable. To his contemporary readers, as John Wilson noted at the time, it was a gripping revelation that seized a "sudden and entire possession" of the English national consciousness; yet though it is important to consider Byron's works as part of his life, persona, and epoch, the very qualities that made him a contemporary celebrity allow his works to transcend the date of their conception. Fears of the apocalypse *du jour* come and go with the latest threat, real or imagined, hopelessly dating themselves in a few months, years, or decades. Byron's appeal to balance and the individual as the root of morality exists outside the shifting moral frameworks based on social norms and

fears; constructed outside of society by an outcast poet, it is simple, humanistic, and, in a way, eternal.

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