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Byron and "scribbling women": Lady Caroline Lamb, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot

Denise Tischler Millstein

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, dmills3@lsu.edu

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BYRON AND “SCRIBBLING WOMEN”:
LADY CAROLINE LAMB, THE BRONTË SISTERS,
AND GEORGE ELIOT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Denise Tischler Millstein

B.S., The University of Texas at Austin, 1996

B.A., The University of Texas at Austin, 2000

M.A., San Jose State University, 2002

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ABSTRACT

Looking first at Byron's canon, I trace the evolution of the Byronic heroes offered in his poetry, arguing that these heroes are the culmination of images of the poet as he interacted with and was interpreted by his female reading audience. Working with his readers, Byron fundamentally altered his poetic heroes to suit changing public opinions about himself. In later chapters, I show how this image continued to evolve as the Byronic hero was co-opted, adopted, and adapted in the novels of female authors across the nineteenth century, especially Lady Caroline Lamb in *Glenarvon*, Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights*, Anne Brontë in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, and George Eliot in *Daniel Deronda*. How female novelists interpreted the Byronic hero as the century wore on was dependent on which images of the poet they had access to including: the real man Byron, the heroes of his poetry, his myth, or some amalgam of the three. All five female novelists demonstrate a measured and typical, though different generational response, offering various levels of imitation, revision, and rejection in their novels. Ultimately, this project shows the enduring legacy and importance of Byron, his myth, and the Byronic hero to "scribbling women" throughout the long nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

At its simplest, this is a study of Byron's influence and reception across the whole nineteenth century. Although it would make sense to investigate Byron's influence on successive generations of male poets, this study instead addresses five female novelists: Lady Caroline Lamb, the three Brontë sisters, and George Eliot. My shift in focus from what's expected was not arbitrarily fixed and might need some justification, first generically. Over the course of the century, the most popular works of literature shifted genres. According to Susan Rubinow Gorsky, "fictions became increasingly popular in both England and America, with novels serialized in mass-circulation periodicals, sold by subscription services, and passed from one reader to another within families and groups of friends" (ix). In Byron's time, the most popular form was male-dominated, intensely personal, narrative poetry, but as the century wore on, this genre was replaced by and expanded into the sentimental novel, a genre becoming dominated by women in an attempt to reach a growing and profitable female readership.

By the Victorian period, there was a huge boom in fictions produced by women, although poetry and drama remained "primarily male preserves, the novel has a number of female practitioners" who "targeted women readers" (Wolf 1). Startlingly, prior to 1800 in America, only four novels written by women were even published; yet, by 1872, 75 percent of all books published that year were written by female authors (Tebbel 179). This was partly due to increased demand. Author Fanny Fern sold some 70,000 total copies of *Fern Leaves* and more than 50,000 copies of *Ruth Hall* in the first eight months after its release. What's more, "Prior to this, a sale of 2,000 copies of a novel had been considered a good press run" (Carr 2). *Uncle Tom's Cabin* especially, which sold literally

hundreds of thousands of copies, demonstrated how popular female authors could become. The situation was the same in England, with authors like Jane Austen and Fanny Burney. As Gorsky has noted, besides serving as entertainment, “fiction communicated moral and ethical values, and for women readers in particular [. . .] fiction proposes models for how their lives might be lived—their options and possibilities” (ix). Byron offered some unique possibilities, especially for women. And, as it happens, Byron’s influence was much keener on female novelists than male authors of either poetry or prose. Simply put, more female novelists than male authors responded to Byron as the century progressed. Gender is therefore a focus of this study though not necessarily in the typical ways a feminist scholar might anticipate. My primary task is not to discuss the misogyny inherent in most of Byron’s texts, or the images of women he creates, though these are both examined. I am more interested in addressing how female authors understood and responded to Byron, what they risked and gained in their interactions with him.

Jerome Christensen has argued that Byron’s strength and lasting appeal owed much to the fact that he was *Lord Byron* (emphasis added 3). While certainly a feature in his personal ego, which helped to make him appealing to readers, Byron’s power came somewhat less from his membership in the minor aristocracy than from his popularity. Byron’s fame and literary success are what made him so profoundly influential and powerful. Of course, the chief cause of Byron’s fame lay in the enduring fascination his audience felt for the Byronic hero. Later that character type was shaped and reshaped by successive generations of female novelists. This study discusses how each female novelist achieved different levels of fame, which seemed to operate in relation to the

nature and depth of her response to things Byronic. This whole study shows how, and in some sections reaches towards explaining why, each female novelist responded to Byron, discovering a little bit about what he meant to the culture at large as the century wore on, perhaps indicating that he was not just the most popular poet of his own day, but also one of the most influential of the century.

In order to argue for Byron's influence on female novelists, my general approach has been directed by intense attention to texts, offering side-by-side close readings of Byron's poetry in comparison with several different novels' prose sections, with some attention given to the poetry of each female author when applicable. Considerable attention has been given to direct references in these women's texts to Byron's life and his works. Also a special ear for the textual echoes of Byron found in the novels, which can be easy to overlook without a substantial reading knowledge of Byron, has been especially useful and necessary. Finally, by giving the bulk of consideration to the shifting and evolving characteristic of the Byronic hero, not only in the females authors' novels but also in Byron's canon, I have been able to set the results of these comparisons and subsequent discoveries within several larger contexts. These larger circumstances are admittedly often considered extra-literary, and they include the immediate reactions of each individual author's audience. At times this was accomplished with frequent looks into reviews. In part this is due to the importance of reviewers, who, according to Frank Donoghue, "present themselves as a police force or an army whose official capacity licenses them to regulate the behavior of authors and readers" (38). Audience reaction was then fixed within each author's generation's response to Byron more generally. Only then was I able to gauge comparisons of each generation to the others, all in an effort to

investigate generational responses within the century as a whole in order to reveal the evolution of the century's response to Byron.

Byron was not just a poet who wrote phenomenally popular works and created a remarkably enduring literary hero who remains with us to this day. He was more than merely a brand name, easily recognizable in the marketplace. Byron was also a concept, a myth, which proved surprisingly malleable. His myth experienced dramatic alterations and was employed by several different writers throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. As Andrew Elfenbein has said, "Byron the celebrity" was "a multifaceted cultural phenomenon" (*Byron and the Victorians* 47). The myth of Byron was composed of several different things: his actual biography, the heroes he created in his poetry, which evolved over time, the images he created in his audience's mind of himself, as well as the amalgam of all these things. The first author to recognize this and experiment with the creation of this myth was Byron himself.

The real man lived a fascinating life, complete with sexual taboo, including dalliances into homosexuality and incest. He was also a notorious womanizer; Byron is thought to have fathered five children in total, with everyone from a lowly house servant at Newstead Abbey to Mary Shelley's half-sister Claire Claremont. But, his life also included adventures on a global scale. His grand tour of the East, included Constantinople, a city which Byron was the second Englishman to visit. Once exiled from England, Byron lived all over the world, becoming by far the most cosmopolitan of the Romantic poets. Even early on, he was involved in radical global politics, befriending the Ali Pasha and later joining the Carbonari, a secret society in Italy; he also ultimately

redeemed all his former sins by sacrificing his life in Greece for the cause of independence.

Byron's life was used as raw material for his literary characters. Perhaps because Byron indulged in the taboo, his characters do too. The Byronic hero allowed discussions of subjects such as murder, sadomasochism, incest, vampires, Orientalism, and liberal politics. These characters changed over time, as Byron saw how they were received by his public. Working with his audience, Byron continually reshaped and revised his characters to suit public taste, which also affected how Byron was viewed by his fans. As a poet deeply invested in his audience's opinion as well as the creation of his own image, Byron and his characters evolved, pushing the limits of his audience's acceptance, becoming both increasingly villainous and simultaneously feminized. Byron was not just the hero of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the murderous heroes of the Oriental tales or even the Satanic Manfred. As his audience's opinions of him changed, Byron also became the rather lost narrator of *Don Juan*. This process unmanned Byron to a certain extent, stripping him of his authority as the controller of his works and reducing his traditionally masculine dominance as an influential author.

The Byronic myth was a concept that proved continually fascinating, even seductive, over the course of the century. This was especially true in the case of female novelists who grew up in the shadow of Byron. But why was Byron so appealing to female novelists particularly? It was not just because he reached the pinnacle of literary success in his own time, or because he allowed the open investigations of topics usually forbidden to women. As his own literary successes proved, one could speak of almost anything while adopting Byron's myth as a vehicle. How Byron's myth evolved over the

course of the century demonstrates not only how appealing Byron was, but how each successive generation responded to different stimuli within the cult of Byron.

Lady Caroline Lamb was part of the first generation to deal with Byron, during the course of his own lifetime. As *Glenarvon* and Lamb's forgeries attest, she was interested in exerting her dominance over Byron, not just personally in terms of their failed romance, but also literarily. Lamb takes control over Byron's voice and style and co-opts both his literary heroes and his personal character in her novel *Glenarvon*. However, because Byron was still alive at the time, he got the chance to respond to Lamb by engaging with her in a game of dominance. Byron proves himself the master of their romance, but Lamb's representations of Byron had a permanent effect on his poetry. As a member of his audience, Lamb helped add to and shape the Byronic myth.

The three Brontë sisters were part of the second generation to interact with Byron, the first generation after his death. Each sister represents a typical, though different response to Byron by the mid-century. Charlotte, Emily, and Anne engage mostly with the Byronic hero in their novels, passing judgment, and showing what is and is not acceptable by 1848. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* offers a full adoption of the Byronic hero; his egotism is considered a force of nature and while not healthy, cannot and should not be tamed. In contrast, Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* largely demonstrates a rejection of the Byronic hero. To Anne, the type is dangerous. But Anne also engaged with Byron's biography, actually passing judgment on his immoral life, especially his behavior in his marriage. Although Byron as Arthur Huntingdon is an evil man, Anne felt compelled enough to respond to and meditate on him. Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* offers a revision of the Byronic hero, proving that he can be acceptable if he seeks redemption.

Rochester has to be punished and must suffer for his sins before he can reform and be made socially acceptable.

George Eliot represents the third generation to interpret and respond to Byron, the second after his death. At this crucial time period, fans and critics were settling Byron's permanent reputation. Eliot engages in the critical debate of Harriet Beecher Stowe's controversy then raging about Byron's personal life and behavior in his marriage. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot mostly explores Byron's myth; of particular interest to Eliot was his status as a war hero in Greece. Eliot judges the Byronic hero as largely unacceptable as he is, in part because of his uncontrolled ego. For Eliot, he must be made to look beyond his own life before he can become globally active. Eliot uses Byron's myth in Greece as a model for Daniel in England and Jerusalem because both figures seem to urge national reform of the English character, which had become stagnant.

As these chapters demonstrate, however unappealing Byron may have seemed to some, all these female authors felt compelled to respond to him in their fictions. One chief difference between Lamb, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot is that each responds to different stimuli within Byron's identity complex, dictated in part by their own generation's concerns. For instance, Eliot could not respond to the real Byron, as Lamb could, because he was already largely lost to her generation. Eliot could only deal with his characters, but at that point in history, they had already been co-opted into Byron's personal myth. The Brontës and other mid-century Victorians helped to blend the Byronic hero into myth. However, the Brontës could also tend to the real man himself because their time period saw the first biographies of Byron's life published by authors who knew the "real" Byron. In contrast, Lamb dealt with the real Byron both because she

knew him personally, and because he was still alive, but she also came into contact with his characters. While she knew Byron, Lamb did not effect change in him so much as in his characters. Lamb demonstrates that she helped to shape the type.

Put another way, Lamb was a part of the living Byron's life, and, as a member of his audience, she was also part of the feedback loop whereby Byron understood himself and his characters. The Brontës, on the other hand, dealt mostly with Byron's characters, but, they also helped to create his myth as they revised the character and blended it with Byron's biography. In contrast, Eliot dealt mostly with the myth of Byron, helping to settle certain debates about his lasting reputation as an outgrowth of his characters. Who and what Byron "is" or what he "means" change over time and across the century as new generations come in contact with him. By the end of the nineteenth-century, we have to ask which part of Byron's identity complex a writer is responding to and engaging with: the real man, his literary character types, Byron's myth, or some combination of the three.

How each female novelist responds is different, largely reflecting their own generation's interests, concerns, and accessibility. This is best seen in a comparison between Emily Brontë and George Eliot. Emily, as a mid-Victorian, was living when Romanticism was extremely influential and yet simultaneously dying out. She responds to Byron as a true Romantic might, offering a full recognition of his power and the seductiveness of his ego, resulting in a full-scale acceptance of both. Her version of the Byronic hero Heathcliff is as unforgivable and unforgettable as Byron's Manfred. Eliot, on the other hand, was living at the height of the Victorian era. As a Victorian herself, Eliot responds as most Victorians did, with an interest in duty that seemed to undercut the

Byronic hero's ego. In order to make him palatable to an 1870s audience, Eliot had to tame his narcissism, then find a way to make him a hero of duty. She focuses on Byron's social responsibility and his image as a war hero in Greece as a project that calls for national reform.

Both Emily Brontë and George Eliot found Byron to be a convenient and easily recognizable cultural touchstone. However, each woman responds to him differently in her own novel, in part due to changes in the social climate of England when each of them was writing. Heathcliff reflects the morbid subjectivity of Romanticism that Daniel eventually overcomes. And yet, both images come from Byron's canon. Byron in Greece provides the model that Daniel follows, just as Heathcliff's self-obsession and narcissistic grief end in death, as Manfred's does. While radically opposed, both these options are first explored in Byron's canon and personal myth. The differences are not just a result of personal differences between Emily Brontë and Eliot, but also changes in the social context they wrote from.

In terms of politics, it is enlightening to contrast Caroline Lamb and George Eliot. Both Lamb and Eliot recognized the potential impact of Byron's liberal political views. For Eliot, Byron in Greece was necessary for discussing social and political change for the Jews as well as the English, a cause not as important at the beginning of the century. Lamb, for instance, does not recognize the importance of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* in *Glenarvon* the way that Eliot does in *Daniel Deronda*. Rather, Lamb focuses on her own generation's concerns with the Irish problem. Lamb uses the Byronic hero to discuss the radical politics of a free Ireland. In 1816, Byron had not yet been to Greece as a war hero, so Lamb lacked access to that messianic figure; Glenarvon himself does not become an

Irish war hero, rather, he turns traitor against the cause just as Lamb does in the novel. The book does not end with a free Ireland but rather re-inscribes the imperialistic agenda of the English, while Glenarvon is destroyed in the process. However, both Lamb and Eliot realized the potential for political rebellion in the Byronic hero. As a rebel for the cause of individual freedom, Byron's Satanic Manfred, for instance, demonstrates how easy it is to shift the figure to suit global political views. Byron, at the end of his life, of course, provided further evidence of how easily the type could be reformed to influence real-world politics.

There are at least three significant conclusions that can be reached as a result of tracing Byron's influence on female authors across the whole of the nineteenth-century. First, Byron is extremely relevant over the course of the hundred years. He is still interacting with the English, even after he's been dead for two generations. This demonstrates how popular he really was, how varied and how lasting his image became. His influence helped to shape many of the key literary characters in all of British literature; his heroes become Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. The vampiric Byron of Lamb's *Glenarvon* and the Ruthven of Polidori's tale may well have influenced the most enduring vampire in all fiction, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. As a model to accept or reject, he was also an important factor in the creation of Victorian Englishness, as the century progressed. Byron could be used as a platform to help revise the national character, as Eliot shows in *Daniel Deronda*. While Eliot would never have advocated following Byron's libertine example in his immoral life, which she found repellent, when Byron finally gave up his egotism in Greece, he helped to make the world

a better place. Thus, Eliot could use him as a catalyst to spur national and thus global change.

Second, responding to Byron brought literary success, even if not immediately. Lamb's *Glenarvon* was exceedingly popular during her own lifetime, necessitating three editions in the first year alone (Clubbe 205). In many ways, without *Glenarvon*, Lamb would have simply been relegated to a footnote to Byron's complicated romantic life. Lamb's use of her personal knowledge of the poet's life, which she claimed the novel revealed, rocketed her to instant, overnight success similar to the fame Byron achieved at the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The difference, of course, is that Byron's literary reputation outlived the scandal of his life. Lamb, however, did not fare as well. As literary history demonstrates, being a female novelist with personal ties to Byron was not enough to secure a lasting literary reputation. Lamb has been largely silenced since her own time. Few Romantic scholars, even few Byronists, even read *Glenarvon*, much less give it serious consideration, though this is beginning to change as Lamb struggles to find a permanent place for herself.

The Brontës' novels, on the other hand, all sold fairly well in their authors' lifetimes and remain some of the most popular and widely read of novels today. But there are differences in how each sister was and is received, and these differences may well correlate with the degree to which each sister responds to Byron. Emily did not live to see her own fame. In the middle of the century, Emily died believing, according to an unsigned review in *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, that *Wuthering Heights* leaves the reader "shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance" (rprnt. in Allott 228) in part because she offered

characters who were too strong and independent, too much like Byron's character and his literary heroes for a woman to write. In fact, another early review from the *Examiner* makes a direct comparison between Emily and Byron's works. Speaking of Heathcliff, the critic writes, "Like the Corsair, and other such melodramatic heroes, he is "Linked to one virtue and a thousand crimes" (iii.864) (rprnt in Allott 220). Emily was so stunned by the harsh literary reviews of *Wuthering Heights* that she actually ceased writing altogether, largely believing she had failed in her attempt to secure lasting fame.¹ And yet, as her poetry attests, Emily did actively seek a lasting reputation, although this seems radically opposed to the most common conception of her personality, itself a fiction based on "mythic" biography. Today of course, *Wuthering Heights* is one of the most popular books of all time, becoming a fixture of many American high school core curriculums.

Anne Brontë, in her own lifetime, did not demonstrate enough acceptance of Byron. Her too harsh rejection of him makes her stand out in her time as too judgmental. As with now, Anne was largely viewed as simply too self-consciously pious and preachy for mid-Victorian audiences. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* remains the least popular of all the Brontës' novels, in part because her Byron-figure is denied redemption. Compared to her sisters, Charlotte offered the perfect balance. *Jane Eyre*'s version of the Byronic hero, Rochester, unlike Arthur Huntingdon, is capable of reform. Charlotte purges him of his unattractive Byronic qualities and makes him socially acceptable, though not on a global

¹ As it happens, novelist Mary Ward, in her introduction for the Haworth edition of the Brontës' works makes a direct comparison between Lamb and Emily: "horror and extravagance are not really the characteristic mark and quality of *Wuthering Heights*. If they were, it would have no more claim upon us than a hundred other forgotten books—Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* [1816] amongst them" (rprnt. in Allott 457).

scale. As a result of her tempered response, Charlotte was the most popular of the three sisters in their lifetime, achieving the phenomenal and lasting fame each of them sought.

As for George Eliot's responses to Byron, transfiguring and transforming the English Byron's myth in Greece into the Jewish Daniel's adventures in Jerusalem was too radical a political stance for large-scale acceptance by the Victorian reading public. Eliot lived long enough to realize her audience's resistance, coming up against staunch Anti-Semitism, and as a result, she experienced the full extent of her novel's failure. Reshaping the Byronic hero into a Jewish messianic figure was too much reform. Because her novel was published serially, her audience initially responded favorably to Daniel as a Byronic hero. However, as new episodes were published and it became clear that Daniel was in fact Jewish, Eliot's audience turned against them both. They could not accept an Englishman eventually picking up the mantle left by Mordicai. Today, Eliot is recognized as one of the first English novelists to present a real portrait of the Jews, which itself may have come from modeling her sympathies on Byron's in *The Hebrew Melodies*. While not as popular as *Middlemarch*, Eliot's bestseller, *Daniel Deronda* is carving out its own place in British literary history as an important major work.

Third, there was a battle between Byron and scribbling women, and it came about because of the draw of financial success and lasting fame. As discussed in Chapter 2, Byron feared the women of the literary marketplace due to the complex relationship he experienced with them. The first dimension of this interplay was with Byron's female readers, who sought him with an especially ravenous hunger. The lonely and tortured man of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was a simultaneously seductive and retreating figure, who seemed to inspire romantic aggression in women. Byron was as sought-after as

Harold, easily winning legions of willing amorous victims. Like a modern rock star, Byron had hungry, female groupies. And he responded to their interests, both as a man, becoming a voracious womanizer, and as a poet, but not without a price. Offering his art for sale caused problems. In *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, Byron acknowledges that commerce perverts “the poet’s sacred name” (177) because it “distorts the personal and familial bond between the self and the work” (Hofkosh 99). Byron sought to please members of his audience, changing his characters to deliver what his readers seemed to want and see in him. Thus, his characters became increasingly villainous. Due to the intensity of their influence, Byron’s female readers helped to shape and create Byron’s canon to such an extent that he eventually felt he lost much of the authority of his voice and style. His characters also reflected this growing sense of lost authority, becoming increasingly feminized, chased, and ravished. Being at the mercy of his fans’ desires, caused considerable anxiety. As Sonia Hofkosh claims, Byron “dreads, as he desires, being read by others—a reading that rewrites him and thus compromises his powers of self-creation” (94), causing individual identity to be responsive to the climate of literary production and consumption. This was especially evident for Byron, whose reputation saw extreme highs and lows. Byron went from being a literary lion to a social outcast; thus, he “epitomizes the writer’s vulnerability to the fluctuations of reputation and to the contingent nature of the personal authority reputation confers” (Hofkosh 96). Byron had to evolve or risk losing his fame altogether, but in itself, this evolution causes a loss of literary authority.

Second, Byron was afraid of women as representative of the female authors of his own time. As writers: “The woman [. . .] enacts the marketplace forces that contest the

writer's exclusive claim to his works. Byron's career exemplifies this contest in the poet's efforts to design his own image," inhibiting "the poet's privilege to generate and govern his authorship, his own name and fame" (Hofkosh 94). Byron's anxiety about the power of others over his authority identifies women writers "as the sign of that power," by exposing "woman as the literary rival par excellence" (104). Like Caroline Lamb, other female authors could easily appropriate his lost authority. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, Byron feared Lamb's prowess in particular for good reason. Lamb appropriated Byron's voice with aplomb, actually wrote forgeries to his own works-in-progress, and attempted to interfere generally with his personal life. As Hofkosh points out, *Glenarvon* shows that "the author's private life and work are always another's imaginative property" (105), but this also applies to all successful, and therefore powerful, female authors' novels.

Byron feared that female authors other than Lamb would continue the process of appropriation even to the point of replacing him. According to Hofkosh, the female writer is especially threatening because "She has an imagination too. She reads and she writes." (108). And, part of what she is writing is Byronic identity. Thus, it is in writing and *rewriting* Byron that female authorship becomes especially powerful. Byron was afraid of being used, co-opted, and ultimately overshadowed by female literary success in the marketplace. As Byron complained in *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, he has been "Condemn'd at length to be forgotten quite" (17). This is in essence what has come to pass. By the end of the century, the chief genre is no longer male, narrative poetry, but sentimental, female novels. The Brontës and George Eliot gained more lasting reputations than he ever earned. There is more room, and some might even argue

justification, for reading the Brontës and Eliot in a nineteenth-century course, than reading Byron, even in a Romantics seminar. It's not just that female novelists learned from Byron and tried to do what he did, achieve fame, but that they used Byron and his creations to do so. They employed characters similar to the ones that he created, but their appropriations were more successful than his "originals," originals, which by the way were the product of his relationship with female readers in the first place. Thus, the female reader and writer both threaten Byron's creative self and do so while actively participating in that self's creation. However, in the case of the Brontës and Eliot, this rewriting continued even after Byron's life. Byron becomes as "unmanned" as a poet as any of his characters. His characters became more and more feminized as Byron lost his authority over his own work. As a result, Byron as an author was deprived of his masculine dominance in the marketplace as well as in his own poetry by female authors. He became the prey, the ravished, and the forgotten, largely taking over the female author's position at the beginning of the century. This is true even of Emily Brontë's poetry, which is beginning to eclipse Byron's.

For, as popular as Byron was during his time, he has lost the authoritative voice of the century. What's more, he has lost it to women authors, just as he feared he might, inspiring the passing remark about the contemporary female poet Anna Seward (1747-1809): "Of all bitches alive or dead, a *scribbling woman* is the most canine" (emphasis added rptnt. in Higgin 108). While Nathaniel Hawthorne is credited with coining this derogatory phrase in a letter to his publisher William D. Ticknor in January 1855,² Byron first employed it some thirty years before. What both men express is a fear of female

²Hawthorne's quotation runs: "America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (rptnt. in Mott 122).

authors as literary rivals while inflicting the dual stigmas of gender and catering to public taste in order provide best-selling literature. The only real difference is that each male author felt that women were taking over his own particular genre: poetry in Byron's case and novels in Hawthorne's.

As this investigation works to demonstrate, Byron was important to the whole of the nineteenth century, not just because he was a popular poet, but because he offered a unique path to fame, a pathway followed by some of the most influential female novelists. His heroes became cultural touchstones so predominant that they seem to demand some level of response from other authors. However much some authors might have wanted to silence or ignore Byron, especially in the middle and end of the century, because he did not seem to fit with Victorian-era projects, they were not able to do so. Byron was too compelling a figure. And, because female novelists had the same end goal of Byron's artistic endeavors, fame and lasting financial success and independence, they often did respond to him, offering varying degrees of acceptance or rejection, while responding to different aspects of his myth. Ultimately, Byron outlived the Romantic period and the genre of poetry, even helping to shape what Victorian sentimental novels would come to be.

Although it has been some 130 years since *Daniel Deronda* was published, the world is still far from being free of the Byron identity complex. Byron, his biography, his literary characters, and his myth even today, still loom in the background of our most unattractive and simultaneously seductive characters. The comic book, vigilante-hero Batman is every bit as guilt-ridden and lonely as Manfred, while the wise-cracking, starship Captain Han Solo of *Star Wars*, even as he battles the Evil Empire and Darth

Vader, is as irreverent as *Don Juan*'s narrator, demonstrating the truly enduring spirit of Byron's myth.

CHAPTER 2. BYRON'S RESPONSE TO HIS AUDIENCE

When *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* appeared in March of 1812, Byron awoke and found himself famous. Literally overnight, he went from being a relative unknown to the darling of London. A few years later, his fame had not abated; his narrative poem *The Corsair* (1814) sold 10,000 copies on its first day of publication, while the next most popular work took six months to sell as many (Marchand 162). The extent of Byron's quick fame is difficult to appreciate by today's standards, when celebrity is so common. In many ways, Byron was the first western literary "celebrity." It is worthwhile to pause a moment to reflect on the implications of this commonly misunderstood term. By celebrity, I do not mean that Byron was "merely a famous person," but rather, I agree with Andrew Elfenbein's definition of a celebrity as "a figure whose personality is created, bought, sold, and advertised through capitalist relations of production" (*Byron and the Victorians* 47). Thus, "Byron" was not just a famous author, but also a commodity. His very identity was created in order to be purchased by consumers. This means that both his perceived public character and the characters of his heroes were essentially subject to the demands of his audience's expectations. Byron was the first to deal with the problem of maintaining a stable idea and expression of himself while people were inundating him with concepts of who they thought he was, how he should behave, and even what he should write. As a supplier of product, Byron sought to give his fans what they wanted to purchase, both in terms of his own personality and in terms of his literary characters, making him especially sensitive to the process of self-representation.

Frank Donoghue has noted that when an author no longer writes for a patron, he often becomes "paralyzed" by an uncertainty about what his audience desires. The

opposite seems true in Byron's case, causing another kind of anxiety: the fear of losing control over his representations. As Donohue points out, such an author as Byron "may feel that he knows th[ese] expectations too well, and [may] despair that [his audience] all but dictate[s] his task" (18), making him rely too heavily on his fans' understanding of himself and his poetic productions. Byron was highly interested in self-representation as a symbiotic process existing between himself and his audience. Christine Kenyon Jones has said, Byron felt "not only an intense curiosity to see himself as others really saw him [. . .]," but he also participated in "an odd feedback loop whereby other's perceptions of him became an element in his subsequent presentation of himself" (123). This shifting of Byron's personal view of his own character seems a chief cause for why his voice, style, and male protagonists evolve dramatically over a relatively short period. Other factors fostered the swift evolution as well: his sexual prowess, his personal relationships, the commodification of his art, the numerous imitations of his work, and the threat of forgery.

The public had a very clear conception of what kind of man Byron ought to be. Because *Childe Harold* was his first substantial literary success, his fans turned to Harold to find a good portrait of Byron. The character of Harold is sentimental, lonely, tortured, and yet proud, noble, and worthy of being saved from his own self-imposed isolation. Most of Byron's fans saw Harold as a thin veil for the poet; in many ways, his audience was right. Byron is the model for his world-weary character. However, Harold is also significantly different from his creator. Byron was lame and Harold is not; his clubbed foot was a large part of why he seemed to play the melancholy Harold in public. Byron was not so much aloof as he was reluctant for people to notice his lameness. Moreover,

Harold is such a super-serious character that even trying to picture him smile is difficult. However, as we know from reading his letters, Byron was a remarkably amusing man who enjoyed funny stories, puns, and bawdy jokes. The adoring public ignored these differences, and insisted on drawing a direct correlation between him and Harold. And later, after the publication of the Oriental tales, Byron again found that his fans took him to be the real Conrad, giaour, and Lara, even though they were very different from Harold.

The significant role of the Oriental tales to Byron's perceived public character and the changing poetic heroes he offers over time has been somewhat undervalued. Primarily these narrative poems serve as bridges that unify the different halves of Byron's canon. In seeking to meet the changing tastes of his audience, Byron experimented with radically opposed voices and styles in his early and later career, which caused a disjunction in his canon between his dark, Byronic voice, as exhibited in *Childe Harold*, and the lively, witty voice of *Don Juan*.³ However, even his most Byronic writing, especially *The Giaour* (June 1813), *The Corsair* (January 1814), *Lara* (August 1814), and to a lesser degree *Manfred* (1817), includes tendencies found in *Don Juan*. What's more, the tales also contain his initial commentary about his struggle with his intense popularity as he was grappling with the complexity of his fame for the first time during their composition. Further, it is the connection these tales have with Byron's audience that seems to account for the evolution in his canon as well as the personality changes attributed to its author. Even Byron seemed to note their importance to his public perception, pointing out with disdain in a letter: "he told me an odd report,—that *I* am the

³ Typically, Byron scholars choose between these two different "Byrons" as explicating both at once is a difficult, even daunting challenge.

actual Conrad, the veritable corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in [. . .] [piracy]" (*BLJ* Vol.III. 250).

Because Byron was seen as the embodiment of all his male protagonists, he appealed to women and men who thought that they could save him from the dark forces they saw at work in his poetry. Other features of his character were also appealing because they presented an enigma. Many thought Byron's mysterious past and true personality too deep to be revealed in public so they sought, with a burning desire, the man they found in his poetry. The unquenchable thirst and longing for Byron were so universal during his lifetime that the phenomenon became known as Byromania, a phrase coined by his wife, Annabella Milbanke. Ghislaine McDayter points out that "as Byron's career progressed, physical appetite in others, particularly in women, came increasingly to signify for him the threat of his own consumption, both personal and poetic" (43). Byron's fans were so fixated on him that he came increasingly "to regard them as insatiable beings who fed upon his literary corpus to satisfy their taste for the Byronic" (McDayter 43).

A major focus of Byromania was sexuality. "Don't look at him," Lady Liddell said to her daughter, on seeing Byron in St. Peter's Square in Rome in 1817, "He is dangerous to look at" (Jones 109). And he was, but not so much for who he was, but for what he seemed to inspire in women: lust. This was especially evident just after Byron became famous. According to Fiona MacCarthy, "Byron himself achieved a quasi-royal charisma in the period he would later refer to as his '*reign*,' the spring and summer of 1812 when women in particular went 'stark mad' about *Childe Harold* and its author" (161). MacCarthy notes Byron's effect on women "of differing ages and varied social

classes,” as evidenced by an “extraordinary cache of letters in the Murray archive addressed to the author of *Childe Harold* by his female fans.” In most of these letters, the often anonymous women “beseech Byron for a sample of his handwriting, signed copies of his works, a lock of his hair, and an ‘occasional place in your lordship’s thoughts.’ Some were bold enough to request a meeting with him. The letters are shot through with furtiveness and melodrama” (162). Essentially, Byron’s female fans rearranged the paradigm of seducer and prey. Byron is not the seducer, but rather the seduced. “I have been more ravished myself than anyone since the Trojan war,” he lamented in a letter on 29 October 1819 (*LBSLJ* 223). Comparing himself to Helen of Troy, Byron explains how he has been abused by his fans, while simultaneously suggesting the extent to which he felt unmanned by them.

Perhaps the best place to find Byron’s feelings on the subject is *The Corsair*. Conrad begins the tale by playing the typical male role of seducer. In fact, Conrad takes this role so seriously that he risks his own life to save the female slaves of the harem after he has set Seyd’s palace on fire. Consequently, he is captured. Because of this, the role of seducer is no longer allowed him; instead, Conrad becomes as dependent as any of Seyd’s female slaves. What’s more, he is dependent on Gulnare, the queen of the harem, whom he had temporarily freed. Gulnare falls in love with Conrad and works to free him, but only on the condition that she be allowed to leave with him. His predicament in prison clearly shows that he has been unmanned because he is now both dependent on a woman and ravished by her as his captor.

In order to flee with Gulnare, Conrad must murder Seyd. However, unlike other heroes of the Oriental tales, this protagonist is unable to commit murder: “To smite the

smiter with the scimitar; / Such is my weapon—not the secret knife; / Who spares a woman's seeks not slumber's life" (III.VIII.289). It is Gulnare who kills Seyd because Conrad cannot strike him down in his sleep. At this point, the role of the maiden in distress is played by Conrad, not Gulnare; she is in the position of power in their relationship, although her sexual desire for Conrad still holds her somewhat dependent on him. It is because of the Christian Conrad's sexual attractiveness that Gulnare has turned her back on her Muslim heritage. Her desire to ravish Conrad is the reason she has chosen to save him. As Gulnare says, "'Tis done—he nearly waked—but it is done. / Corsair! he perish'd—*thou art dearly won*" (III.XI.290, emphasis added). Byron later developed and explored this theme in *Don Juan*, wherein Juan becomes the prey of characters like Haideé, Gulbeyaz the Sultana, and Catherine the Great. According to Edward Said's observations about gender roles in Orientalist literature, "Women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing" (207). Some of this, of course, applies to Byron's female characters. Gulnare lives a sensuous, male power-fantasy in the harem, and Byron as an author uses her to explore the taboo sensuality of Oriental females. However, she is not stupid or powerless. In order to escape the harem, she has actually turned certain of Seyd's men against him.

Even before *The Corsair* was published, Byron, whether willingly or not seemed to play the role of ravished man himself, exploited in sources published by those who knew him best. Arguably the best place to find the reversal of the seducer paradigm is in *Glenarvon*, a novel written by Byron's infamous ex-lover Lady Caroline Lamb.⁴ Perhaps

⁴ The focus of Chapter 3 is an in-depth analysis of *Glenarvon* and Lamb's complex relationship with Byron, personally and artistically.

in order to add some validity to her outrageous depiction of Byron, which among other things intimates that he is a vampire as well as a murderer, Lamb included revised versions of actual letters from him in the novel. But perhaps the most interesting thing about *Glenarvon* is that all three of its female characters are ruined for wanting Glenarvon in specifically sexual terms, just as Caroline was socially ostracized for publicly lusting after Byron. In *Glenarvon*, Lamb continues what Byron began in the *Oriental tales*: she inverts traditional male/female roles. The novel begins with Glenarvon in the role of seducer, however, this role is reversed as Calantha, the main character, falls in love with Glenarvon and in turn pursues him. Moreover, when their brief but intense affair is over, Calantha initiates a frantic attempt to recapture Glenarvon's affections, becoming the romantic pursuer. As Frances Wilson notes, in *Glenarvon* "the *masculine* is treated as the object of desire, while the *feminine*, as desire subject, is analyzed" (xxiv).

This was especially important to Byron as he constructed *Don Juan*, his mock-epic with a ravished male youth as its protagonist. As Sonia Hofkosh observes, Juan's "love affairs [. . .] ravish him, putting him in the woman's place" (109). For instance, Juan's first lover, Donna Julia, is an older and more experienced woman, and the initiator of their sexual relationship. More than this, when Juan is ordered by the Sultana Gulbeyaz to make love to her, he feels victimized, refuses, and weeps:

But Juan

[. . .]

[. . .] left his cheeks as pale as snowdrops blowing:

These words went through his soul like Arab-spears.

So that he spoke not, but burst into tears. (V.CXVII. 712)

Possibly the best model for understanding Byron's plight as artistic creator supplying raw material to a hungry, even ravenous public, is the vampire metaphor, applied by McDayter. Byron felt a strong "sense of victimization by his readers [. . .] described in the Byronic terms of vampire and victim" (McDayter 44). Just as the public "fed" on his descriptions in *Childe Harold* and *The Corsair*, Byron himself sought from his audience material to shape and reshape more characters like the ones the public already adored. McDayter has noted that a kind of reciprocating vampiric relationship existed between the poet and his audience, which is not unlike Jones' idea of a feedback loop. In vampiric terms, Byron was both the victim of an audience who "fed" on him and at once the vampire who "fed" on his audience.

Lara, published in 1814, is arguably the best of the Oriental tales in which to investigate this kind of "feeding" process, as it discusses Byron's feelings toward his fans and their perceptions of him. Lara returns to his ancestral home after a mysterious absence in a foreign land and will answer no questions about his past or the strange servant Kaled, whom he has brought with him. But rumors of his supposed crimes abound, fueled by Lara's stoic solitude and his persistent and violent nightmares, and are complicated by rumors of an "unnatural," homosexual connection between Lara and Kaled. In his defense, Lara eventually raises an army, attacks the other lords in his region, and is killed in battle. Unlike Conrad, Lara remains traditionally masculine throughout the work, although Byron implies that Lara has a homosexual attraction to his valet. Lara is saved from such "degradation" when his too-faithful male attendant is revealed to be a beautiful woman. The nature of Lara and Kaled's relationship seems clear when Kaled dies of grief at the loss of her lover. According to Said, the male

Orientalist represents a world that “tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement [. . .] is denied the Orient and the Oriental” (208). In this case, Byron upsets some of Said’s expectations. Lara’s sexuality is shifty, while Kaled is in effect transgendered in the text. Both of these affect how we see Lara himself.

Although *Lara* does not at first seem to allude to Byron’s interest in self-representation, the text is full of references to his biography, especially in terms of his sexuality. For instance, when Byron and Lamb were a couple, she frequently presented herself in public as his young, male page.⁵ Further, there was some speculation about his travels to the east from 1809-1811 after he became famous. Some of these rumors involved his shifty and complex sexuality, which certainly included periods of homosexuality.⁶ Conviction of homosexuality in England during the Regency brought a virtual death warrant. Convicted sodomites were often publicly executed by hanging. According to Louis Crompton, several homosexuals were executed in this manner in England every year. But even if not sentenced to execution, a convicted homosexual was still essentially consigned to death at the pillory. This barbaric punishment saw the convicted chained before the public, who were allowed, in a stately and organized fashion, to hurl stones, offal, fruit, or anything else at hand at the offender. More often than not, this resulted in death.

Lady Byron first suspected her husband’s homosexuality due to mysterious hints dropped by him. According to Crompton, who examined Annabella’s extensive notes to

⁵ The implications of this tendency are discussed in Chapter 3.

⁶ There is still some debate as to whether Byron was truly homosexual or actually bisexual, as the case may seem considering the extent of Byron’s notorious womanizing. Scholars who argue for Byron as essentially homosexual include Louis Crompton and Fiona MacCarthy.

be used if Byron ever sought custody of their daughter Ada, on 3 January 1816, Byron confessed: “I have not done an act *that would bring me under the power of the Law*—at least on this side of the water” (221). Byron seems to be admitting, at least partially, to having committed sodomy while on his grand tour of the east. Perhaps he had in mind his Greek lovers Eustathios Georgiou and Nicolo Giraud or any of his nameless male conquests while in Turkey (Marchand 87-88). In any event, this note demonstrates for Crompton Byron’s “need to confess and to conceal” (218) aspects of his “deviant” sexuality to his wife. Annabella’s suspicions were confirmed by Caroline Lamb, when she recounted a fuller confession whispered to her after her relationship with him concluded. For reasons known only to himself, Byron admitted “that from his boyhood he had been in the practice of unnatural crime—that Rushton was one of those whom he had corrupted—by whom he had been attended as a page.” Annabella continues: “he mentioned 3 schoolfellows whom he had thus perverted” (reprt. in Crompton 199) while at Harrow. These most probably included George Delawarr, Clare Dorset, and William Harness. Byron may have also thought of his Cambridge friend and lover, John Edlestone, to whom “To Thyrza” is addressed. Annabella’s perhaps only act of charity towards Byron was to refuse formally to level these charges when she sought legal separation from her husband. Instead, the document is filled with blanks, which even today seem to scream sodomy. And yet, the indication that Annabella perhaps knew his secret was enough to send him into exile. In fact, only a few days after signing the legal separation from his wife, he left for the continent.

Byron’s tendency towards homosexuality returned in his later years. After initially settling in Italy into quasi-domesticity with the married Teresa Guiccioli, once

away from her in Greece, where he went in support of the Greek war for independence from the Turks, it was not long until Byron was engaging in his youthful “deviant” sexuality. As Crompton indicates, Byron repeated “the pattern of his boyhood” and saw his “patronage blossoming into love” (315). The aging poet fell in love with the young and beautiful but vain and greedy Lukas Chalandrutsanos. It is quite clear that while Lukas enjoyed the gifts he received from Byron, he did not return his feelings of affection. And yet, Lukas was the center of his emotional life during his last months in Greece (Crompton 315). It was in the presence of the apathetic Lukas that Byron suffered two epileptic-type fits, before finally succumbing to fever in Missolonghi, where he died a few weeks later.

Written at the height of his fame, *Lara* at least darkly hints to Byron’s readers about his interest in homosexuality. The difference, of course, is that Byron was guilty of a crime that Lara never actually commits. In many ways, *Lara* also contains Byron’s perception of events surrounding his fame when he describes Lara’s reaction to public scrutiny. Both Lara and the poet are forced to deal with the demands of an overly-invested and hungry audience. When Byron writes, “in vain their stubborn ardour he would tame, / the hand that kindles cannot quench the flame” (II.XI.304), he seems to regret seeking fame at all. Most remarkably, there is a perceptible shift in the chief attributes of the heroes of the Oriental tales compared to *Childe Harold*, that seem to correlate to how Byron’s audience viewed him. While Harold is an honorable man, Conrad and Lara are villains and cut-throats. Conrad is a marauding pirate, while Lara is a vengeful warlord. Both Conrad and Lara seem to be reflecting Byron’s new impression

of his public's perception of himself after first being cast as the broken-hearted and vulnerable Childe Harold; now, he had become a dangerous man.

The Giaour best exemplifies Byron's new hero and the new image of himself in his audience's mind. As McDayter points out, in *The Giaour* "Byron begins to self-parody the role that had been, in a sense, written by his fans and critics" (49). As a parody, *The Giaour* exaggerates everything found in *Childe Harold*. While the crimes of Harold are merely suggested, in *The Giaour* the crimes of the protagonist are clear. He is a villain, a murderer in no uncertain terms. However, this villain was as beloved by Byron's audience as Harold. Further, the poet too remained beloved by his fans even after they cast him in the role of the giaour. In other words, Byron's negative parody of himself was applied back to him by his audience and he was still as popular as ever.

And in *The Giaour*, Byron includes even more of his own life as raw material. The drowning of Leila, who is sewn into a sack and tossed into the sea, was inspired by actual Greek custom, and Byron himself apparently interrupted a similar punishment while traveling. There is evidence that he apparently intervened in the operation and managed to save the girl's life. The incident occurred in 1810 in Piraeus where he had been bathing (Marchand 89-90). But there are other aspects of the poem that seem to correspond to his life, too.

The Giaour is a rich and complex text made difficult to understand because of its fragmentary nature. As Said anticipates, "Oriental literary productions [are] essentially alien to the European; they also do not contain a sustained enough interest [. . .] nor are they written [. . .] to merit publication except as extracts." The Orientalist writer is thus "required to *present* the Orient by a series of representative fragments, fragments

republished, explicated, annotated, and surrounded by still more fragments” (Said 128). The plot of the tale is made difficult to understand due to its formal structure, which includes several interruptions in the narrative. Byron deliberately breaks the poem off at key moments by a series of asterisks, then continues what could be dozens of lines later. Byron does this, of course, to imply that he has “found” the manuscript, not merely invented it. Just like the formal structure of the tale, Byron’s personal character was similarly fragmented in Regency society. His personal identity was ruthlessly examined and shattered by his fans, only to be put back together in the manner they thought best. As Elfenbein has argued, Byron was “a name without a stable identity” (*Byron and the Victorians* 47).

As Byron’s public began to speculate about his past, his image in the public’s mind began to change. Soon, he was seen as exemplifying the attributes of his new heroes. Casting him in the role of the heroes of the Oriental tales justified the public’s fear of him, the perception that he was dangerous, that he had a morphing or uncertain masculinity, and that he had an evil or un-Christian soul. For instance, Byron curses the *giaour* as a vampire:

But first, on earth as Vampire sent,
Thy corse [sic] shall from its tomb be rent;
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race.
There from daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet which perforce

Must feed thy livid living corse [sic];

Thy victims ere they yet expire

Shall know the daemon for their sire,

As cursing thee, thou curse them,

Thy flowers are wither'd on the stem. (755-66)

It might be argued that Lamb's depictions of Byron as a vampire in *Glenarvon* may well have stemmed from her own reading of *The Giaour*, a good example of how Byron's poetry lead to other depictions of him that subsequently affected public perception of him. *Glenarvon* was devoured by the public, who believed they were getting a secret look at the "real" Byron in the text. Also, just as the giaour cannot make a redemptive confession because he is too proud to seek absolution, Byron was seen as similarly haughty. And it was precisely this perception of Byron that encouraged works like Lamb's.

One unfortunate result of the popularity of the Byronic hero was that he was easily copied, co-opted, parodied, and stolen. The phenomenal success Byron experienced in terms of literary commodification influenced other writers to try their luck imitating him. A series of inauthentic Byronic works appeared with his name. Perhaps the most famous of these involves vampires: the tale "The Vampyre" by Dr. John Polidori, published in 1819 in the *New Monthly Magazine*. To this day, there is still considerable controversy surrounding this tale, the first vampire story published in English. Polidori, the uncle of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, traveled with Byron as his personal physician when he left England and met the Shelleys in Switzerland in 1816. Polidori was a constant companion of Byron's, even present the night he and the Shelleys decided

to hold a writing contest to see who could write the best horror story. While Mary Shelley began *Frankenstein* that evening, Byron wrote a fragment of a vampire tale. Polidori obviously heard this story because he later co-opted its basic structure, plot, and characters to frame and complete his own vampire story. Eventually, Byron grew tired of his companion and dismissed Polidori, who returned to England and had his own version of Byron's tale published almost three years after the night of ghost stories.

While the tale betrays a certain level of plagiarism, the controversy arose because the story Polidori published did not appear with his name, but Byron's, to great financial success for the publisher. Exactly how the poet became the author of Polidori's prose tale is still uncertain. There is much debate as to whether Polidori planned to publish the tale with Byron's name or his own name. But to be sure, when Polidori was discovered to be the true author of "The Vampyre" instead of Byron, he suffered extraordinarily in public, and was labeled a "pirate, parasite, and liar" (Skarda 269). According to D. L. MacDonald, Mr. Watts, the editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, wanted to publish the tale with a disclaimer as follows

we present this tale to our readers, without pledging ourselves for its authenticity, as the production of Lord Byron [...] we should suppose it to have been committed to paper rather from the recital of the third person, than under the immediate direction of its noble author. (reprt. in MacDonald 178)

However, the magazine's publisher, Henry Colburn,⁷ deleted the disclaimer and instead published the tale with the title "The Vampyre: A Tale by Lord Byron" (MacDonald 177). Polidori recognized Colburn's mistake when the tale appeared, and seeing that he

⁷ Colburn was fairly well known for such stunts, and incidentally published Lamb's *Glenarvon* three years prior to the Polidori scandal.

would be blamed for it, wrote Colburn saying, “your correspondent has been mistaken in attributing that tale, *in its present form*, to Lord Byron. The fact is, that though *the groundwork* is certainly Lord Byron’s, its development is mine” (reprt. in MacDonald 181). Colburn claimed never to have received this letter. The public turned a deaf ear to Polidori’s explanations even after Colburn changed the title in a subsequent edition to “The Vampyre: a tale related by Lord Byron to Dr. Polidori” (Skarda 269). While Colburn made a tidy profit from “The Vampyre,” Polidori never received his promised payment and was left penniless and reviled as a plagiarist. Ultimately, Polidori died under circumstances, which looked a lot like suicide; it is supposed that he intravenously self-administered a lethal dose of poison.

Besides the social uproar that surrounded “The Vampyre,” the tale itself is worth investigating as it projects into fiction the extent of Polidori’s obsession with Byron. As the story describes Aubrey’s infatuation with Lord Ruthven, it also mimics Polidori’s own fascination with the poet. Further, just as the story shows Ruthven’s influence on Aubrey, it also demonstrates Byron’s literary powers at work on Polidori’s weaker style, which is the essential vampirism inherent in the story. While Polidori should have developed and explored his own style, he simply fell victim to another’s. What’s more, Polidori ultimately appropriates Byron’s identity as an author, whether intentionally or not. Patricia Skarda goes so far as to say that “Polidori’s plunder of Byron the man and Byron the poet goes beyond plagiarism to the bloodless vampirism of collecting [...] the pollen of Byron’s genius. The result is that without Byron, Polidori becomes nothing less than a vampire of an unacknowledged kind” (265). The implications of “The Vampyre”

scandal are clear. Byron offered an immediately recognizable image in his work that was easily copied for advantage in the marketplace.⁸

Byron offers his audience a more detailed image of himself in the dramatic poem *Manfred*, the last poem written in his metaphysical style. Part of the daring of this poem lies in Manfred's unapologetic egotism. As Peter Thorslev has said, Byronic heroes on the whole are "activated by a very self-conscious pride" (187), which makes them intensely egocentric, deeply concerned with their own inner nature and emotional states, which sometimes becomes a "morbid self-analysis" (189). While Kenneth Wommack says "goodness manifests itself during the *healthy* pursuit of self-awareness and self-knowledge" (171), Manfred is not engaged in such healthy activities. Instead, he is intensely self-interested and morbidly self-conscious. As Wordsworth once said, this is often a passion that "murders to dissect" (reprnt. Hartman 47). As seekers of self-knowledge, Manfred and other Byronic heroes are necessarily egocentric, even to the point of narcissism.⁹ Manfred is vain and proud to a fault with an inflated ego because he can manipulate and control the spirits of this world and the next.

Manfred's narcissism is a key factor in a template authored for most Byronic heroes. Like them, Manfred imagines himself beyond the reach of conventional morality, and therefore explores taboos, both moral and sexual. This exploration usually leads to the corruption of the hero, but not without excessive feelings of guilt. The pattern of the narcissistic hero almost always ends in the death of the hero, as a statement of the power of the self. Manfred dies through his own force of will and therefore achieves something

⁸ Caroline Lamb also published a number of forgeries that will be addressed in Chapter 3.

⁹ As discussed in Chapter 4, mid-Victorians like the Brontë sisters had different views of the egotism of the Byronic hero. Later Victorians like George Eliot would be profoundly offended by it, as Chapter 5 demonstrates.

like victory. In *Manfred*, as in the Oriental tales, Byron both reveals and conceals certain aspects of Manfred's story, especially events in his past. While Byron wants readers to understand that Manfred has committed some nameless sin, he stubbornly refuses to explain it. However, he weaves enough clues into the text that speculation about these crimes is possible.

There are two main categories of sin that Manfred commits: those against man and others against God. Manfred, like Lara and the giaour, is probably a murderer. When the Chamois Hunter offers him wine after his failed suicide, Manfred exclaims, "there's blood upon the brim! / Will it then never—never sink into the earth?" (II.i.21-22). Moreover, when he is with the Witch of the Alps, he admits, "I have shed blood but not hers" (II.ii.119), meaning Astarte. When he initially summons the Witch, she acknowledges his criminal nature, addressing him: "Son of Earth! / I know thee, and the powers which give thee power; / I know thee for a man of many thoughts, / And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both" (II.ii. 33-36). Manfred also sins against God. Like Prometheus or Lucifer in the Garden of Eden, Manfred possesses certain forbidden knowledge. As the Abbot says, "'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things / Which are forbidden to the search of men" (III.i.35-36). Manfred is also able to summon natural spirits and the Witch of the Alps, and visit evil spirits like Arimanes on his own plane. The extent of his knowledge is evidenced in his strength; he can coerce Arimanes into raising the dead, bringing forth Astarte from beyond the grave. Such acts of necromancy and witchcraft are strictly reserved for the Satanist.¹⁰ Manfred indulged his tendency

¹⁰ Satanism as a form of rebellion is considered a part of the Byronic hero. There has "always been an alliance between aggressive humanism, self-reliance, and Satanism," according to Peter Thorslev (189). To M. K. Newton, the Byronic hero, like Satan himself, "refuses to recognize any external source of authority that claims to be superior to the self" (*George Eliot* 28). Byron is always on the side of his characters "in

towards Satanism while Astarte was alive, perhaps even bringing her into those acts with him. Manfred's servant Manuel recalls that Astarte was the only person allowed into his inner chamber: "Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,— / How occupied, we know not, but with him / The sole companion of his wandering / And watchings—her, [. . .] the Lady Astarte" (III.iii.41-47). In addition, at the end of the drama, Manfred stubbornly rejects conventional Christianity, which the Abbot represents. Like the *giaour* before him, Manfred cannot confess or seek absolution, as that would admit to God's dominion over him. He much prefers his own pagan practices, which include respecting the curse Manfred feels from his own cursed star.

Manfred aligns himself with this evil star, which finds its origin in his doomed family lineage. In order to raise the seven natural spirits, he calls upon the strength of this family curse: "by a power, / Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell, / Which had its birth-place in a star condemn'd [. . .] I do compel ye to my will" (I.i.42-49). When the spirits appear before him, Manfred begins the central quest of the narrative:

"Forgetfulness— [. . .] / Of that which is within me; / [. . .] Oblivion, self-oblivion" (I.i.136-144). The spirits reply that "the thing / Mortals call death hath nought to do with us" (I.i.162-3). Thus begins Manfred's pilgrimage to find a force that can help him achieve forgetfulness. Being self-reliant, he next attempts to commit suicide, hoping that it will end his torturing feelings of guilt, but the Chamois Hunter interrupts him. Manfred then contacts the Witch of the Alps, who claims that she can help Manfred, but he would have to "swear obedience to my will, and do / My bidding" (II.ii.154-56). Manfred, of course, defiantly refuses replying, "Be a slave / Of those who served me—Never!"

their defiant assertion of will and their refusal to submit to either human or divine authority, even in the face of death." (29). Manfred does not relent in his Satanism even when a dark spirit comes to take him to Hell.

(II.ii.158-59). Finally, Manfred seeks Arimanes, the most powerful natural spirit, who grants part of his wishes by summoning the shadow of Astarte. Her image tells Manfred that he will die the following day: “to-morrow ends thine earthly ills” (II.iv.152).

However, she refuses to grant Manfred her forgiveness, and will not answer any of his questions, including whether or not his death will provide him the forgetfulness he seeks.

It is at this crucial time that the Abbot becomes a significant character in the drama. The Abbot arrives just in time to tempt Manfred into conventional confession in an effort to save his soul. It is not too late for him to achieve the forgiveness of Heaven: “there is still time / For penitence and pity: reconcile thee / With the true church, and through the church to heaven” (III.i.48-51). But Manfred, in an assertion of defiance, rejects the Abbot’s help: “whate’er / I may have been, or am, doth rest between / Heaven and myself— / I shall not choose a mortal / To be my mediator” (III.i.52-55). Indeed, whatever his crimes, and despite the tempting offer from the Abbot, Manfred refuses to be unfaithful to his own moral code. He remains true to his nature, despite the fact that death may or may not offer him release.

Manfred’s final act of Satanic rebelliousness is best seen in the last moments of his life. As Daniel M. McVeigh puts it, “in the end Manfred does [. . .] enjoy a certain triumph. He does so by remaining true to himself, however blighted his nature” (609). Indeed, when the “dusk and awful figure” comes to him “unbidden” (III.iv.61-72) to convey him to Hell, Manfred stays true to his belief that nothing, not even death, is stronger than the self. He denies the dark spirit’s power. Manfred says,

I have commanded

Things of an essence greater far than thine,

And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

[. . .]

I knew, and know my hour has come, but not

To render up my soul to such as thee:

Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone. (III.iv.85-90)

In this way, Manfred rejects the customary way into death, as he has all along rejected ordinary existence. He exclaims triumphantly

Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;

I have not been thy dupe, nor am I thy prey—

But was my own destroyer, and will be

My own hereafter,— Back, ye baffled fiends!

The hand of death is on me—but not yours! (III.iv.137-141)

Although Manfred denies the spirit's power over him because he has ties to the demonic, we are certain that like Faust, he is headed for eternal torment in Hell. Ultimately, his desire for forgetfulness is unfulfilled, and yet, because he seems to choose Hell for himself, Manfred's death can be seen as somewhat self-redemptive. His death at least signals the end of his present suffering.

Like the heroes of the Oriental tales, Manfred is a criminal, however, the chief taboo explored by him is sexual in nature. Unlike Lara, whose subjects suppose he is homosexual, Manfred commits the sexual crime of incest, a natural outgrowth of his narcissism. Excessive narcissists like Manfred focus their attention on themselves to such a degree that they project themselves onto everything and everyone around them. Manfred does this with Astarte, the mysterious woman with whom he has had a

forbidden love affair. While in the text of *Manfred*, the specifics of how they are related are “never unequivocally put,” they are also, according to Frederick Garber, “never in doubt” (243). They have committed some kind of incest, whatever their actual relation, making their exact relationship somewhat insignificant. It is enough to know that Astarte is a close relation to Manfred and looks exactly like him: “her eyes, / Her hair, her features, all to the very tone / Even of her voice, they said were like to mine” (2.2.105-107). Astarte, like Manfred, also had “the same lone thoughts and wanderings, / The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind / to comprehend the universe” (2.2.109-111). As Garber points out, this passage also “carefully spells out difference.” Astarte is not Manfred’s precise counterpart “but a tenderer version, the lineaments the same ‘but softened all, and tempered into beauty,’ her powers (‘pity, and smiles, and tears’) gentler than his own. The tenderness she had, he had only for her. The humility she had, he never had” (Garber 243-244). Astarte is a kinder, gentler Manfred. Garber explains how their incest is inherently narcissistic:

to commit incest means that one keeps within the family. But Manfred and Astarte carry the narrowing even further, taking it to its finest point, for theirs is *narcissistic* incest; a sort that reduces its smallest reach the distance one needs to go to get outside of the self. If what one reaches for is the exactest cast of oneself, then one has hardly to reach at all. (245)

In loving Astarte, Manfred, in effect, falls in love with himself. Loren Glass goes one step further, claiming that Astarte is “ultimately a projection of [Manfred’s] own mind. For in the dialectic of narcissism, the other is always simply a reflection of the self” (Glass 213). And, as Nancy Jane Tyson points out, “the narcissist’s curse is not merely

that he loves himself too much but that he can only love himself” (111). Manfred’s love for Astarte is a manifestation of his obsession with himself, his own narcissism.

McVeigh points out that while Astarte is not specified to be Manfred’s sister, “incest is implied, in a rhetorical ellipsis stretching out towards the unspeakable” (611).

Astarte is

the sole companion of his wanderings

And watchings—her; whom of all earthly things

That lived, the only thing he seem’d to love,—

As he, indeed by blood was bound to do,

the Lady Astarte, his—

Hush! who comes here? (III.iii.43-47)

In typical fashion, just as Manuel is about to reveal how they are related, he is interrupted by the entrance of the Abbot. There are other tantalizing hints of incest in the text. The most important of these occurs when Manfred discusses his familial relationships with the Chamois Hunter. Referring to the wine on the brim of his cup as blood, Manfred exclaims, “‘tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream / Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours / When we were in our youth, and had one heart, / *And loved each other as we should not love*” (II.i.24-27 emphasis added). Several significant aspects of Manfred and Astarte’s relationship are revealed in this confession. Manfred’s love for Astarte was not merely one-sided; she actively returned his affection. And what they shared is forbidden; they loved as they “should not love.” However, as Manfred explains, Astarte’s “faults were mine,—her virtues were her own” (II.ii.116). She could share in the crime of incest because she shared that fault with Manfred, but her virtue would not

allow her to continue to commit incest, although at some point it was surely weak enough for her to try it.

Blood is of the utmost importance to any analysis of *Manfred* because it recurs as a motif both confirming incest and anticipating Astarte's death. Blood is important because it is "what gives Manfred's life continuity and coherence" due to the fact that it represents "the perpetuation of familial identity" (Glass 216). That is, Manfred commits incest with Astarte partly to reaffirm his own identity. The blood he shares with Astarte is the same blood that "ran in the veins of [their] fathers." And yet it is that blood which is shed. Therefore, blood becomes, according to Glass, "the link between the consummation of incestuous love and the violent act which destroyed that love." As Glass says, "it is the shedding of blood that causes a rupture" (216) between Manfred and Astarte. Manfred admits to the Witch of the Alps, "I have shed / Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed; / I saw—and could not staunch it" (II.ii.119-121). The mystery, left unsolved in the play, is how Astarte's blood is shed if not by Manfred. For although he says he did not murder Astarte, Manfred admits, "I loved her, and destroyed her" (II.ii.117). Astarte's blood is on Manfred's hands, of course, only figuratively. Astarte's blood could have been shed through suicide, due to excessive feelings of guilt for having committed incest. Manfred claims he destroyed Astarte, "Not with my hand, but with my heart—which broke her heart— / It gazed on mine, and withered" (II.ii.118-119). Byron also provides at least one hint about Astarte's having committed suicide, calling her "One without a tomb" (II.iv.82).¹¹ Ultimately, Manfred's embrace, his love itself, is fatal. As Manfred explains to the Chamois Hunter, "my injuries came

¹¹ Suicides, of course, were not traditionally allowed a marked grave in sacred ground.

down on those who loved me— / On those whom I best loved / [. . .] But my embrace was fatal” (II.i.84-88).

Byron began *Manfred* in Switzerland in September 1816, and completed it in Venice in February 1817. Since he was already in exile when *Manfred* came out, he did not get to read the reviews immediately. Instead, as James Soderholm points out, “Byron wrote to Augusta wondering if the work had caused ‘a pucker’” (“Byronic Confession” 193). It had, which Byron must have guessed. Though in exile, Byron did not manage to avoid public outcry against him while on the continent. According to Elma Dangerfield, Lord Glenbervie, a Scottish visitor in Diodati, Switzerland, wrote in his *Diary* that “Byron was ‘cut off by everybody’—meaning no doubt that the other English visitors who had descended in droves in Geneva that summer [. . .] either ignored or harassed him” (27). Byron acknowledged in a letter to Thomas Medwin: “Gossips made my stay a nightmare . . . There is no story so absurd that they did not invent it at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the lake [. . .]. I was waylaid in my evening dress—I was accused of corrupting all the *grisettes*” (reprt. in Dangerfield 27-28). Rumors of his liaison with Claire Claremont, Mary Shelley’s half-sister, did nothing to assuage the public belief that he continued to explore unconventional morality. Wild rumors of supposed incestuous orgies were furthered when Claremont became pregnant with Byron’s daughter Allegra.

Manfred was Byron’s first effort published after the public heard of his separation from Annabella. Resistance to the work was created when *Manfred*’s characters appeared obviously drawn from life. Astarte was generally accepted to be Augusta Leigh, Byron’s half-sister, while Manfred like Harold and the heroes of the Oriental tales, was taken to

be Byron himself, a position often adopted by contemporary criticism: “Manfred bears some similarity to Byron. [. . .] his destructive and apparently incestuous love for the beautiful Astarte suggests the poet’s liaison with Augusta Leigh. In short, his credentials as an autobiographical hero seem impeccable” (McVeigh 603). Despite the apparent debauchery of the Regency, the public was stunned at Byron’s daring in *Manfred*, which according to Peter Gunn, “refers to the incest theme with a boldness that is staggering” (201). On this topic, the reviews of *Manfred* were particularly brutal. One outraged reviewer for *The Day and New Times* on 23 June 1817 wrote

Manfred [sic] has exiled himself from society, and what is to be the ground of our compassion for the exile? Simply the commission of one of the most revolting crimes. He has committed incest! Lord Byron, has coloured *Manfred* into his own personal features. (reprt. in Gunn 205)

Byron’s drama also outraged his estranged wife and terrified his half-sister. In a strange irony, after he left England, these two women became friends. The background of their relationship deserves some attention as it sheds some light on the poem.

Shortly after New Year’s Day 1815, Byron and Annabella Milbanke were married in her family’s home in Seaham. Annabella, nicknamed “The Princess of Parallelograms” by Byron for her inclination towards science and mathematics, was an attractive young woman with round cheeks and a feminine figure. In terms of her suitability as Byron’s wife, however, Annabella had perhaps the very opposite personality to what was required. Annabella was logical, even-tempered, pious, and almost without humor. Her husband, on the other hand, was excessively emotional, with radical and swift mood changes often at little provocation. At his best, despite a deeply

Calvinistic upbringing, Byron was religiously skeptical. Beyond all else, he loved laughter and life to an extent not often appreciated due to the melancholy hero-figure he bequeathed us. By all accounts, Byron and Annabella had a disastrous marriage. He was more often than not drunk on white brandy, took large doses of laudanum daily, flaunted his affairs with actresses at Drury Lane, and was facing certain financial ruin. As a result, the newlyweds fought regularly. He was verbally abusive and threatened her with physical violence even when she was pregnant.¹²

Perhaps the main reason the Byron marriage failed was due to the fact that his heart was already engaged elsewhere, with his half-sister Augusta Leigh.¹³ Byron's abusive treatment of Annabella was not so much fueled by troubles in their relationship per se, but by his enduring and tortuous feelings for Augusta. The situation must have been unbearable to Byron, especially when Augusta came to share their home at St. James Place for six weeks. While he was living with the woman he loved but could not marry, he was also sharing close quarters with a wife who prevented completion of his desires, causing a mental breakdown. Whatever the case, Byron's affair with Augusta is well documented in his letters, especially those to Lady Melbourne, Caroline Lamb's mother-in-law. When Augusta lived with Byron and his wife, he made it painfully obvious that he preferred Augusta's company to Annabella's, and he also dropped hints about their relationship before their marriage.¹⁴

¹² Arthur Huntinton in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* seems modeled on this period in Byron's life.

¹³ Although they were raised apart and did not meet face-to-face until Byron was twenty years old, Byron and Augusta shared the same father, Captain "Mad Jack" Byron.

¹⁴ It is supposed that Medora Leigh was Byron's daughter with Augusta. If so, they would have already had a child together before he married Annabella.

In another ironic twist, it was through Caroline Lamb that Annabella first heard confirmation of Byron's innuendoes about Augusta. Later, Augusta herself re-confirmed the worst. The reasons behind Augusta's confession about her affair with Byron are many, but perhaps the most significant is that through her piety, Annabella revealed herself as someone who could help save Augusta's immortal soul, even though she had failed to save her husband's. But first, Annabella required that Augusta make a full confession. Under intense pressure, Augusta finally relented. Having had her fears satisfied, Annabella filed for legal separation. However, Annabella did not include a charge of incest in her request, perhaps as an act of charity towards Augusta. While charges of incest were taken very seriously during the period and called for social ostracism, the actual state punishment for such indiscretions was relatively slight. According to Crompton, "offenders were liable to only feel 'the feeble coercion of the spiritual [i.e., ecclesiastical] court'" (223). By 1813, imprisonment was limited to only six months (Crompton 224).

It was under the guise of this precarious friendship that Annabella wrote to Augusta offering her advice about how to handle the scandal attached to *Manfred*. Lady Byron writes, "you can only speak of *Manfred* [. . .] with the most decided expressions of disapprobation. He practically gives you away, and implies you were guilty *after* marriage" (reprt. in Gunn 205). Augusta followed the advice. Her letters to Byron after the publication of *Manfred* became increasingly detached. Soon Byron grew tired her unsatisfactory responses and ceased writing at all and their relationship dissolved into an uncomfortable friendship.

James Soderholm has called Byron's need to divulge aspects of his personal life in his art while simultaneously obscuring those facts "Byronic Confession." He points out that "Byron's habit of appearing at once transparent and oblique" is seen "especially in works such as *Manfred*, his most sinuous confession" (Soderholm "Byronic Confession" 185). What he divulges, in his mode of disguise and disclosure, is his incestuous love for Augusta, as his contemporaries surmised. Thus to Soderholm, "Astarte becomes the repository of innuendo, a code name [. . .] that allows Byron laboriously to tell certain truths about himself, but to tell them *slant*, to elaborate a game of disguise and disclosure" ("Byronic Confession" 188). Byron's artistic endeavors allowed him to reveal himself and his crimes, to admit them to his public in the most shocking way without necessarily putting himself at risk. This is especially true for *Manfred* because the author was already safely in exile on the continent when the drama was published.

Another important aspect to Byronic confession in *Manfred* is that "in the very act of apologizing for his misdeeds he commits another [. . .] misdeed by exploiting [. . .] and *publicizing*" it ("Byronic Confession" 188), letting his audience in on the secret. Byron paraded himself in front of his audience like a kind of exhibitionist, one "who oddly combines the confession with the art of violating one's own privacy" (Soderholm, "Byronic Confession" 192). Perhaps this was done as a direct response to Byromania. While Byron often felt victimized by his audience, he also encouraged them by tantalizing the public with hints in his poetry about his immoral life, as a sort of dare spurring his audience to apply those findings back to himself. As his popularity increased over time, Byron became almost obsessed with the creation and evolution of his myth.

Peter W. Graham sees Byron as the perfect example of a poet absorbed in and responding to his public perception in his own works. Byron kept track of comparisons of himself to other famous characters in a lengthy catalogue writing, “I have seen myself compared personally or poetically” with “Rousseau—Goethe— [. . .] Satan— Shakespeare—Buonaparte [. . .] to Milton—to Pope—to Dryden—to Burns—to Savage—to Chatterton [. . .]” (*BLJ*, Vol. 9, 11). The completed list contains the names of over forty individuals, which shows “how fascinated he is by the making of his own myth” (Graham 24). Byron’s poetry ultimately offers a blending of his true character with those of his literary characters. In this way, he found an “indefinitely sustainable poetic vehicle for self-expression.” His poetry demonstrates a “volatile blend of concealment and confession, a delightfully mystifying tissue of apparent sincerity, blatant falsehood, and every nuance between” (32), which Graham calls “the truth in masquerade” (29). Perhaps the best place to find this tendency is *Manfred*, not coincidentally the last of his Byronic works. In *Manfred*, he pushes the limits of the acceptability of the Byronic hero by admitting not only to incest, but also to Satanism. It seems that after *Manfred*, there was simply no taboo left to explore. There were no other shocking confessions that he could make. Thus, the death of Manfred in the text also has symbolic significance in Byron’s canon; it signaled the end of his Byronic writing before he turned his attention to the wholly different style of *Don Juan*. Yet, there were ramifications for this as well.

As the generation’s most popular poet, Byron largely lost authority over his own literary works, which belonged to his audience. He lost the approval of many of his fans when he began to publish works even slightly outside the vein of what can be called Byronic. As McDayter states, “the Byronic had come to take precedence over Byron, the

creation over the creator. So much so that when Byron abandoned his gothic style [. . .], he was attacked by his critics for writing ‘inauthentic’ Byronic works” (56). By rejecting his non-Byronic works, his fans attempted to force him to continue to write what they wanted him to write. When *Don Juan* appeared, his fans turned against him, claiming that *Don Juan* was not worthy of the poet’s efforts. Although a witty and lively poem, it was not taken seriously by fans and critics alike, in part because it was not Byronic.

The public would have its Byronic hero and because Byron was ultimately influenced by what his audience wanted, it can be argued that even *Don Juan* contains Byronic heroes, albeit revised models of them. It should not be surprising at this point to suggest that the new heroes offered in *Don Juan* reflect the new image Byron saw of himself mirrored in his public’s perception. The new hero, as seen in the character of Juan was a victimized, ravished and seduced male. Like Juan, Byron seemed to view himself as the victim of overly amorous fans, almost to the point that it affected his masculinity. In fact, in much of Canto VI, Juan is disguised in the harem as Juanna, whom almost no one suspects is a man. Shockingly, Byron refers to Juan with the feminine pronoun “she”:

But no one doubted on the whole, that she
Was what her dress bespoke, a damsel fair,
And fresh and ‘beautiful exceedingly,’
Who with the brightest Georgian might compare. (VI.36.281-84)

However, even when he is unmaned, and dressed as a maiden, Gulbeyaz seeks to seduce Juan:

She added to Juanna, their new guest:

‘You’re coming has been unexpected here,
And every couch is occupied; you had best
Partake of mine [. . .].’ (VI.46.364-67)

It is only later that Gulbeyaz tries to coerce Juan to make love to her, which he refuses to do out of respect for the lost Haideé.

The narrator of *Don Juan*, in many ways the main character of the piece, also plays a version of a watered-down Byronic hero. This older and wiser version is no longer a dangerous or powerful man like Conrad or Manfred. Rather, like Byron himself in Italy, he seems lost, even to himself. The narrator is so unsure of his own character that he cannot express a solid opinion on anything:

Whene’er I have expressed
Opinions two, which at first sight may look
Twin opposites, the second is the best.
Perhaps I have a third too in a nook,
Or none at all—which seems a sorry jest;
But if a writer should be quite consistent,
How could he show things existent? (XV.87.690-96)

The narrator’s chief attribute is his lack of a central self; he has no stability, which is also demonstrated in the poem’s formal structure, Byron’s new digressionary style. It is not surprising that this older hero too is drawn from Byron’s own life. After he settled down with Teresa Guiccioli, his life changed dramatically. By becoming her Anglo *cavalier servante*, Byron ended much of his notorious behavior. Their life was comfortable, if somewhat mundane, representing the tamest period in his life, causing him to act and

even appear much older than his thirty-five years. A lust for another adventure would spur his sailing for Greece.

As a mock-epic, *Don Juan* indeed satirizes every component of Byron's older and calmer world. When Juan visits England in Canto IX, the poet unleashes his most stinging insults. English weather, law, religion, history, taxes, and gender roles, to mention a few, are exposed as ridiculous. Even fame, the factor that seemed to inspire Byron's writing at all, at this point in his career, is unimportant. Canto I records,

What is the end of fame? 'tis to fill

A certain portion of uncertain paper:

[...]

For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,

And bards burn what they call their 'midnight taper,'

To have, when the original is dust,

A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust. (I.218.1737-44)

How could fame still hold the promise it once had? Byron's reputation had suffered much after his exile; not even the comic brilliance of *Don Juan* could redeem him. It was not until he joined in the fight for Greek liberation from the Turks, a battle for which he sacrificed his life, that Byron again received the worldwide adulation he experienced at the height of his fame. This time, he would become a war hero.¹⁵

Early on, Byron's audience had an image of him that he initially supplied to them in his poetry. As he changed as an artist, his poetry and heroes also changed and yet his audience still applied these images back to Byron himself. Over the course of the Oriental

¹⁵ The image of Byron in Greece is addressed in detail in Chapter 5.

tales, Byron pushed the limits of his hero's acceptability, making him more and more villainous. This process ends with the sinuous confessions of *Manfred*, which publicly betrays Byron's incest with Augusta and seems to admit to Satanism. After *Manfred*, which pushes the limits of the character type to its utmost extreme, Byron developed the wholly non-Byronic style of *Don Juan*, a work largely devalued in its own time. But even *Don Juan* demonstrates that together, the poet and his audience created and shaped the Byronic myth. Even during his own lifetime, Byron and his fans added substantially to his myth, making it on the whole, something that shifted, changed, and evolved over time.

The evolution of Byron's personal myth and literary heroes continued well after his death. Both subjects proved simultaneously attractive and repellent to later nineteenth-century female novelists, who for various reasons, and as members of his reading audience, actively engaged in the further reshaping and revising of both. However, what Byronic themes offered and meant to these women seemed to evolve over time as well, making each generation's response to him unique. The following chapters will investigate this process in detail by examining the responses to Byron found in the novels of Lady Caroline Lamb, the Brontë sisters, and George Eliot, giving special consideration to the differences in how each author understood and added to the overall Byronic myth.

CHAPTER 3. LADY CAROLINE LAMB'S *GLENARVON* AND THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO BYRON

As Duncan Wu has noted, Lady Caroline Lamb “is the subject of one of the most memorable hate poems in the [English] language” (140), Byron’s “Remember Thee,” a nasty response to Lamb’s decree “Remember Me!” written in his copy of *Vathek*. The poem is so venomous that it warrants quoting in full.

Remember thee! Remember thee!

Till Lethe quench life’s burning stream

Remorse and shame shall cling to thee,

And haunt thee like a feverish dream!

Remember thee! Ay, doubt it not.

Thy husband too shall think of thee!

By neither shalt thou be forgot,

Thou false to him, thou fiend to me!

Undeniably, Byron’s poem exhibits a double standard typical of its time period; he too committed adultery *with* Lamb, which the poem obviously fails to acknowledge. Byron carried on a very public affair with the married Caroline Lamb from March to July 1812, immediately after his rise to fame. Their brief relationship was characterized by intense fits of ego and temper on both sides, as well as sexual games, all of which involved the assertion of dominance. Much of Lamb’s writing demonstrates a desire to *become* Byron, a common enough aim at the onset of the nineteenth-century.¹⁶ This

¹⁶ Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* resulted in thirty-one imitations, continuations, and parodies from 1813-1958, with *Don Juan* eliciting fifty-one from 1819-1940.

tendency can be noted in relation to Lamb's forgeries of Byron, including her letters and "A New Canto," which was originally believed to be a legitimate continuation of *Don Juan*. The most extended example of Lamb's quest to become Byron is seen in her novel *Glenarvon*. A close examination of all these texts reveals an interesting motive for Lamb's writing—a wish to exert her dominance over Byron, both in terms of their romantic affair, which she could no longer control after Byron left her, and in their writing careers. This dominance was denied in reality, but obviously greatly feared by the poet.

Lamb famously proclaimed Byron as "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" in her journal after their first meeting (Marchand 118), but the epithet applies equally well to Lamb herself. There are dozens of stories about her notorious behavior. The most popular involves a purloined Byron portrait. Lamb forged a letter that impersonated Byron in order to pilfer his Newstead Abbey miniature, which was in the possession of John Murray, his publisher. Byron wanted to give the portrait to his new mistress Lady Oxford, but Lamb also wanted the painting. Pretending to be Byron, Lamb wrote Murray and requested the portrait be sent to herself. The letter worked. Imagine Byron's shock when Murray admitted that he no longer had the painting, that he had already, in compliance with a letter from Byron, sent it to Lady Caroline Lamb.

Murray was fooled not only by Lamb's handwriting, but also by her wonderful "imitation of Byron's peculiar style of letter writing," as James Soderholm points out ("Byron's Miniature" 28). Lamb duplicated his halting letter-writing style, and his means of correction by blotting out portions. But most frightening to Byron, Lamb managed to duplicate his thought processes as well. Writing as a "miniature" Byron, Lamb forged his

denial of the authorship of the satire “Waltz,” which only a few people knew was Byron’s. As Soderholm writes, “she used her knowledge of a piece of writing Murray and a few others would have recognized as Byron’s. In having Byron deny his authorship of the satire, [Lamb] brings to Murray a document containing both an allusion to “Waltz” and a typical eschewal of it that could only belong to its author” (“Byron’s Miniature” 38). Not only did Lamb demonstrate that she knew the details of Byron’s work, his letter-writing style, and his handwriting, but she also demonstrated that she could “parody his intentions as well” (Soderholm, “Byron’s Miniature” 37).

Ultimately, in regard to the fate of the Newstead Abbey portrait, Byron got the last laugh. When what can only be called a ransom letter from Lamb appeared, the circumstances of the painting’s theft became clear. Thus, terms had to be established for the portrait’s return. Lamb sent clippings of her pubic hair to Byron, urging him to return the favor, but cautioning him about clipping “too near” in her letter of 9 August 1812 (Douglass, *Lady Caroline* 120). While Lamb did receive pubic hair, for which she returned the purloined portrait, the hair she received was not Byron’s, but Lady Oxford’s. Just as Lamb had forged her letter, Byron similarly forged the more personal ransom.¹⁷

The whole situation may have vividly demonstrated to Byron what little authority he had left. Due to the high quality of Lamb’s forged letter, he recognized that she could usurp not only his personal integrity and his personality, but also his authority as a writer. According to Soderholm, Lamb’s letter clearly demonstrated to Byron that he no longer had “control of the transmission of his works” (“Byron’s Miniature” 32). Byron feared

¹⁷ Lamb includes this humiliating experience in *Glenarvon*, though it is somewhat “sanitized.” In the novel, Calantha receives a letter from Glenarvon written to her friend about the incident: “You are aware that when [Calantha] sent a few days since for her lover’s portrait, and a lock of his hair, Lady Mandeville yesterday in an envelope enclosed a braid of her own” (287). Thus, Lamb demonstrated that she knew of Byron’s substitution.

“the power of forgery in general and [Lamb’s] prowess in particular” (Soderholm, “Byron’s Miniature” 28). Just as Lamb usurps the “miniature” portrait, via her forgery, Lamb becomes a “miniature” Byron herself. Writing as Byron, Lamb could easily forge corrections to existing works, or even pen new ones that could be attributed to him. Thus, while Lamb could no longer exercise dominance over Byron in terms of their romance, in terms of their literary relationship, Lamb did wield some power over her former lover.

Lamb first learned of Byron in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, which sold an amazing first edition run of 500 copies in only three days (Wu 141). Lamb was so impressed that she wrote immediately to Byron to express her admiration anonymously. When she received no reply, Lamb wrote again and included a poem, which begins: “Oh that like thee Childe Harold I had power/ With master hand to strike the thrilling Lyre/ [. . .] With verse that breathes from heaven & should to heaven aspire” (Wu 141-2). This poem is remarkable for several reasons. First, it is addressed not to Byron, but to the fictional Childe Harold. The conflation of the two was common for Byron’s early readers. Second, Lamb expresses the ardent wish to share in Byron’s powers of poetic expression. Lamb commonly expressed the desire to write like him. According to Wu, this brief poem shows the first glimpse of what would become Lamb’s “driving urge to incorporate [Byron] into her own imaginative world” (142).

Written after their affair burnt out, “A New Canto” seems to indicate that Lamb’s imaginative acts “could enable her to reclaim Byron—symbolically, if not physically. [. . .] she was attempting to retrieve the lost object of her love” (Wu 142). The apparent logic at work is that if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, forgery is even more so. In “A New Canto” Lamb not only writes *like* Byron, but *as* him. Her appropriation of Byron is

done not merely to recapture his affections, but to become him. Moreover, because the poem is written in first person, Lamb becomes not just Byron, but Byron's creative voice, the narrator of the piece, which allows her fully to experience his powers of expression. It is hard to imagine that Byron would have seen such complete appropriation as anything but frightening; he certainly did not find it flattering. He rather expressed the desire that Lamb be "fairly shut up—& bread and watered into common sense" (*BLJ* IV.116).

Wu has noted that "A New Canto" is perhaps "the peak of [Lamb's] literary achievement" (146), but acknowledges the poem's defects as well. Overall, he says that Lamb's "handling of the *ottava rima* is inferior to Byron's—she lacks his virtuosity" (143). This is also true when it comes to rhyme, especially polysyllabic rhyme, which is Byron's specialty in *Don Juan*. Where Lamb seems the most adept is in her ability to "duplicate the rhetorical techniques of *Don Juan*" including "quarrelsome swipes and in-jokes" (143). This is especially true when Lamb satirizes popular writers of the time, most notably Byron himself. As Wu indicates, Lamb "makes the assured, scabrous poet of *Don Juan* his most acute critic" (143).

The poem begins with Byron's narrator complaining: "I'm sick of fame—I'm gorged with it, so full / I almost could forget the happier hour / When northern oracles proclaimed me dull" (1-3.212) and later adds, "For my part, though I'm doomed to write in rhyme, / [. . .] something must be done to cure the spleen, / And keep my name in capitals, like KEEN [sic]" (27.213, 215-216.216). Byron would complain of his fame repeatedly in his epic. In the body of the poem, Lamb also mimics his satiric take on English hypocrisy, as Byron would do later in Canto IX of his own work. Lamb writes, "When doomsday comes, St Paul's will be on fire" (3.17. 212). And later she describes a

full-scale apocalypse, as Byron also does in his short poem “Darkness.” Lamb mocks more typical Byronic subjects as well, including foreign settings and exotic women, while gently chiding Byron for his more amorous verse. Lamb writes,

Wild, foolish tales of Italy and Spain,
The gushing shrieks, the bubbling squeaks, the bride
Of nature, blue-eyed, black-eyed, and her swain.
Kissing in grottos, near the moon-lit tide,
[. . .]
Except for rampart and amphibious brute,

Such damp and drizzly places would not suit. (25.194-197, 199-200.216)

The poem succeeds best when Lamb imitates Byron’s technique, even down to the title page, which, like his, appeared without an author’s name. Wu believes “false attribution” could thus become “another element in her appropriation of the Byron persona” (145).

Lamb is more widely known in Byronist circles as the author of the notorious, gothic novel *Glenarvon* (1816)¹⁸. For several months after its publication, *Glenarvon* was on everyone’s tongue. It garnered publicity in all major newspapers and journals, coming as it did on the heels of Byron’s exile. In fact, the novel’s three volumes appeared on 9 May 1816, only two weeks after Byron left England (Marchand 205). The timing of its release looks suspiciously as if Lamb set out to further blacken Byron’s already tarnished reputation, although Lamb always claimed she published the novel, “to help Byron’s cause” (Clubbe 206). Whatever the case, public demand for the book saw it through three editions in its first year. Everyone, no matter how high or low born, sought

¹⁸ Lamb also published three other novels during her lifetime: *Graham Hamilton* (1822), *Ada Reis* (1823), and *Penruddock* (1823).

the book for its scandals and gossip about those in the upper echelons of society, even despite harsh literary pronouncements on its actual writing. According to the Countess of Airlie, the book was “a true product of the disordered mind which penned it.” Rowland E. Prothero judged it “unreadable,” and Samuel C. Chew called it “the product of hysteria” (Clubbe 208).

But not everyone was as harsh. Both Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Goethe read *Glenarvon* and approved of certain aspects. Bulwer-Lytton said that the novel “made on me a deeper impression than any romance I remember, and had its literary execution equaled the intense imagination which conceived it—I believe that it would have ranked among the few fictions which produce a permanent effect upon youth in every period of the world” (207). Goethe wrote that ““though the novel bored him dreadfully [. . .] he read it from cover to cover under the impression that he was gleaning reliable information about Byron’s private life” (Clubbe 208), with the understanding that Lord Glenarvon is a thin veil for Byron.

Glenarvon is rather satiric, and it “allowed its author to ridicule the foibles of society” (Kerley 316) by exposing and exploring the hypocrisy of regency England: its indulgences, excesses, and power-hungry social climbers, revealing the neuroses of the most famous people in social life at the time. When *Glenarvon* was published, its cast of characters was widely known and writing about such easily recognizable personalities brought disaster upon Lamb. The novel discredited her social position and systematically destroyed whatever was left of her reputation after her affair with Byron. It made permanent and powerful “enemies of the women she parodies” (Kerley 316) and Byron in particular.

In the novel, Lamb challenges Byron's position as the most respected literary figure of the era, exposing the dark underbelly of his character flaws, though admittedly capitalizing on speculation as to the true nature of his separation and his rash departure into exile. Byron knew nothing about Lamb's plans at the time of *Glenarvon's* publication because he "was proceeding up the Rhine to Switzerland, writing as he went the third canto of *Childe Harold*" (205). When he first heard of Lamb's novel, from his friend John Cam Hobhouse, Byron wrote in his letter of 23 June 1817: "'What—& who—the devil is *Glenarvon*! I know nothing—nor ever heard of such a person'" (205). By mid-July, Byron had still not read the novel, having missed the copy Hobhouse forwarded to him. But he was hearing so much about it that by 29 July, he had already read Madame de Staël's copy (Clubbe 214).

Typical of Byron at the time, he received his portrayal with humor. Writing to Thomas Moore 5 December, Byron said of the novel, "It seems to me that, if the authoress had written the truth, and nothing but the truth—the whole truth—the romance would not only have been more romantic, but more entertaining" (*BLJ* VII 138). Those close to Byron however, felt that Lamb's characterization of him was quite good. Byron's paramour at the time, Claire Clairmont, Mary Shelley's half-sister, wrote of the novel to Byron on 6 October 1816: "some of the speeches in it are yours—I am sure they are; the very impertinent way of looking in a person's face who loves you, and telling them you are very tired and wish they'd go" (Lovell 142). A few years later, Byron allowed Teresa Guiccioli, his last female lover, to read the novel; she was terrified. Byron wrote to her:

“Your little head is heated now by that damned novel, the author of which has been—in every country and at all times—my evil Genius” (*BLJ* VII 37).¹⁹

The most dramatic and sustained communication of Lamb’s drive to become Byron, as a way of demonstrating her literary dominance over him, is seen in *Glenarvon*. In the novel, Byron is played by the wicked Lord Glenarvon, who lives to ruin the lives of innocent women, seducing them away from their families and friends, only to later leave them dishonored and alone. Glenarvon has the same approach to all women, getting them to renounce everything, even God, in order to live only for him. Becoming bored after his conquest, he quickly moves on to other victims. Glenarvon thusly “ruins” Alice MacAllain, with whom he has a son, Clare, Elinor St. Clara, with whom he also has a sexual relationship, and Lady Calantha Avondale. The extent of Glenarvon’s relationship with Calantha is ambiguous; it is never explicitly clear that their relationship is consummated. Everyone with whom Glenarvon has a relationship dies by the end of the novel. Glenarvon becomes a notorious womanizer because he is ruthlessly mistreated himself by Lady Margaret Buchanan, Calantha’s mother-in-law²⁰.

Scholars have taken all of these female characters as avatars for Lamb, assuming that Calantha in particular is Lamb as she commonly conceived of herself. Thus, when Lamb describes Calantha’s writing, she is also implicitly discussing her own. Both women express their feelings of guilt regarding their infidelity through writing. Lamb

¹⁹ As this quote indicates, Lamb had a nasty habit of constantly disrupting Byron’s life from the moment their affair began until his death. As Paul Douglass has pointed out, one of Byron’s actual seals was “She follows you everywhere,” which perhaps “comments satirically on [Lamb]’s unwanted pursuit, a recurring theme of Byron’s letters of 1812-16” (“Playing” 16).

²⁰ Byron had a longstanding “interest” in Lamb’s actual mother-in-law, Lady Melbourne. Also, just as it is Lady Buchanan, who introduces Calantha and Glenarvon, the real-life Lady Melbourne conducted the first face-to-face introduction between Byron and Lamb. Immediately upon seeing Glenarvon, Calantha is struck by his face, which seems to haunt her every moment from then on. Likewise, after meeting Byron for the first time, Lamb pronounced in her diary: “that pale face is my fate” (Marchand 119).

says of Calantha, “She retired to her room: at one time seized a pen, and wrote, in all the agony of despair, a full confession of her guilty feelings to her husband; the next she tore the dreadful testimony of her erring heart, and addressed herself to heaven for mercy” (172). Later in the novel, Lamb also writes that “Unable to rest, Calantha wrote during the whole of the night; and in the morning, she heard that the Duke was in possession of her letter” (213).

Harold Bloom has said that “the dynamics of literary history arise from the artist’s ‘anxiety of influence,’” a fear that he is inferior to his predecessor so that the poetic father’s writing assumes “essential priority over his own writings” (*Anxiety* 46). Thus, the poet must “somehow invalidat[e] his poetic father” (*Anxiety* 47). While Bloom’s model is almost exclusively male, “a female poet has an even more primary ‘anxiety of authorship,’” according to Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar. This anxiety is experienced as “a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a ‘precursor’ the act of writing will isolate or destroy her” (Gilbert and Gubar 48-9). Lamb seems to be one of the few exceptions to both expectations. She does not experience Bloom’s anxiety of influence; Lamb does not seek to kill her creative father but rather, become him. Lamb also certainly does not fear that becoming Byron will destroy her; it rather seems her goal. In *Glenarvon*, Calantha’s letters are full of her untamed emotions. In the first example, Calantha silences herself, fearing reprisals and in the second, she learns that her writing has been intercepted and feels an intense betrayal from the Duke. Also, in order to prove his power over Calantha, Glenarvon provides some of her love letters to Lady Margaret, just as Byron confessed to enclosing some of Lamb’s letters in correspondence with her mother-in-law. Every time the wrong party reads Calantha’s letters, the text

testifies against the author who wrote them, perhaps producing an anxiety about the dangers of writing generally, an anxiety Lamb may well have felt.

And Lamb also anxiously anticipates how her writing is likely to affect her readers. Admonishing herself for revealing a portrait of guilty lovers, Lamb admits to the reader, “I know there are some whose eyes may glance upon these pages, who will regard with indignation the confession here made respecting the character of Calantha.” Lamb quickly adds, “But it is as if those who had never known sickness and agony mocked its power—as if those who had never witnessed the delirious ravings of fever or insanity reasoned upon its excess: —they must not judge who cannot understand” (218). Writing to Lamb is a kind of fever, an excess of emotion, and Lamb expects her reader’s shock at such a state of mind. She reminds them that they do not understand what a writer goes through in producing art.

When it comes to describing Glenarvon’s powers of expression, which stand in for Byron’s, all these agonies disappear. In poetry or speech, Glenarvon is gifted with a dangerous talent. Lady Mandeville is the first who warns Calantha about Glenarvon: ““he is possessed of that persuasive language, which never fails to gain upon its hearers. Take heed to your heart: remember my words, —beware of the young Glenarvon”” (109). Later, Lamb describes Glenarvon’s voice: ““When he spoke, it was like the soft sound of music,” Lamb writes. ““The wild impassioned strains of his lyre awakened in the soul every emotion: it was with a masterhand [sic] that he struck the chords and all the fire of genius and poetry accompanied the sound”” (320). Lamb deliberately conflates the sound of Glenarvon’s voice with his poetry, which both awaken listeners’ souls, revealing

Lamb's admiration of Byron's poetry. This is not merely praise, however, as Lamb is also describing the way she would like to be admired as a writer.

The novel also accurately describes Byron's often ambivalent feelings about his writing. St. Clara reveals, "To create illusions, and raise affection in the breasts of others, has been the delight of many: to dispel the interest he had created was Glenarvon's care" (143). St. Clara admits to Glenarvon's powers and at once dismisses their importance to him. Glenarvon, like Byron, experiences both the warm glow of being loved by his readers and a typical disdain for such appreciation. Such feelings are often accompanied by a hatred the writer has for himself. St. Clara reminds: "when they tell thee thou are great, when they tell thee thou art good, remember thy falsehood, thy treachery. Oh remember it and shudder, and say to thyself thou art worthless, and laugh at the flatters that would deny it" (294).

As a poet, St. Clara is in a kind of unspoken artistic contest with Glenarvon throughout the novel, just as Lamb must have seen herself in relation to Byron. This competition for dominance is not just about who the better writer is, but also about who holds more power over an audience. Although both female artists respect and admire their male counterparts, they are clearly his rivals. As Chapter 1 argues, Byron often felt the keen pressure of female authors "muscling in" on his position in the marketplace of early nineteenth-century London. The first critic to notice this anxiety was Sonia Hofkosh; her observations have been picked up by a number of other scholars. Douglass aptly summarizes her position and Byron's sense of fear. Byron's "ravishment stems from the threatened disruptive power of women in the literary marketplace. Stealing his 'likeness' and entering on the literary playing field were complementary challenges"

(Douglass “Playing” 14). Soderholm points out that Byron deflects “his own anxieties about being victimized in the marketplace onto the more pleasurable circumstance of being sexually victimized by women” (“Byron’s Miniature” 32), while Hofkosh sees Byron’s sense of ravishment less sexually. Byron seems to fear being victimized by female authors who could easily usurp his powers and audience, just as Lamb did. Hence, Byron once referred to Lamb as “my evil Genius;” (*BLJ* VII 37) he recognized that she was a worthy rival. Byron complained about Lamb’s interference thusly

I have seen the forged billet—the hand is very like—now what is to prevent her from the same imitation for any less worthy purpose . . . she will have the credit of being the authoress of all the letters anonymous & synonymous, written for the next ten years & the last five. —For aught I know she may have forged 50 such to herself—& I do not feel very much refreshed by the supposition. (*BLJ* III 13-14)

Although this example tracks Byron’s uneasiness about Lamb’s forged letter, the sentiment can easily be applied to his marketplace productions. Thus, Douglass finds that Lamb becomes a “written reflection of [Byron’s] own power to infatuate and destroy” (“Playing” 15).

Marketplace competition may be one reason Byron felt distress at Lamb’s many productions, especially *Glenarvon*, which, as a gothic novel, typically includes a mixture of genres including fictional prose, letters, journal pages, songs, and poetry, Byron’s specialty. Obviously, Lamb also felt in competition with Byron, which in part helps to explain why she includes so many embedded poems in *Glenarvon*, to prove that she too could be a poet like Byron. The female poet in direct competition with *Glenarvon* in the novel is St. Clara, and it is interesting that when Lamb most wants to demonstrate her

talent, she mimics Byron most obviously. Singing to Calantha, St. Clara warns of Glenarvon's love. Lamb writes,

By that smile which made me blest,
And left me soon the wretch you see—
By that heart I once possest,
Which now, they say, is given to thee—
By St Clara's wrongs and woes—
Trust not young Glenarvon's vows.

By those lays which breathe around
A poet's great and matchless art—
By that voice whose silver sound
Can soothe to peace th' Imprisoned heart—
By every bitter pang I prove—
Trust not young Glenarvon's love. (180-1)

St. Clara is warning Calantha about trusting Glenarvon because of his poetry, which is seductive and deceptive. A critic familiar with Byron's poetry may notice how much this passage sounds like "Manfred's Curse" in Byron's drama. Byron's poem runs thus:

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy soul's shut hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art

[. . .]

I call upon thee! and compel

Thyself to be thy proper Hell! (I.I.383)²¹

Here are similarities in rhythm, with the repetition of certain images like smiles. What's more, both poems are actually delivered as curses, with themes about the power of poetry and deception, accompanied by the anaphora of the word "by," clearly linking them.

Other evidence of kinship between *Manfred* and *Glenarvon* is that both male protagonists are themselves cursed at birth by nature, specifically by a star. This is expressed in *Glenarvon* in his song:

The star, that on thy birth shone bright,

Now casts a dim uncertain light:

A threatening sky obscures its rays,

And shadows o'er thy future days. (81)

In *Manfred* a similar passage describes how Manfred's fate is tied to a cursed star.

Manfred says,

by a power,

[. . .]

Which had its birthplace in a star condemn'd,

The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,

A wandering hell in the eternal space;

By the strong curse which is upon my soul,

²¹ It has been almost impossible to tell which embedded poem came first, Lamb's or Byron's. Although *Manfred* was published after Byron went into exile and *Glenarvon* came out only a few weeks after he left, "Manfred's Curse," as it is known, was first published apart from the drama. And the dates of publication aside, what this example shows is the link between Lamb's and Byron's poetry.

[. . .]

I do compel ye to my will—Appear! (I.3.381)

Other sections of St. Clara's speeches echo Byron's *The Hebrew Melodies*.

According to Douglass, Lamb included in her first edition of *Glenarvon* the music to which her characters sing, not unlike Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*. Most remarkably, the composer of both sets of music was the same man, the Jewish composer Isaac Nathan ("Playing" 171). Lamb writes,

Sound mournfully, my harp; oh breathe a strain,
More sad than that which Sion's daughters sung,
When on the willows boughs their harps they hung,
And wept for lost Jerusalem! (353)

Almost all of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* are filled with similarly mournful thoughts about the exile of the Jews.²² The one that fits the best is "By the Rivers of Babylon We Sat Down and Wept." Byron writes,

We sat down and wept by the waters
Of Babel, and thought of the day
When our foe, in the hue of his slaughters,
Made Salem's high places his prey;
And ye, oh her desolate daughters!
Were scatter'd all weeping away.

[. . .]

On the willow that harp is suspended,

²² A detailed discussion of Byron's sympathies with the Jews in *The Hebrew Melodies* can be found in Chapter 5.

Oh Salem! Its sound should be free! (I.III.81-2)

The echoes of these two poems are fairly clear, as they are both based on Psalm 137. The most obvious connection is the setting of both poems. In a moment when St. Clara is addressing her Irish troops, her poetic expression actually discusses the exile of the Jews, which seems slightly out of place. There is also a duplication of several key images: the river, weeping daughters, and harps “suspended” in Byron and “hung” in Lamb in Willow trees. The composition dates of these two poems are readily available. Byron wrote his piece in 1815, a full year before Lamb’s novel came out, allowing her access to the text as she composed her novel.

Of course, St. Clara is not the only poet in *Glenarvon*. Lamb creates specific links between Glenarvon and Byron’s Harold besides the fact that both men are fairly stereotypical Byronic heroes, and thus antisocial, egotistical, and antireligious. Looking a little more closely at some of Glenarvon’s poems reveals Byron’s creative voice behind Lamb’s. In the novel, Glenarvon sings to claim Calantha, though his song is of “Farewell,” and in *Childe Harold*, Byron includes the embedded poem “Adieu, Adieu, my Native Shore” as Harold sets sail from England. Not only are both poems of leaving, they are written in the same rhythm and rhyme scheme. In fact, their lines are almost interchangeable. Lamb says,

Farewell.

Ah! Frown not thus—nor turn from me,

I must not—dare not—look on thee;

Too well thou know’st how dear thou art,

‘Tis hard but yet ‘tis best to part;

I wish thee not to share my grief,
It seeks, it hopes, for no relief. (179)

Byron's poem reads, as if taking up from where Lamb left off,

For who would trust the seeming sighs
Of wife or paramour?
Fresh feres will dry the bright blue eyes
We late saw streaming o'er.
For pleasures past I do not grieve,
Nor perils gathering near;
My greatest grief is that I leave
Nothing that claims a tear. (I.8. 178)

As all of these textual echoes demonstrate, Lamb's imitation shows her desire to be both a rival of Byron, but also a wish to appropriate him, in order to become a writing version of Byron herself. This is not accomplished without specific revisions, however.

The most obvious change is that Lamb's version of the Byronic hero becomes female; this is a revision that the Brontë sisters will more fully explore a generation later. *Glenarvon* contains the portraits of three different women as they are brought to ruin by Glenarvon, but only two of them can really be considered Byronic heroes, Calantha and St. Clara. But even here, there are differences between the two female leads. Calantha is a fairly realistic depiction of an early nineteenth-century woman, while St. Clara is more idealized and thus much like the hero Byron became after his involvement with the Greek War for Independence.

From the beginning of the novel, Calantha is reared to be somewhat different from the stereotypically powerless women of her time period. Her spirit is far more independent, if not outright wild. Of Calantha, Lamb says that “a fearless spirit raised her, she scarcely deigned to bow the knee before her God; and man, as she had read of him in history, appeared too weak, too trivial to inspire either alarm or admiration” (31). A little later in the chapter, Calantha says of herself, “I would not bend my free spirit to the weakness of which you accuse me, for all the world can offer; your Calantha will never acknowledge a master; will never yield her soul’s free and immortal hopes, to any earthy affection!” (35). Calantha is not a submissive woman; she proudly rebels against the constraints of marriage that her age and class would impose. While other women “knew the place they were called upon to fill in society; and they sought not to outstep the bounds which good sense had prescribed” (36), when it comes time for Calantha to marry, she avers that she “never would become a slave and a wife; — [Lord Avondale] must not expect it” (50).

Calantha has other qualities that mark her as a female Byronic hero besides her desire to exist outside of what is expected of women during the Regency. Lamb tells us that “she stood upon the summit of the cliff, hour after hour, to behold the immense ocean, watching its waves, as they swelled to the size of mountains, then dashed with impetuous force against the rocks below; [. . .] gazing on the lofty summits [. . .] lost in idle and visionary thought” (32). This description could easily be applied to Harold in Byron’s *Childe Harold*; Calantha can be compared with “the fierce eagle who soars above all others, and cannot brook a rival in its flight (321). These qualities would be applied to later female literary heroes created by Emily Brontë and George Eliot. That is,

Calantha can be viewed as an early model for both Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* and Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*.

However, one thing different about Calantha is her refined or at least impassioned artistic senses, which really mark her as a Byronic hero. Just as Lamb herself was very impressed by music, Calantha's reaction is decidedly Romantic. Lamb writes, "You have often described to me her excessive fondness of music. [. . .] She does not admire it, as one of the lovers of harmony might. On no; she feels it in her very soul—it awakens every sensibility—it plays upon the chords of her overheated imagination—it fills her eyes with tears, and strengthens and excites the passions" (69).²³

Lamb describes Calantha's spirit by explicitly connecting it to Ireland. She writes that Calantha is like a horse, which "flies lightly and wildly proud of its liberty among its native hills and valleys, [that] may toss its head and plunge as it snuffs the air and rejoices in its existence" (71-2). The Irish horse is used as a symbol, and eventually reemerges as the steed on which St. Clara plunges over the cliff. St. Clara's characteristics as a typical Byronic hero are obvious and pervasive. She turns Glenarvon's men against him, leads an Irish revolutionary force against the English, gets wounded in battle, and finally leaps over a cliff heroically killing herself rather than surrendering. Although St. Clara is "bleeding to death from her wounds" (355), she "pressed the spur into [her horse's] sides, and galloped in haste to the edge of the cliff" (356); "the affrighted steed saw not the fearful chasm into which, goaded on by his rider, he involuntarily plunged" (357).

²³ One link between Lamb and Calantha involves music. In accordance with the terms of their affair, Glenarvon refuses to allow Calantha to dance in public (Lamb 158), just as Byron supposedly chastised Lamb for waltzing at parties he also attended. In the novel this is due to jealousy, and in life vanity, as Byron was lame and could not dance.

Just before St. Clara's fatal fall, Lamb writes, "'Hark!' [. . .] 'obey my last commands—light the beacons on the hill! Belfont and St. Alvin's shall blaze; the seat of his fathers shall fall; and with their ashes, mine shall never mingle! Glenarvon, farewell!'" (357). It could be that this fire has precedence in Lamb's life. Lamb burned copies of Byron's letters in December 1812 at a massive outdoor bonfire she directed at the Melbourne family country estate in Ireland. Lamb wrote a special incantation to be read as she destroyed Byron and his letters in effigy. Family servants were hired to dress up and take part in the ceremony. Lamb did not burn her originals, however, as she always privileged the original more than the forgery, which is made clear in the novel. In the case of the character Glenarvon, Lamb employs another imitation, a decidedly Byron-like character. The purpose of this puppet, whom Lamb can manipulate and control, even supply words to, was perhaps to exercise control over the original on which he was based, Byron. For as long as her Byron (Glenarvon) speaks, Lamb speaks as Byron, becoming him while simultaneously creating him, an obvious display of dominance.

Employing the Byronic hero necessarily allows Lamb avenues of forbidden exploration, most of them sexual, especially so due to her gender. Both Calantha and St. Clara co-opt the typically male power of "the gaze," especially in relation to Glenarvon, which seems to be a gender reversal that he most commonly inspires. Lamb writes, "To Calantha it appeared that the eye was given her for no other purpose than to admire all that was fair and beautiful. Certain it is, she made use of her's; and whether the object of such admiration was man, woman, or child, horse, or flower²⁴, if excellent in its kind"

²⁴ Glenarvon's first gift to Calantha is a rose. Lamb writes, "She had reason to be mortified by the remark which accompanied the gift. 'I offer it to you,' he said, 'because the rose at this season is rare, and all that is new or rare has for a moment, I believe, some value in your estimation'" (150). Byron's first gift to Lamb

(84). Interestingly, St. Clara adopts the gaze, while dressed as a young man. While at a public concert, St. Clara takes Glenarvon's harp, and sings while fixing her eye only on him. Lamb says, "a young performer appeared. Was it a boy! Such grace—such beauty, soon betrayed her: it was Miss St. Clare. [. . .] the youthful performer seized her harp—Glenarvon's harp—and singing, whilst her dark brilliant eyes fixed on him alone, she gave vent to the emotions of her own bosom" (157). Only Glenarvon seems unmoved by this incident, as he commonly inspires such playful gender confusion, although the audience at the concert expresses intense approbation.

St. Clara often takes control over Glenarvon's harp in order to produce her own songs, not unlike Lamb as she co-opts bits of Byron. The following describes St. Clara as a cross-dressing poet, singing to Calantha in a rather homoerotic moment: "from above [she] beheld a young man. Ah no—it was St. Clara. *Too soon she saw it was her.* Her ear had caught the last murmurs of Glenarvon's song, and her hand feebly repeated the strain. [. . .] then, throwing the plumed hat aside, [. . .] she struck the full chords" (emphasis added 180). "Too soon she saw it was her" seems to betray Calantha's interest in lengthening the gender play and her disappointment that she quickly sees through St. Clara's disguise. This event also demonstrates Lamb's own relationship to Byron in terms of art. St. Clara begins her song by repeating the last few measures of what Glenarvon had just sung moments before, as if employing his art will get her closer to him. However, St. Clara has the power to remove her disguise, and strike the full chords of Glenarvon's harp for herself, as if she can break the ties that keep her dependent on Glenarvon's art. It is as if Lamb wishes she could do the same thing with her novel, break

was a carnation and a rose, accompanied by a note reading: "Your Ladyship, I am told, likes all that is rare and new—for a moment" (Lamb 372).

free from the influence of Byron, and instead of imitating him become him, especially as a means of reversing his dominance over her.

St. Clara is not just a poet, but also a military leader. It is as a general overseeing Glenarvon's troops that she seems to arouse the most interest, for she seems to blur the lines between male and female most completely, making her almost "the third sex." Lamb writes, "The plumed hat and dark, flowing mantle, the emerald clasp and chain [. . .] the sunny ringlets which fell in profusion over a skin of alabaster, the soft smile of enchantment blended with the assumed fierceness of a military air, the deep expressive glance of passion and sensibility, the youthful air of boyish playfulness, and that blush which years of crime had not entirely banished [. . .]" (321) held the fascination of all who beheld her.²⁵

Calantha too, dresses as boy in the novel. In her case, she is doing it in order to elope with Glenarvon in the middle of the night. When Byron and Lamb discussed elopement, Lamb, as her character would later do, appeared at Byron's home dressed as a male page. Byron's friend Hobhouse talked him out of the rash elopement scheme and reinstated Lamb at her husband's home. Of Calantha, Lamb says, "It was past three o'clock, when Calantha opened the cabinet where the page's clothes were formerly kept, and drew from thence his mantle and plumed hat; and thus disguised, prepared for the interview [with Glenarvon]" (219). Lamb often dressed as a male page and accompanied Byron as such while in public. Lamb's sexual ambiguity at these times confused, aroused, and sustained Byron's interest in her. Lamb lacked the voluptuousness and soft femininity that typified most of Byron's heterosexual conquests. Lamb was thin, frail,

²⁵ St. Clara looks like common depictions of St. Joan of Arc, who likewise blended male and female designations.

and Byron commonly referred to her as “the mad skeleton” once their relationship concluded. In light of Byron’s probable bisexuality, his attraction to her becomes more understandable.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of *Glenarvon* deserve a brief discussion here. William Lamb sent his wife to the Melbourne home in Ireland to “get over” Byron. While there, however, Lamb spent her days pining for Byron, and her nights, dressed like a page, frantically writing the novel. According to eye-witnesses, Lamb first met with her prospective publisher dressed as a pageboy (Wilson xvii).²⁶ Lamb claims to have written the entire 380-page manuscript in only six weeks, leaving her little time for revision. Or at least, that is the legend surrounding the novel, which links its composition to tales about Byron’s similar rapidity. More recently, it is believed that Lamb probably wrote the novel over a course of two or three years after their affair concluded.²⁷

Glenarvon may also have been a pivotal text for Byron, even influencing aspects of *Don Juan*. For the novel, which we know Byron read as he was developing the epic, offered him three perspectives on himself that ultimately found their way into *Don Juan*. First the novel provided a way for Byron to see himself and his character from a position outside himself, even though he denied this. Writing to Thomas Moore on 5 December 1816, Byron recorded, “As for the likeness, the picture can’t be good—I did not sit long enough” (*LBSLJ* 138-9). Second, when Lamb relates how *Glenarvon* is perceived by the

²⁶ All of these examples of cross-dressing can be considered as another type of forgery that Lamb commonly engaged in, perhaps also indicating the situation of the female writer as “challenged” to produce literature in the guise of her own gender.

²⁷ In terms of how all of this behavior affected Lamb’s marriage, the novel obliges us. Lord Avondale eventually returns from the front lines to request a divorce, just as William Lamb unsuccessfully requested of his own wife after *Glenarvon* was published.

women in the text, she is really offering Byron a way to see and understand just how women were affected by his poetry, presence, and sexual attractiveness.

Chapter 45 of *Glenarvon* is especially filled with this kind of information. As Lord Glenarvon enters the concert hall Lamb describes the scene

‘Where is he? – ‘Which is he?’ –was whispered now from mouth to mouth [. . .] One object appeared suddenly to engage the most boundless curiosity. ‘Is that really Lord Glenarvon?’ said a pretty little woman pushing her way towards him. ‘O! let me but have the happiness of speaking one word to him! –let me but say, when I return to my home, that I have seen him, and I shall be overjoyed.’ [. . .] The rush was then general; everyone would see—would speak to their Lord—their King [. . .]’ (156).

This passage clearly elucidates the most common reactions to Byron during the height of his fame. He could not appear in public without causing near riots. The nameless “pretty little woman” fights her way through the throng to speak “one word to him.” Failing this, she admits that she will be “overjoyed” at merely seeing him. This woman’s tremendous yearning is shared by the crowd generally. By describing Glenarvon as “their King,” Lamb informs Byron about both the depth of his fans’ devotion as well as his powers over them.

But perhaps the most valuable thing *Glenarvon* offered Byron was a way of inverting stereotypical gender roles. The novel begins in much the same way as Byron’s *The Corsair*, with Glenarvon in the role of seducer. However, this role is reversed as Calantha falls in love with Glenarvon and in turn pursues him. Moreover, when their brief but intense affair is over, Calantha initiates a frantic attempt to recapture

Glenarvon's affections. She hounds him with letters, ignoring her husband, her children, and even her own mental and physical well being in order to rekindle the relationship, much the same way Lamb herself reacted. Lamb writes in the novel: "Lady Avondale wrote again and again to Glenarvon. All that a woman would repress, all that she once feared to utter, she now ventured to write" (278). In this way Calantha becomes the romantic pursuer. This was important to Byron as he constructed the *Don Juan* epic, wherein the innocent Juan is hotly pursued.²⁸

Glenarvon too engages in sexual games, though some of them are forced on him rather than chosen. This is especially true once he becomes famous. Like Byron, who felt persecuted by his female fans, Glenarvon experiences similar situations. The co-opted female version of the male gaze is used to objectify and dominate him sexually. And it is not merely young women who chase after him, as Lamb specifically notes. After breakfast one morning, the aged Lady Augusta²⁹ admits, "it is quite natural we should all fall in love with Glenarvon. I have myself; only he will not return my advances. Did you observe *what an eye I made him* at breakfast? . . . but that never was a love making meal. Place me near him at supper, and you shall see what I can do" (emphasis added 168). But Glenarvon also has literal followers, and not mere fans. After seeing his daughters and his wife marching behind Glenarvon, St. Clara's father says, "Are not Miss Laura and Miss Jessica after him at this very time, and my pretty niece, my young, my dear Elinor, and Lady St. Clare, more crazy than all, is not she following him about as if he were some god?" (111).

²⁸ A detailed discussion of gender reversals in Byron's poetry can be found in Chapter 2.

²⁹ This character is not to be confused with Byron's half sister Augusta, who does not appear in the novel.

Glenarvon's letter of dismissal to Calantha discusses his feelings of being chased. Glenarvon makes it clear that such behavior is unbecoming for women, even though he inspired the action. Just as Lamb indulged her memory of falling in love with Byron as she describes Calantha and Glenarvon's developing relationship, so too in several places Lamb also records the details of their breakup. For instance, Byron's actual letter of 9 November 1812 is cited in the novel's annotations: "Lady Caroline—" Byron writes,

Our affections are not in our power—mine are engaged. I love another ... my opinion of you is entirely altered ... I am no longer your lover ... As to yourself, Lady Caroline, correct your vanity, which has become ridiculous—exert your caprices on others, enjoy the excellent flow of spirits which make you so delightful in the eyes of others, and leave me in peace. (373)

The novel paraphrases Byron's original: "I am no longer your lover; and since you oblige me to confess it, by this truly unfeminine *persecution*—learn, that I am attached to another" (emphasis added 280). Glenarvon, like Byron before him, clearly feels threatened by Calantha's romantic pursuit. What's more, the letter of dismissal to Calantha is sent from Lady Mandeville's home, with her seal, just as Lamb's dismissal letter was sent from Lady Oxford's home. And, just as Glenarvon shares Calantha's letters with his new mistress, Lamb discovered that Byron shared hers with Lady Oxford. Finally, the extent of Glenarvon's frustration when forced to deal with the women he has "corrupted" also speaks to his fear of the fascination he has procured. Speaking to Calantha of St. Clara's particular obsession, Glenarvon laments, "She absolutely forced herself upon me. She sat at my door, and wept when I urged her to return home. What could I do [. . .] Oh! my adored Calantha, look thus on me. You are not like this wretched

girl: there is nothing feminine, or soft, or attractive in her; in you there is every charm” (196). But, as we know, Calantha herself will eventually act exactly as St. Clara does, after Glenarvon has left her.

However, Glenarvon is not just pursued by women. He also mixes male and female qualities. Lady Margaret says of him, ““He unites the malice and petty vices of woman, to the perfidy and villainy of a man. You do not know him as I do”” (241). Glenarvon, like St. Clara, almost becomes “the third sex,” especially in relation to other men. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s ideas of homosocial bonding unite Glenarvon to other males. It is through the female characters that Glenarvon can come to his “real” prey, the men in the text. In other words, one reason why Glenarvon attracts female followers is to corrupt the wives and daughters of other men. The women are used as stepping-stones in relations between men. Lady Margaret points this out to Calantha: ““you are loved more because your ruin will make the misery of a whole family, and your disgrace will cast a shade upon the *only man* whom Glenarvon ever acknowledged as superior to himself—superior both in mind and person. This, child, is your potent charm—your sole claim to his admiration” (emphasis added 240). Lady Margaret knows that Glenarvon is really pursuing Avondale. Thus, there is little surprise, seventy pages later, when Glenarvon declares: ““I could have loved that man,’ said Glenarvon, as he watched [Avondale] in the distance. ‘He has a nobleness, generosity, sincerity. I only assume the appearance of those virtues. My heart and his must never be compared: therefore I am compelled to hate him.—but O! not so much as I abhor myself’” (314).

Homosexuality is never explicitly discussed in the text. Lamb merely drops hints, which only Byron himself would have picked up, hints like employing the names Clare

and Ruthven. In keeping with the theme of sexual taboo in Byron's biography,³⁰ the name of Glenarvon's son by Alice is Clare. The Earl of Clare was a young man Byron initially befriended at Harrow, and later seduced. The fact that his name is used by Lamb in *Glenarvon* provides some validity to the suggestion that Byron "confessed" the nature of this relationship to Lamb, or that she guessed the details of it and included his name to harass Byron, indicating that perhaps she knew his secret. Furthermore, the man in charge of Glenarvon's estates while he is dispossessed of his property is Clarence de Ruthven. Grey de Ruthvyn was the name of the actual tenant Byron had at Newstead Abbey, who apparently tried to seduce Byron when he was in his early teens. Lamb may have used the name "Ruthven" in part to torment Byron about the truth of their "friendship."

The taboo sexuality in *Glenarvon* is commonly heterosexual, and includes marital adultery, expressed rather tamely, and incest, which is more implied than overt. The incest in *Glenarvon* stems from Calantha's relationship with her cousin Buchanan, whom she does not marry. As a child, Calantha was forced to wear a diamond bracelet from Buchanan as a promise to marry him with the inscription: "*Stesso sangue, Stessa sorte,*" meaning in Italian, "same blood, same fate." However, Calantha and Buchanan are *reared* as siblings.³¹ Lamb writes, "what say you to Mr. Buchanan, being her cousin, brought up with her from a child?" (98). Moreover, when Lamb first describes Glenarvon's feelings for Calantha it is expressed as incest: "It was the attachment of a brother to a sister whom he loved: it was all devotion" (174). While it first appears as if Lamb is discussing her own life, she may have referred to brother/sister incest as another way to harass Byron, who surely would have noticed references to incest in the text. All

³⁰ A detailed discussion of Byron's "deviant" sexuality can be found in Chapter 2.

³¹ Catherine and Heathcliff are treated similarly in *Wuthering Heights*.

of this seems evidence that Lamb is using knowledge of Byron's personal life as blackmail, indicating perhaps that if he did not behave in exile according to her wishes, she could share what she knew about him to damage his reputation permanently. Thus, referring to Byron's sexual past in the text is yet another ploy at exerting her dominance over Byron.

The way in which Lamb more overtly discusses Byron's "deviant" sexuality in *Glenarvon* is through the figure of the vampire, which Glenarvon embodies. It is not uncommon to find the Byronic hero as a vampire, as Chapter 2 explains. Glenarvon is a mysterious stranger who has suddenly appeared in Belfont. He is so shrouded in uncertainty, that it is not even clear that he is a man. After Glenarvon has murdered Lady Margaret, the Duke cannot even discern whether he is human: "was it a human form? It lengthened—it advanced from the thicket. [. . .] and the heart of man sunk before its approach; [. . .] That black shapeless mass—that guilty trembling being, who, starting at his own shadow, slowly crept forward" (347). It is also widely reported that Glenarvon does not actually live in his ancestral home. Instead, his rebel followers live at Belfont Castle, while Glenarvon lives underground: "'my master [Glenarvon], everyone knows lives under ground, in the family vault.' 'Is he dead then, or what can he be doing under ground?'" (116) asks St. Clara's uncle. It has even been rumored that Glenarvon died in childhood: "Indeed the report of his death was so often affirmed, that when he again presented himself, so changed in manner and in form, [. . .] they questioned one with another whether he was in reality their lord. 'I am not what I seem,' he would frequently say" (140).

What is known for sure are Glenarvon's vampiric tendencies. Lamb writes, "He had looked upon the dying and the dead; had seen the tear of agony without emotion; had heard the shriek of despair, and felt the hot blood as it flowed from the heart of a murdered enemy, nor turned from the sickening sight" (141-2). What's more, Glenarvon's Belfont Castle and St. Alvin's Priory are based on Byron's Newstead Abbey, where he once dug up a monk's skull, which he later mounted on a silver stem and drank from. In *Glenarvon*, this story is slightly adjusted. While touring Glenarvon's castle, the housekeeper relates to Calantha's family a tale of Glenarvon's ancestor: "'It is here,' she said, 'in this chamber, that John de Ruthven drank hot blood from the skull of his enemy and died'" (123).

Glenarvon also has other powers commonly attributed to vampires; he has the ability to inspire followers, who seem enthralled by him and are willing to do his bidding, no matter the cost to their personal lives. The references to Byron and his adoring fans should not be missed. Lamb writes, "'they move along, a thousand at a time, in a silence would surprise you—just in the still night, and you can scarce hear them as they pass; but I know well when they're coming'" (134). These men and women are an infection, as if vampirism is a blood disease, mixed with superstitious speculation: "'Cattle walk out of the paddocks of themselves: women, children, pigs, wander after Glenarvon; and Miss Elinor, forgetful of her old father, [. . .] her religion, and all else, to the scandal of everyone [. . .] heads the rabble. They have meetings underground [. . .] and in the caverns: *no one can stop the infection; the poison in the fountain of life*; and our very lives and estates are no longer in safety'" (emphasis added 113-114). Alice MacAllain's father, whose daughter is one of Glenarvon's victims, complains, "'it's a rage, a fashion.'

‘Its [sic] a frenzy,’ returned the Doctor, —‘a pestilence which has fallen on the land, and all, it’s my belief, because the stripling has not one Christian principle, or habit in him: he’s a heathen’” (111-112). Discussing vampirism as a contagion would later be commonly found in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.

Glenarvon’s followers are also his sexual victims; few characters demonstrate this as well as Calantha. Lamb tells us that Glenarvon could rouse “the passions of those over whom he sought to exercise dominion. Yet, when by every art and talent he had raised the scorching flames of love, *tearing himself from his victim*, he would leave her” (emphasis added 162-3). Glenarvon also has the power to invade Calantha’s dreams. In one dream, he is unmistakably described in vampiric terms; Lamb says that he appeared “pale, deadly, and cold: his hand was ice, and as he placed it upon hers, she shrunk as from the grasp of death, and awoke oppressed with terror” (172). Once she reciprocates his affections, Calantha begins to change, not too unlike Lucy Western in *Dracula*. Lamb writes,

To the throne of heaven, she no longer offered up one prayer [. . .] and upon a sleepless bed, visions of horror distracted her fancy; and when, at break of day, a deep and heavy slumber fell on her, instead of relieving a weary spirit, feverish dreams and maddening apprehensions disturbed her rest. Glenarvon had entirely possessed himself of her imagination. (175)

Unable to sleep at night, Calantha rests only during the day, and the dreams she has are not restful or healthy, again revealing that the vampire brings disease with him. His sexuality is a plague that disrupts the natural order of things, in part because his sexuality is not natural.

To be fair, Glenarvon does seem to admit to Calantha what he is, without ever saying it explicitly. Glenarvon confesses, “I am not what you think me, my Calantha. Unblessed myself, I can but give misery to all who approach me. All that follow after me come to this pass; for my love is death, and this is the reward for constancy” (229). He further admits, several chapters later, “the pupils of Glenarvon never can forget their master. Better they had lived for years of folly and vice with thousands of common lovers, than one hour in the presence of such as I am” (266). The comparison to other lovers makes it clear that the vampire’s sexuality is deadly to those who contract it. Like Byron before her, Lamb has her Byron confess what he is, without ever really revealing what specifically that is. In the novel, Glenarvon becomes increasingly bold in detailing his crimes to Calantha, just as Byron supposedly did in reality. Lamb indicated this in an interview with Lady Byron, on 27 March 1816 after her separation. Annabella was afraid that Byron would try to seize their daughter Ada and was looking for any evidence she could use against him. Annabella took careful notes of the interview. The story goes that in order to rid himself of Lamb altogether, Byron took her on a ride and in the privacy of his carriage, confessed that he not only practiced homosexuality while in school, but also that he committed incest with Augusta after he was married (Marchand 229-30). While in the novel, Glenarvon’s confessions bind him with Calantha in sin, in real life, Lamb was supposedly so terrified by all that was said during the carriage ride, she did not seek him again in person.

In the novel, Lamb reveals the links between sexuality, poetry, and vampirism as well. Glenarvon’s followers are willing victims of his art. It is said that he “inspired the passions he felt, and inflamed the imagination of his hearers to deeds of madness—to acts

of the most extravagant absurdity. Crowds followed upon his steps; yet it was melancholy to see them pass—so fair, so young, and yet so utterly hardened and *perverted*” (emphasis added 142). This is especially true for the young, male Lindsey, who follows Glenarvon after he is bereft of his fiancé Alice, whom Glenarvon has seduced away from him. But women too are at risk for Glenarvon’s perversion. In fact, it may be argued that they are even more susceptible: ““Was it in woman’s nature to hear him, and not to cherish every word he uttered? And, having heard him, was it in the human heart ever again to forget those accents, which awakened every interest, and quieted every apprehension?” (148). Glenarvon is attractive due to the powers of his art, perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Glenarvon’s vampirism; Lamb links it directly to Glenarvon’s and, by extension, Byron’s powers of poetry. His influence not only affects Lamb emotionally, but also seems to transfix her powers of artistic expression, infecting even the novel *Glenarvon*. Lamb talks about the thralldom of Glenarvon thus:

The eye of the rattle-snake, it has been said, once fixed upon its victim, overpowers it with terror and alarm: the bird, thus charmed dares not attempt its escape; it sings its last sweet lay; flutters its little pinions in the air, then falls like a shot before its destroyer, unable to fly from his fascination. Calantha bowed, therefore with the rest, pierced to the heart at once by the maddening power that destroys alike the high and low. (148)

There is also an inherent connection between the vampire and Orientalism; the vampire is often depicted as a foreigner and his effects on the home population are usually represented as sexual disease. Lamb’s novel contains both these tendencies, usually when it orientalizes the Irish. According to Joep Leerssen, Ireland “could be said

to have stood to England in a quasi-colonial relationship, and to have undergone the same process of hegemonistic representation in English discourse as ‘the’ Orient” (161-2), although England’s relations with Ireland have never been exactly “colonial” (164). Thus, the Irish were in a unique position, both able to speak “in the voice of [. . .] worldwide Ascendancy” or to speak of Ireland “exclusively in terms of a suppressed colony” (Leerssen 171). It is in this way that Ireland can be claimed as “no less exotic than England’s Eastern colonies” (168), which is what *Glenarvon* does.

As David Punter has said, there is always a link between the gothic and Orientalism because these narratives are especially “responsive to the specific conditions of power.” In the gothic, the recapitulation of the past is essentially “a discourse of the marginal” (Punter 123). Ireland in the nineteenth-century experienced a romantic exoticism “similar to that of Byron” (Leerssen 167). And in the case of the English Caroline Lamb, orientalizing Ireland may have offered her a way to participate in the Orientalism practiced by Byron without traveling to the dangerous regions he visited, regions, she as a woman, was unable to access. In the hands of English writers, the picture of Ireland that emerges can be extremely negative. Irish characters were portrayed as reckless, profligate, tumultuously passionate, and unable to offer moral or intellectual restraint (Leerssen 172). In the Romantic period, of course, these were generally considered positives and can be found in Lamb’s Irish characters, especially *Glenarvon*.

The novel is set in Belfont, Ireland, the home of the Glenarvons and the Avondales during the Irish Revolution in 1798. Lamb describes the period thus: “The threatening storm of rebellion now darkened around. —Acts of daily rapine and outrage alarmed the inhabitants of Ireland, both in the capitol and in the country: all the military

forces were increased; Lord Avondale's regiment [. . .] was ordered out on actual service" (60). Glenarvon is the leader of the Irish revolutionaries. Of his leadership, Lamb records, "the infatuation was general: he was termed the leader of the people, the liberator of his country, the defender of the rights of Ireland. If he wandered forth through Belfont, he was followed by admiring crowds" (166). Lamb includes addresses from Glenarvon to his supporters:

My heart bleeds for your wrongs. Every tear that falls from an Irishman is like a drop of the heart's best blood, [and your leader] feels for your misfortunes; who will not live among you to see you wronged: and who, though having nothing left for himself, is willing to divide his property amongst you all to the last shilling [. . .] Even if we fail, let us die defending the rights of man—the independence of Ireland. (259)

Although written long before Byron's involvement with the Greek cause, this speech sounds much like something Lamb would have scripted for him at that time.

Glenarvon achieves phenomenal, overnight renown upon the publication of his "Address to the United Irishmen." The name of Glenarvon's speech actually mirrors Byron's first speech on taking his seat in the House of Lords, which took the side of striking Irish framemakers. However, Glenarvon eventually turns traitor against the Irish people in favor of England, which restores his title and property, and provides the ship on which he later drowns. St. Clara takes over the doomed rebellion. Her words of revolution are just as powerful, if not more so than Glenarvon's. Lamb has St. Clara discuss her foes: "England, thou has destroyed thy sister country [. . .] The hour of

retribution is at hand. Give back the properties that thy nation has wrested from a suffering people. [. . .] Woe to the tyrant who has betrayed his trust!” (354).

Yet, for all of this, it is not clear which side of the debate Lamb supports. She certainly triumphs in Ireland’s quest for freedom, and seems to glory in speeches that rouse support, while morally damning the effort. Lamb at times defends the English ruling-class in power in Ireland through characters like Lord Avondale, who is modeled on her own husband, who did own land in Ireland and became the Secretary of State for Ireland under Canning’s administration (Kelsall 4). She also allows characters like the English Sir Richard, Avondale’s uncle, to speak against the Irish cause: “I hate these rebellious party colors. I am for the King, old England; and a plague on the Irish marauders, and my Lord Glenarvon at the head of them” (250). The novel, therefore, reflects Lamb’s own extraordinarily conflicted ambivalence about the Irish Problem, but it is a mistake to think that she does not acknowledge the complications in the relationship between the two nations.

Glenarvon in fact engages directly in Whig politics, offering an informed woman’s perspective and solution to a complex political impasse facing the empire. According to Douglass, *Glenarvon* reveals Lamb’s “astuteness in the politics, artificial wit and hypocrisy of Whig culture” (“Playing” 2). Of course, a woman writer “with political acumen—was an anomaly” (“Playing” 3), but Lamb had several significant political figures in her life like her husband, eventually Lord Melbourne, with a safe seat from Newport. Through her own family the Ponsonbys, Lamb cultivated personal relationships with Queen Marie Antoinette, the Prince Regent and his wife, and revolutionary literary figures such as Godwin, Sheridan, Scott, Blake, Moore, Bulwer-

Lytton, and Coleridge (Douglass, *Lady Caroline* xi). *Glenarvon*, generally regarded as “the distressed outpourings of diseased sexuality,” (4) according to Malcolm Kelsall, “reveals the inherent contradictions of the Whig ideology [. . .] in providing a scapegoat for the failure of [Lamb’s] society to find a solution to the Irish problem” (Kelsall 4-5). The novel offers a straightforward analysis of the evils of English absentee landownership and its imperial leanings more generally—and seems to advocate Irish revolution, but the situation is often more complex than this.

Kelsall finds that through the use of the Byronic hero, Lamb demonstrates the peril inherent in political unrest. The Byronic hero is a figure of rebellion, and revolutions, like those in Ireland, are dangerous. Lamb seems to want the best of both worlds; she argues for modest reform so that her class can applaud liberty and freedom, without putting their own elevated social and political rank at risk. Her Byronic hero is a convenient scapegoat, the product of a corrupt society, which rejects him due to its own guilt over helping to create him. The Byronic hero can be admired when far away in Greece fighting for the rights of man, which the English can support, without fearing that he will inspire such rebellion in the Irish, which obviously would not be desired.

Glenarvon himself represents revolution in general and the Irish rebellion in particular in this novel. But the revolution he inspires is both political and sexual. In fact, most of his sexual conquests are attracted to him in part due to his political views. Kelsall maintains that “part of the seductive appeal of Glenarvon lies in his political enthusiasm” (10). His views are fused with “a mixture of Satanism and sexuality [. . .] not without their political implications” (6). Glenarvon’s *libido dominandi* “debauches the political aim just as, in the role of lover, Glenarvon debauches [. . .] the women in the novel” (9).

Glenarvon is the perfect blend of the dangers inherent in both excessive political and sexual liberty. In the character of Calantha, Lamb “shows the corruption of natural innocence by the sophistication of Whig society and by the Byronic spirit” (Kelsall 14). *Glenarvon* thus embodies both the fundamental human drive toward revolution as necessary to challenge the evil of the world as it is, and the practical fear of the disastrous consequences of insurrection in the world they might produce, politically *and* sexually.

It is said that two events stopped Lamb from writing; the first was Byron’s early demise. The Lamb family wisely kept this news from her, but the death of such a celebrity was hard to keep quiet. In fact, it is rumored that Lamb stumbled on Byron’s funeral train while out riding one day. Her reaction was not positive. Lamb herself claimed that the event produced a fever from which she never recovered (Douglass, *Lady Caroline* 256). From 1824 on, “Alcohol, laudanum, and pills took their toll on Lady Lamb, as she abandoned her abortive struggle to become a feminine novel-writing version of Byron” (Douglass, “Playing” 16). The final blow was delivered unintentionally by Thomas Medwin’s *Conversations With Byron*, which for the first time published Byron’s venomous poem “Remember Thee” (Wu 140). When Lamb read Byron’s response, she appears to have given up the will to live. Ultimately, it was Byron who remained in the position of power in their relationship, even after he died. Lamb would follow him not quite four years later on 25 January 1828.

Lady Caroline Lamb was and remains a fascinating puzzle, a riddle obscured by time and the short-term memory of a literary community, which even today punishes those who speak from the margins. Whatever its flaws, *Glenarvon* has its virtues and, as Douglass points out, “these gain stature if we read them as attempts to translate *Childe*

Harold into fiction” (“Playing” 15). Lamb’s romance with Byron supplies little to sustain interest in *Glenarvon* compared to the literary relationship it reveals between them.

Lamb’s female characters, who usurp Glenarvon’s sexual and political prowess as well as his powers of poetry, are just as threatening to Glenarvon as Lamb was to Byron, especially as she sought to become him in an effort to exert her dominance over him. In at least one way, she excels. As Clubbe says, Lamb successfully conceives of Glenarvon as “more terrifying and treacherous than any figure who ever stepped out of Byron’s own pages.” He is a “prototypic Heathcliff, a Satan with an occasional touch of the angel. He is the Byronic hero gone berserk” (Clubbe 209). The following chapter will look at another Byronic hero “gone berserk,” Heathcliff, by investigating the Brontë sisters, perhaps the only female authors as profoundly effected by Byron as Lady Caroline Lamb.

CHAPTER 4. THE BRONTËS AND EARLY VICTORIAN RESPONSES TO BYRON

Reactions to Byron varied widely during the early Victorian period as Romanticism in general remained largely influential and yet was dying out. While some authors writing from 1830-1860 wholeheartedly adopted Byron, and others were searching for a new *modus operandi*, another group offered an ambivalent and tempered response. Each of the three Brontë sisters offers a different, though typical reaction to Byronism in her novels and poetry. Emily represents full-scale adoption; Anne rejection; and Charlotte seems to demonstrate the tendency to be simultaneously attracted and repulsed. What's more, the sisters offer slightly different versions of the Byronic hero, which may account for the measurable differences in their reactions. To Emily, the Byronic hero is a force of nature that cannot and should not be tamed or controlled. Anne, on the other hand, finds him morally repellant and dangerous to society. Charlotte, however, seems to explore the seductive and redemptive qualities of the character type, who, she argues, can be reformed. A summary of written reactions to Byron during the Brontës' lifetime will be useful in understanding the different versions of him and his heroes the sisters offer in their work.

The death of Byron in 1824 was an event with major historical, cultural, political, and artistic implications, which would last the remainder of the century. The years 1824-1839 are especially important because Byron's personal and poetic myth and reputation were being evaluated, revised, and, to a large extent, settled, even though judgments of him were often based on faulty or unreliable information. This period of Byron reception is crucial to the Byronic myth as it would be understood and developed by early

Victorian authors, themselves profoundly impacted by Byron's life and death. Many authors, like the Brontës, began writing under the shadow of Byron.

Discussions of Byron saturated the literary marketplace from his death through the 1830s. Most of these sources begin by expressing grief over his loss. As Clement Tyson Goode, Jr. has noted, "When Byron breathed his last [. . .] the reaction was both simple and complicated; but in either case it was overwhelming. Initially there was sincere and immediate grief. This reached everyone." From close friends, servants, and relatives to "the vast crowd that attended the body all along its processional from its arrival on the Thames to its final burial in the family vault at Hucknall Torkard" (12), everyone felt Byron's death. After accidentally encountering Byron's funeral train, Lady Caroline Lamb suffered a massive depression from which she never recovered. One oft repeated story is that the fifteen-year-old Alfred Lord Tennyson, then living at Somersby, ran from his home distraught, and somewhere in the woods near the rectory, carved into a sandstone rock the phrase "Byron is dead." At first, reaction to Byron's death seems to have been personal and intense.

From Byron's death until about 1839, Byron studies experienced its most explosive outpouring, but the materials published are largely unreliable, due to the particular motives of each author. While some published based on monetary need, others sought justification of their own personal views, fame or notoriety, or to settle "a personal grudge," but "whatever the motive, the end result was the same—exploitation" (Goode 23). The first result of these accounts was a gradual tapering off of interest in Byron, the period having glutted itself on first-hand accounts. The second was that now stereotypical misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Byron's character were fully embraced and

established within the public at large, regardless of the validity of the account. And third, the period ends with “the forces of denigration firmly in command” (Goode 23).

At this point, in the early years of Byron studies, all important items were biographical.³² The majority of written commentaries in 1824 came from eyewitness accounts of his death in Greece. However, over the course of the next year, friends also began to publish accounts of their personal acquaintance with Byron. The remainder of the decade is overrun with attempts “to capitalize on the event, to exploit the materials of an association with a famous personality” (14). There was a desire, even from close friends, “to trade on the dead poet’s name” and the results were often “full of mischief” (Goode 16). Because most of these sources gave Byron’s character a rather negative cast, they are at once problematic and foundational to the mid-century’s understanding of Byron. Viewing these sources is beneficial before looking more closely at the reactions of the Brontës, who employ certain misconceptions found in these texts, whether intentionally or otherwise.

Four commemorations were especially influential; the first is Thomas Medwin’s *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron. . . at Pisa, in the Years 1821 and 1822*. While Medwin and Byron saw each other a number of times in Pisa, they were never intimate associates. Byron did not take Medwin very seriously and often said things to him in jest that were recorded as facts. Medwin’s account is especially controversial due to the “inaccuracy of known facts so egregious as to cast doubt on the whole piece” (Goode 15). Byron’s close friend John Cam Hobhouse noted fifty substantial errors in the text. Overall, Byron is portrayed as arrogant, lazy, and spoilt, having gorged himself on

³² Few sources actually entertained discussion of Byron’s merits as a poet as most readers took this as a given. Opinions on Byron’s talent as a poet would not change much until the 1840s.

his own talent and debauchery. However misleading it may have been, *Conversations* helped Medwin win a reputation for himself, and his version of Byron held lasting significance³³ because his was one of the first to offer a first-hand view of Byron. Surprisingly, most biographies, even those written today, rely heavily on his accounts.

The second crucial text of this period comes from Leigh Hunt, a sometime friend with whom Byron began the unsuccessful journal *The Liberal*. According to Goode, Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828) offers "the most openly vindictive of all the eyewitness accounts" (19). The figure of Byron that emerges is "avaricious, hypocritical, cowardly, jealous, superstitious, arrogant, insincere, inept in conversation, [and] bumbling in social situations" (Goode 20). The relationship between Hunt and Byron had never been good; it was stressed from its beginning, and the failure of *The Liberal* saw it fall flat. Hunt's account seems to slander Byron deliberately due to personal slights Hunt suffered. His views openly prejudiced readers against Byron, creating negative opinions, which seemed "almost impossible to controvert" (Goode 20).³⁴ Because of the lasting impression left by Hunt's book, friends of Byron felt compelled to correct his obviously biased image of the poet.

In 1830 specifically, another came forward to defend Byron and vindicate his memory in order to secure his place for future generations. The defense began, chiefly as a response to Hunt's book, in Thomas Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of His Life* (1830). Moore provided readers with a full-length portrait that took into account the strengths and weaknesses of Byron's character. Moore's book collected

³³ Arthur Huntington in Anne Brontë's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is a good representation in literature of Medwin's Byron.

³⁴ Hunt later appeared to regret his harsh portrayal of Byron somewhat in his own autobiography published at the end of his life.

an enormous amount of ephemera: 561 letters, the journals which were not burned in Murray's offices, including "Detached Thoughts," and dozens of interviews with people who actually knew Byron. As a collection, Moore's book becomes the first significant biography of Byron, largely held as the most reliable and exhaustive until Leslie A. Marchand's three volume *Byron: A Biography* (1950).³⁵

Lady Blessington, at one time Byron's patron, also published her own account of their acquaintance and conversations. The immediate motive for her collection appears to have been monetary (Goode 19). Her conversations were published serially in *New Monthly Magazine* in 1832 and 1833 and later collected into *The Idler in Italy* (1839). Blessington's condescension makes the Byron who emerges from her text pitiful and despondent in part because she repeatedly refers to him as "Poor Byron." This version of Byron was to have influence throughout the course of the century.³⁶ And, as Goode points out, Blessington's book is perhaps most remarkable for being "the only book-length record by a woman" (19).

As the Brontë children were first experimenting with writing, they did so under an inescapable cloud of Byronism. Bettina L. Knapp writes, "Although the [Brontë] children were inspired by a variety of works they had read, the passionate and heroic rebel, outcast, and fighter for causes, Lord Byron, was their absolute favorite" (24). Joan Rees similarly indicates, "Much of their wide reading influenced the writing of the Brontës, but in particular the minds of the three eldest were stimulated by the novels of Sir Walter

³⁵ The Brontë children had a copy of Moore's book, read it repeatedly, and offered it as reading to their friends. In a letter to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte writes, "for Biography, read Johnson's Lives of the Poets, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Southey's Life of Nelson, Lockhart's Life of Burns, Moore's Life of Sheridan, Moore's Life of Byron [. . .]" (Barker 220). Moore's biography was especially useful to the Brontës as they interpreted and presented their own versions of Byron.

³⁶ Much like Arthur Huntington, but perhaps even more akin to Edward Rochester at the end of *Jane Eyre*.

Scot and the poems of Lord Byron, descendants of whose heroes stride through all their works” (Rees 32). It’s not so much a question of whether or not the Brontës would be influenced by Byron’s life and work, but the extent and kind of influence each sister felt.

There were primarily three different kinds of reactions to Byron during the middle of the nineteenth century, and each Brontë sister represents a different kind of response. Emily is considered the most Romantic of the three sisters, thus it is not too surprising to find that she consistently provides a full-scale adoption of Byron in both her poetry and her novel *Wuthering Heights*. In contrast, Anne seems the most stereotypically Victorian of the three, and therefore tends to exhibit large-scale rejection of Byron in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. And finally, while Charlotte’s poetry demonstrates imitation of Byron, *Jane Eyre* allows for co-option of him only after punishment and reform, making Charlotte somewhat ambivalent about Byron.

As poets, the Brontë sisters were hugely influenced by Byron. Emily especially exhibits a kinship with Byron that demonstrates her full-scale adoption of him. One of the first critics to note this was Mathew Arnold in his elegy “Haworth Churchyard” (1855), which makes an explicit comparison between Emily and Byron. Arnold writes,

She whose genius, [. . .]
[. . .] was yet
Sweet and graceful: [. . .]
[. . .]
Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Darling, since Byron died,

That world-fam'd Son of Fire; She, who sank
Baffled, unknown, self-consum'd;
Whose too bold dying song
Shook, like a clarion-blast, my soul. (156-66)

According to Arnold, the chief difference between Emily and Byron is that while Byron became "That world-fam'd Son of Fire," Emily remained "Baffled, unknown, self-consum'd." However, as Arnold implies, there are similarities as well; both Emily and Byron shared a certain genius and the power to move readers to their very souls, but there are others.

Emily's chief female protagonist in her poetry is Augusta Geraldine Almeda. The name Augusta would seem to indicate a connection to Byron and his half-sister Augusta Leigh. Emily's Augusta, "who seems to have been a ruthless queen of Gondal," "has great energy and emotion. Some see in her the original of Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*" (Chitham and Winnifrith xxiii). According to Chitham and Winnifrith, at times Augusta "fulfilled the role of lawless *alter ego*, in whose character [Emily] could dwell and act without harming her own real-life personality" (xxiii). Like Branwell's Alexander Percy or Charlotte's Marquis of Durouno, Emily's Augusta Almeda perhaps provided her a useful mask. Also like Branwell, Emily is "acutely interested in the subject of rebellion and strife, but hers is a cosmic rebellion without sure reconciliation" (Chitham and Winnifrith xvii). The largely domestic Emily needed a persona, usually a Byronic hero, to speak this rebellion aloud.

Like Byron's, Emily's poems tend to create confusion about the gender identity of the speaker. In the case of *Don Juan*, Juan is obviously male, however, Byron often has

him speak as a female, putting his male character in the traditional role of the woman.³⁷

As Angela Leighton points out, “the buried form,” commonly found in Emily’s poems, “is more often female than male. But this need not reflect on the sex of the speaker.”

Assuming that Emily’s lover figures are usually male implies that the speaker is female, but this is not always the case. Often, according to Leighton, “A sexual struggle is thus mapped onto a struggle for poetic identity.” Thus, Emily’s poetic voice “remains unsettlingly open” (Leighton 66) in terms of gender, like Byron’s.

In addition, like Byron, Emily often wrote poetry that employs feminine rhyme, especially the tri-syllabic form (Leighton 63) unique to Byron’s *Don Juan*. One of Byron’s more famous examples of this is: “But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual, / Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck’d you all?” (I.22.175-6.). Emily’s verse is full of examples of tri-syllabic rhyme, especially “Remembrance”:

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild *Decembers*

From those brown hills, have melted into spring:

Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that *remembers*

[. . .]

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I *forget thee*,

While the world’s tide is bearing me along;

Other desires and other hopes *beset me*, [. . .]. (emphasis added 9-11, 13-15)

But there are examples of even deeper connections between Emily’s and Byron’s poetry. One of these is theme, especially the quest for self-oblivion as found in Emily’s “The Philosopher” and Byron’s *Manfred*. Emily writes,

³⁷ The inverted gender roles of Byron’s heroes are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

And even for that spirit, seer,
I've watched and sought my life-time long;
Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air—
An endless search, and always wrong!
Had I but seen his glorious eye
[. . .]
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
To cease to think, and cease to be;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest, [. . .]. (41-49)

Manfred's weakest point in Byron's play is when he calls upon the seven spirits, asking them for death in order to gain

Forgetfulness—
[. . .]
Of that which is within me; [. . .]
[. . .]
Oblivion, self-oblivion— (I.i.136, 138, 144)

It is not just that both Emily's and Byron's speakers are looking for a spirit, a seer whom they have sought in heaven, hell, earth, and air. They are searching for the same figure in order to achieve the same ends; both speakers would like to dispel their cowardly wish to cease to think, to cease to be. They both would like to numb their too sentient souls, too full of power and will, of self, to find any peace.

In addition, both speakers hope that death will bring about the end of self-hood, so that they can finally be at peace. Emily ends her poem with

This sentient soul, this living breath—
Oh, let me die—that power and will
Their cruel strife may close;
And conquering good, and conquering ill
Be lost in one repose! (52-56)

While Emily does not indicate the means of her speaker's death, Byron adds the immediate danger of Manfred standing "on the torrent's brink" (I.ii.14), contemplating jumping

[. . .] when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom'd bed
To rest forever— (I.ii.16-19)

Besides meditations on death, another common theme in both Emily's and Byron's poetry is fame. While Byron's quest for fame is well known and serves as one reason Victorians often came to reject him, scholars do not commonly conceive of any of the Brontë sisters in this light, especially not Emily, who more often than not is depicted as the most reclusive of the three. However, both Byron and Emily seem to indicate a simultaneous attraction to, desire for, and repulsion to fame in their poetry. Byron writes in Canto IV of *Childe Harold*,

[. . .] unfound the boon—unslack the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first—
But all too late,—so are we doubly curst.

Love, fame, ambition, avarice—'tis the same,
Each idle—and all ill—and none the worst—
For all are meteors with a different name,

And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame. (IV.124.1109-1116)

Byron admits that he has been attracted to fame, that he has in fact achieved it, but he also laments how empty his achievements have proven to be, how these “phantom lures” in the end mean very little compared with the certainty of death. Emily’s poem “Plead for Me” at first indicates she has been “Heedless, alike, of wealth and power— / Of glory’s wreath and pleasure’s flower.” But, she also admits that this was not always the case.

These, once, indeed, seemed Beings Divine;
And they, perchance, heard vows of mine,
And saw my offerings on their shrine;
But, careless gifts are seldom prized,
And *mine* were worthily despised. (16-20)

Emily affirms that while she did once seek fame, “wealth,” “power,” and “glory,” she no longer does so because her offerings have been “worthily despised.” This too seems to come from echoes of Byron. In stanza 131 of Canto IV, Byron similarly writes “Admist this wreck, where thou has made a shrine / And temple more divinely desolate, / Among thy mightier offerings here are mine” (1171-11730). While Byron’s speaker goes on to dedicate himself to the survival of his own blood through the years, Emily’s speaker has decided to “adore” her more lasting “ever-present, phantom thing; / My slave, my comrade, and my king” (24-25). But who or what is this “phantom thing,” itself an echo of Byron’s “phantom lure”? Emily ends her poem with

And am I wrong to worship, where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair,
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me,
And tell why I have chosen thee! (36-40)

Instead of seeking fame that lasts, Emily's speaker has chosen to follow the imagination, something her own soul can supply, while recognizing how painful it can be to dedicate herself to the "God of visions." This shift does not typically occur in Byron's poetry.

At times, Emily's echoes of Byron are even more directly inspired. In Emily's "The Prisoner," a man and a prison guard visit a female prisoner, who has had sublime experiences brought on by glimpses of light she can see from her chained position. This poem is heavily influenced by Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon," which he composed after visiting the actual prison on the Isle of Chillon with Shelley in the summer of 1816. Byron's poem is much longer, beginning with background information about the prisoner's life and family. He is a religious and political captive, who had six brothers who are now dead. Three of the man's brothers were initially imprisoned with him; their bodies remain unburied in the cell. Both of these poems address a prisoner who is being held in a dark dungeon, but who manages to achieve release from that prison in momentary flashes of inspiration brought on by reflecting on nature.

Both prisoners have an experience of the sublime, while being held against their will in the place least likely to inspire such flights of fancy. While Byron's prisoner is touched mostly by animals: the eagles, the fish, spiders, and mice, he is also excited by trees, the mountains, the breeze, the ocean, and the flowers. Emily's prisoner is moved by

the wind, wandering stars, the sky, the sun, and thunderstorms. Each prisoner experiences a release of the same sort. While Byron's prisoner's spirit soars with an eagle, "The eagle rode the rising blast, / Methought he never flew so fast / As then to me he seem'd to fly" (351-53), Emily's prisoner is visited by a "soundless calm," which pulls her into spiritual ecstasy. She describes: "then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals; / My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels: / Its wings are almost free" (49-51). Emily's moment of release lasts longer is more detailed, and her poetry is more sublime than Byron's; she seems to take over where he left off, or where his words fail him.

In addition, both prisoners experience only a momentary release. Both are pulled back into their bodies, and afterwards, feel their imprisoned states more keenly. Byron writes that "I did descend again, / The darkness of my dim abode / Fell on me as a heavy load" (357-59). And Emily, in a much more moving and highly more profound bit of poetry says, "Oh dreadful is the check [. . .] / When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again, / The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain" (53-56).

But more than this, both poets refuse to feel embittered by their imprisonment. They both recognize that it was the state of being held captive that led them to their spiritual journeys. Emily writes that "I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less, / The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless" (57-58). Byron similarly states,

My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh. (381-85)

At times, Emily's poetry seems to meditate on Byron himself. In "Stanzas to—" Emily makes reference to a man of great, though blighted fame, and the addressee's personality seems to match Byron's. The speaker first expresses grief at the death of the famous man, then feels foolish for doing so. But, the poet is eventually able to feel sympathy for the subject because she recognizes it is in his nature to act as he does. At the end of the poem, Emily is able to ask for the subject's resting peace in death. While this poem could be addressed to Branwell, considering the subject's "ruined hopes," Branwell achieved only a slightly tarnished and limited local reputation. He was simply not popular enough to have earned "fame." Few from the early nineteenth-century had earned "blighted fame" more than Byron. Also, like Byron, Emily's subject is "vain," "weak," false, prideful, and full of pain. Further, the subject of this poem has a power over Emily, a power she tries to deny. Emily's denials seem to indicate that she in fact recognizes that this man's heart *is* "akin" to hers and that his soul *does* have power over hers. Although she does not want to acknowledge this, Emily knows that her denials are "unwise, unholy, and untrue."

But, the best reason for making a claim that Emily is addressing Byron, or at least that he was a component in her thought process is due to the closing lines of the poem. Emily makes a comparison between the man and his innate character with the inherent nature of the deer. Emily asks, "Do I despise the timid deer, / Because his limbs are fleet with fear? / [. . .] / No!" (17-18, 23). Emily realizes that she cannot blame the deer, the wolf, or the linnet, which she also references, for living up to the nature that God instilled in them, and thus she also cannot blame the man for his vanity, pride, and pain; he is simply following his nature. This, of course, is the same rationale that Emily later

provides for suspending judgments about Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Despite his brutality, Heathcliff remains true to his inner nature throughout the novel, and Emily does not judge him too harshly for this. Rather, Cathy betrays and tries to deny her nature when she marries Edgar and lives at Thrushcross Grange, and, for this, Cathy is punished with death. Emily's chief defense of the Byronic hero is that he embraces his inner nature and remains true to himself whatever the ultimate cost.

Like Emily, Charlotte too was strongly influenced by Byron's poetry in the writing of her own. Like her sister Emily's poetry, Charlotte's often employs a full-scale adoption of Byron. Certain textual echoes of Byron in Charlotte's poems clearly demonstrate that she began her writing career in imitation of him; however, most of Charlotte's poetry also showcases her ambivalent reaction to Byron by revising and at times reversing elements found in his poems. It is as a poet that Charlotte began her writing career, making her complicated response to Byron in the genre all the more significant.

Leighton has already noted some similarities between Byron and Charlotte's poetry, which was "fueled by the general 'Byromania' of the age, and particularly of the annuals—those fashionable gift-book anthologies [. . .] of which we know the Brontës owned at least three. The annuals promoted a highly gendered, story-bound, death-bound poetry, rich in Byronic betrayal and reproach" (56-7). Leighton notes particularly that "Byron gave the Brontës a *dramatis personae* of roving men and dying women which Charlotte and Branwell reproduced with relish" (57). While Charlotte's echoes betray a reliance on Byron's example, which operated beyond the surface-level of style and

subject matter, at times her echoes can also be seen as a gentle rejection, or a merely limited acceptance, possible only after significant revisions.

In the poem “Regret,” Charlotte writes of a woman traveling abroad, who is called home by her beloved William. This poem sounds like many of Byron’s Farewell poems in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* or other lyrics. However, instead of leaving home, as Byron’s speakers are usually doing, the speaker of Charlotte’s poem is returning home. Charlotte writes,

Long ago I wished to leave
“The house where I was born”
[. . .]
‘Mid the unknown sea of life
I no blest isle have found;
At last, through all its wild wave’s strife,
My bark is homeward bound.

Farewell, dark and rolling deep!
Farewell, foreign shore! (1-2, 13-18)

Compare this to Byron’s “Adieu, adieu! My Native Shore” from the first canto of *Childe Harold* reprinted below. Byron writes,

With thee, my bark, I’ll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine;
Nor care what land thou bear’st me to,
So not again to mine.

Welcome, welcome, ye dark-blue waves!

And when you fail my sight,

Welcome, ye desert and ye caves!

My native Land—Good Night! (1.10.73-80)

The repetition of certain words, as well as the specific oceanic imagery of Charlotte's poem almost make it seem as if Charlotte's heroine is returning from the trip described by Byron's hero. There are, however, important differences between these poems.

Charlotte's poem revises Byron's hero, actually Harold himself in Byron's poem, into an unnamed, female Byronic hero, a woman who has had foreign adventures and is now returning home as a hero herself. This significant gender reversal perhaps indicates that by reading Byron, Charlotte more easily conceived of female characters just as brave as Byron's most fiercely independent male protagonist. Also, the gender change is only one example of reversals in the poem, revisions that employ direct opposites. While Byron writes, "welcome, ye dark-blue waves!" Charlotte revises, "Farewell, dark and rolling deep!" Charlotte is bringing home the Byronic hero, something Byron was often loath to do. The tendency for Charlotte to model her poetry on Byron, and yet simultaneously revise Byron's poetry is fairly common, clearly demonstrating an adoption of Byron that is only partial acceptance.

Charlotte's poem "Passion" about a soldier abroad gearing up for battle recalls a similar passage in Byron's most famous call to arms poem written on his birthday, "Today I Complete My 36th Year." Charlotte writes

Some have won a wild delight,

By daring wilder sorrow;

Could I gain thy love to-night

I'd hazard death to-morrow

[. . .]

Wild, long, a trumpet sounds afar;

Bid me—bid me go

[. . .]

Glad I'd join the death-doomed host,

Were but the mandate given. (1-4, 17-18, 27-28)

Byron's poem, written from Missolonghi, Greece just a few months before his death, also follows in the same abab rhyme scheme in quatrains, and seems to provide the "mandate"

Charlotte is looking for:

The sword, the banner, and the field,

Glory and Greece, around me see!

The Spartan, borne upon his shield

Was not more free.

[. . .]

If thou regrett'st thy youth, *why live!*

The land of honourable death

Is here:—up to the field, and give

Away thy breath! (21-24,33-36. 110)

The last stanza of Charlotte's is particularly evocative of Byron's final stanza, though this is not immediately apparent. Byron says,

Seek out—less often sought than found—

A soldier's grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy ground,

And take thy rest! (37-40.110)

And Charlotte echoes,

Then Love thus crowned with sweet reward,

Hope blest with fullness large,

I'd mount the saddle, draw the sword,

And perish in the charge! (49-52)

Both the soldiers at the end of these poems are gladly sacrificing their lives in order to insure military victory. What at first stands out as a difference is that Charlotte's soldier is willing to die if he is assured of victory in love first. But Byron's poem too discusses love. The beginning of Byron's poem, which was written about his final lover, the Greek, male, fifteen-year-old Loukas Khalandritsanos, specifically focuses on denying his love for the boy in order to assure military victory.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,

The exalted portion of the pain

And power of Love I cannot share,

But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*

Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor *now*

Where Glory decks the hero's bier

Or binds his brow. (13-20)

Byron rejects his romantic feelings in favor of earning pride on the battlefield. Charlotte's poem includes both aspects of Byron's, but again, Charlotte revises the situation so that her soldier combines the romantic and military victories, making the one dependant on the other.

Charlotte's poem "Parting" describes two resigned characters being separated due to the pressures of the world. Charlotte writes,

There's no use in weeping,
Though we are condemned to part;
There's such a thing as keeping
A remembrance in one's heart:

There's such a thing as dwelling
On the thought ourselves have nurs'd,
And with scorn and courage telling
The world to do its worst. (1-8)

Though Charlotte's lovers are forced to part, she allows them the conciliation of remaining united in their thoughts and memories:

We can burst the bonds which chain us,
Which cold human hands have wrought,
And where none shall dare strain us
We can meet again, in thought. (25-28)

This closely echoes the final stanza of Byron's "Epistle to Augusta," which could very easily finish Charlotte's poem:

For thee, my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign;
It is the same, together or apart,
From life's commencement to its slow decline
We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last! (XVI.90)

The repetition of paradoxical images of parting and yet remaining together, of the world tearing the lovers apart, and yet enabling them to have a private community link the lines of Charlotte with Byron's earlier verse. But, here again, Charlotte revises Byron's poem slightly. The first change is that Charlotte's poem sees her characters being "chained" apart, and in Byron's case, the lovers are "entwined" together. Another change is that there is no doubt as to the recipient of Byron's poem; it is specifically addressed by its title to his half-sister Augusta, as is his "Letter to Augusta," which is much shorter but has the same general theme. The implication of having committed incest with her is inherent in both poems. In "Epistle," the final line of the poem almost reads as confession: "The tie which bound the first endures the last!" The main revision Charlotte employs is the quieting of Byron's incest theme. Charlotte does not insist that her characters are related, nor even that they are necessarily romantically linked, though the poem can be read both ways.

Perhaps the poem that best exemplifies Charlotte's responses to and uses of Byron is "The Fairies' Farewell," also known as "The Trumpet Hath Sounded." Barker notes it was while on Christmas vacation in 1831 that Charlotte produced the poem, which Barker says "reflects Charlotte's passion for Isaiah, [. . .] and her growing love for Byron, upon whose poem, 'The Destruction of Sennacherib,' it is based" (Barker 180). Both Charlotte's and Byron's echoes of the Old Testament story are less impressive than the echoes between their lyrics. The destruction of Sennacherib is recorded in the Book of Isaiah in the *King James Bible* as follows:

Therefore, thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. [. . .] For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the Angel of the LORD went forth, and smote the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. (Isaiah 37. 33-37)

In order to save Jerusalem from the would-be invading army of Assyrians, God sends his angel to destroy their camp before the battle even begins.

Tom Winnifrith says that in "The Trumpet Hath Sounded," Charlotte "appears to have decided to write no more of fairyland, and to have written the poem for the purpose of calling her fairies and genii together in their aerial palace over the city of Verdopolis to bid them 'Good-bye!' We do not meet them again in any of her poems or stories of a later date" (Winnifrith 135). The interesting thing is that while their accounts are very

different, Charlotte ends up echoing Byron more often than the Bible's account of the same event. This only seems to beg the question of why Charlotte chose this poem of Byron's and why Byron is invoked at all. Charlotte's poem records not merely a moment when she echoes Byron, but provides an opportunity to better understand the nature and depth of her complex responses to him.

Investigating the formal aspects of these two poems is both a convenient and necessary way to begin. Byron's reliance on anapestic tetrameter in "The Destruction of Sennacherib" is so unrelenting and regular that the poem is quoted in a number of poetry anthologies as the example of the meter. Charlotte follows Byron's rhythm and rhyme, but also allows her readers brief respites between long stanzas. These come in the form of irregular quatrains.

Tracking three specific images contained in both poems but absent from the Bible, a horse, the flying Angel of Death, and a trumpet, reveals the depth of Charlotte's reliance on Byron's account rather than the Bible's. Charlotte's first stanza is replete with some of Byron's most favorite nature images: the ocean, mountains, the eagle, doves, and the antelope. But, more specifically, both Byron and Charlotte focus their attention on a horse, an Arabian. On the one hand, Byron, a known animal lover, dedicates a whole stanza to the horse's death. He writes, "And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide, / But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride" (17-18). Charlotte, on the other hand, discusses the horse as an absent-presence, which seems to imply its death: "No chariot rode thunderous adown the wide street, / No horse of Arabia, impetuous and fleet" (59-60).

Charlotte and Byron also discuss the Angel of Death who has come to destroy the Assyrian camp in the case of Byron and the city of Verdopolis in Charlotte's. Both the camp and the city are populated by the chilly dead after the Angel has flown over, causing death and destruction. The Bible, of course, makes no mention of how the Angel of Death travels. Byron writes,

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still! (III.9-12)

And Charlotte records,

Mute, mute are the mighty, and chilled is their breath,
For at midnight pass'd o'er them the Angel of Death!
The king and the peasant, the lord and the slave,
Lie entombed in the depth of one wide solemn grave. (63-68)

Another significant image in both poems is the trumpet. While the Bible makes no mention of trumpets in its account at all, both Byron and Charlotte include them. In fact, both poets specifically discuss the blowing of a battle trumpet that has either no effect, falls silent, or is even "unblown." The trumpet is so key to Charlotte's poem that it is included in the title. Further, Charlotte begins her poem the moment after the trumpet has sounded. It is actually unheard in the poem. By the second stanza, the trumpet cannot be heard because the people are already dead: "Men heard not the roar of the terror-struck deep / Nor the peal of the trumpet still sounding on high" (10-11). Byron too discusses an

unheard trumpet. He writes, “And the tents were all silent, the banners alone, / The lances unlifted, the trumpets unblown” (19-20). Byron’s call to arms is never even attempted.

Charlotte’s repetition of images found in Byron’s poem, yet absent from the Bible’s account makes it fairly clear which text more directly inspired her response. But, there are richer connections between these poems than those already mentioned, and they appear only beneath the surface. Charlotte’s poem was written to describe the final moments of Verdopolis; it records the destruction of her imaginary town, thus the poem is etched with sadness and sorrow because Charlotte’s once proud city is now silent and dead. Byron’s poem specifically recalls an aborted invasion by the Assyrians and the subsequent destruction of Sennacherib, their king. But most of Byron’s *The Hebrew Melodies*, the collection that contains this poem, are solemn, focusing primarily on the exile of the Jews from Jerusalem.³⁸ The question is: why does Charlotte turn to Byron at this vulnerable moment? She could have modeled her farewell on any poem that discusses the destruction of a city, but she chose Byron’s.

Charlotte chooses Byron for the symbolic importance of his poem as well as the symbolic significance of the poet himself. Both poems describe the decimation of a city by the Angel of Death. For Charlotte, Verdopolis is the city of her childhood. The Brontë children had, at this point in their careers, spent hundreds of hours writing their sagas that focus on the city and its inhabitants. To imagine their city lying in ruins, to hear it fall silent must have been very painful. After this poem, Charlotte no longer wrote about the fairies or genii of Verdopolis. Thus, the poem signals an end of childish things, if not an end to the security of her childhood writing group. And she chose to express her pain by

³⁸ The importance of the Jewish subject matter of *The Hebrew Melodies* will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.

turning to the poet who most inspired her childhood poetry, the poet for whom all the children had the most affection and respect, Byron. This implies that Byron held a position of importance and influence to all the children, but perhaps to Charlotte especially because it is her poem. Charlotte's poem is not just a response to Byron, nor is it merely a record of imitation. Rather, it demonstrates that Charlotte recognized herself how significant Byron was to her own writing career, and, in the case of "The Trumpet Hath Sounded," Charlotte enacts very little revision of Byron, perhaps demonstrating that in this case, sounding like Byron was completely acceptable.

A close look at Emily's and Charlotte's responses to Byron in their poetry reveals not only that both sisters write in imitation of him, but that, overall, they actually employ slightly different versions of Byron's myth. As the Romantic, Emily seems most attracted to the sublime contemplations of the Byronic hero. In particular, when it comes to direct echoes of Byron, she commonly references the poetry of *Childe Harold*; however, as a slightly better poet than Byron, her mediations on the sublime are more considered than his. Charlotte, on the other hand, seems to focus her poetry on the image of Byron as a military hero, referring more often to his war poetry. As it turns out, the image of Byron in Greece would come to take precedence in the later Victorian era.³⁹ Although these images are different, they can each be found first in Byron's canon.

The family likeness of *Poems* can also be applied to the Brontë sisters' novels, especially *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. This is largely because the Brontë sisters wrote as a part of an interrelated writing group, with each sister being inspired by and borrowing freely from her other sisters' works. As Jill Matus says,

³⁹ George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, as Chapter 5 argues, especially discusses the image of Byron in Greece.

“it is as if each Brontë sister broke off a piece of the same large clump of creative clay and set to kneading and shaping it in her own way. That clay is what we may call the common matrix of the Brontë texts. It produced novels of great individuality that are also closely akin” (100). Of course, the Brontë matrix includes Byron, who provided some of the literary clay from which each sister made her own mold. Byron and his heroes provide similarities between each of these novels; undeniably, each of the novels of the Brontë sisters includes Byronic heroes, male and female. However, the relationship that each sister experiences with Byron is unique, revealing a different response to him differently. While Emily employs full-scale adoption and Anne consistently seems to reject Byron, Charlotte responds with more ambivalence, allowing for acceptance only after substantial alterations. Taken together, the sisters’ reactions represent different, though fairly typical, reactions to things Byronic by the middle of the century, especially the Byronic hero.

As Helene Moglen has pointed out about the sisters, “In creating their characters they were responding to the Byronic vision which represented the *Zeitgeist* of their time” (Moglen 27). And, the spirit of the age supported the notion that “The Byronic hero and Lord Byron the poet [. . .] were inseparable in the public mind” (Moglen 27). In some cases, the Brontë sisters seem to blend aspects of Byron’s life with his works in their own novels. Although the Byronic hero is hardly a foreign concept, the particular characteristics of the type and connections with the myth about Byron himself deserve a brief revisiting.

The Byronic hero represented the possibility of rebelling against the pressures of a society in the grip of radical change. Byron was considered “the supreme embodiment of

[. . .] standing not only against a dehumanized system of labor but also against traditionally repressive religious, social, and familial institutions” (Moglen 28). As Chapter 2 argues exhaustively, Byron molded his heroes on the role he seemed forced to play himself. Central to his rebellion was “the assertion of the self freed from external limitations and control.” The Byronic hero rejects religion and proclaims himself his own God, making him the master of his own fate while denying society’s punishments and rewards. As a result, he is typically a narcissist, and “All of his efforts refer essentially to himself: to his own feelings, his own sensations, his own capacities” (Moglen 29). This self-centeredness essentially obliterates the division between the self and others, yet simultaneously drives towards integration, by usually focusing on eroticism. Moglen argues that the search for “‘the other’ was intended to culminate in physical and spiritual union. But the effort did not advance beyond narcissism” (29). Fundamentally, this makes him an egoist looking for erotic connection to himself. This is, of course, one reason why the Byronic hero often indulges in incest. He is incapable of finding a mate outside himself, thus he turns to those most like him, his siblings, to find erotic fulfillment. Moglen does not make this connection explicit. Rather, she sees the Byronic hero’s quest for spiritual unity dissolving into the “concrete problems of dominance and submission. That such relationships will be sadomasochistic to varying degrees seems inevitable since they are defined by subjugation and the exercise of power. It is in this nexus that the work of the Brontës and Byron is joined” (Moglen 30). Byron and the Brontës write about issues of control, those who dominate, and those who are dominated.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ This tendency is also addressed in Chapter 3 looking at Lady Caroline Lamb, whose novel not only witnesses her characters’ obsession with dominance, but also Lamb’s own feelings of being dominated by

Moglen claims that the Byronic hero is “Male power affirmed through an egoistic, aggressive, even violent sexuality,” leaving female sexuality the opposite choice. Women are generally portrayed as passive and self-denying, defining themselves “as ‘the exploited,’ as ‘victim’” (Moglen 30). But this is a limited view in the case of Byron, especially as new understandings of his heroes emerge. Scholars like Sonia Hofkosh, who demonstrate that the Byronic hero often speaks from the passive position of the woman, are revising the character. Byron’s supposed passive female sexuality is certainly not a pattern reflected in the Brontës’ novels. While Bertha may be a prisoner in her husband’s home, she is not merely a suffering, submissive victim of male power. She too has an aggressive, even violent sexuality, not too unlike Byron’s Gulnare in *The Corsair*. As Harold Bloom has noted, it is more accurate to describe the Byronic hero’s sexuality as “passive-aggressive sexuality—at once sadomasochistic, homoerotic, incestuous, and ambivalently narcissistic.” It is this complexity and openness that “clearly sets the pattern for the ambiguously erotic universe of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (Bloom, *Modern Critical* 2), where Charlotte and Emily’s versions of Byron become Rochester and Heathcliff.

Emily and her novel *Wuthering Heights* were heavily influenced by Byron. In fact, there are several clearly recognizable similarities between Emily’s novel and Byron’s poetry. As Winifred Gérin has noted, one incident in particular “left a recognizable trace in Emily’s work; this was connected with the poet’s early love for Mary Chaworth.” The story that Byron recounts is that, at the height of his desperate infatuation with her, he overheard Mary saying to her maid one evening: “Do you think I could care for that lame boy?” Byron described this speech as hitting him “like a shot

Byron.

through the heart" (Gérin 46). Being thus rejected, Byron "instantly darted out of the house scarcely knowing whither he ran, and never stopped till he found himself at Newstead Abbey" (Gérin 45). Mary's rejection did not leave Byron merely broken-hearted, but humiliated. As Gérin points out, "The relevance of this incident to the scene in *Wuthering Heights*, in which Heathcliff overhears Catherine telling Nelly Dean that it would degrade her to marry him, whereupon he runs away and is not heard of for three years, need not be stressed" (Gérin 45-6). Heathcliff in this case is not merely a Byronic hero; he has actually acquired traits and experiences of the real Byron as well, demonstrating Emily's tendency to reference not only Byron's works, but also events from his biography, which at the least shows that she knew it well.

Emily's characters are very much stereotypical Byronic heroes, especially in terms of being antisocial, having mysterious origins, ill-fated and doomed lives, with fatally unsuccessful love relationships. As Gérin points out, "In Byron, Emily found the champion of unsociable man. His ill-fated lovers attract her equally because of their contempt for conventional society and their boldness in defying their unpropitious stars" (46). These characters are also largely mysterious, especially in light of their family and overall life experiences. The mystery of their origins was a source of romantic inspiration to Emily. Byron says of Childe Harold

but whence his name

And lineage long, it suits me not to say;

Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,

And had been glorious in another day. (I.3.19-22)

Heathcliff's origins are also unknown, as is the shelter he seeks after Catherine rejects him.

Another mystery connects Heathcliff and Byron's Lara; how they make their fortunes. Lara returns home from abroad, stirring up much speculation about how he has earned his living. Byron writes

His silence found a theme for other's prate—
They guess'd—they gazed—they fain would know his fate.
What had he been? what was he, thus unknown,
Who walked their world, his lineage only known? (17.5-8)

This is not unlike suspicions surrounding Byron himself about his travels in the East from 1809-1811. As Byron once remarked in a letter, “he told me an odd report,— [. . .] that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in [. . .] piracy” (*BLJ* III 250). When Heathcliff returns to the Grange, Emily only hints at what he has been doing when Ellen says, “His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army” (87). But Heathcliff indicates otherwise. He tells Catherine that he only stopped by the Grange to see her and that afterwards he planned “to settle [his] score with Hindley; and then *prevent the law by doing execution on myself*” (emphasis added 88). This more than implies that Heathcliff is wanted by the authorities for having presumably engaged in criminal activities, perhaps even piracy. Whatever Heathcliff's actual experiences, he confirms that he has “fought a bitter life” since he last heard Catherine's voice, and that he “struggled only for [her]!” (88).

Byron also provided Emily “the defiance of *Cain*; the fatal love of Manfred; all these Byronic attributes [. . .] that were finally justified in the protagonist of *Wuthering*

Heights” (Gérin 46). Discussing Manfred and Heathcliff, Gérin notes, “the voice of Heathcliff is no less authentic when he cries to the dead Catherine [. . .] because Manfred cried with equal passion years before to Astarte” (45):

Yet speak to me!

[. . .]

Speak to me! though it be in wrath!—but say—

I reckon not what—but let me hear thee once—

This once—once more! (II.iv.142-8)

Specifically, Manfred’s curse, which causes him to be haunted by Astarte, sounds much like Heathcliff’s wish to be haunted by Catherine. One difference is that, in Byron, the phantom of Astarte articulates his curse. Byron writes,

Though thou seest me not pass by,

Thou shalt feel me with thine eye

As a thing that, though unseen,

Must be near thee, and hath been;

And when in that secret dread

Thou hast turn’d around thy head,

Thou shalt marvel I am not

As thy shadow on the spot [. . .]. (I.i.212-19)

In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff imposes his curse upon himself: “I pray one prayer— [. . .] may you not rest as long as I am living! [. . .] Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!” (153). F. B.

Pinion finds that Heathcliff suffers after the death of Catherine from the night she dies to the end of the novel; “he is continually condemned to be aware of her imagined spirit, and tormented at the same time by the absolute frustration of his yearning to see her” (Pinion 200). Both Heathcliff and Manfred welcome their torture because it is the only way they can remain connected to their loved ones.

But there are other correlations. The relatively straightforward brother-sister incest theme of Byron’s canon is complicated in *Wuthering Heights*, and not solely due to the novel’s intricate structure. In looking at the first generation, Heathcliff and Catherine are not, strictly speaking, brother and sister. Heathcliff is a foundling that Mr. Earnshaw brings home from Liverpool, but it is possible that Heathcliff is the bastard child of Mr. Earnshaw and an unidentified woman. Certainly, Heathcliff’s addition to the family creates intense sibling rivalry between Catherine/Hindley and Heathcliff/Hindley for their father’s attention. Whatever the case, Heathcliff and Catherine are clearly *raised* as brother and sister, regardless of their genetics. They see themselves as linked, much like Rochester and Jane and the string connecting their rib cages. The scene in which Catherine and Heathcliff share their cabinet-bed as children, therefore, leaves many readers feeling uncomfortable, though there are scholars, like Stevie Davies who claim that their love is strictly Platonic.

By the time Heathcliff and Catherine are adults, of course, there seems little doubt as to their romantic attachment to each other. When Catherine proclaims, ““Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He’s always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being”” (74-5), she admits more than her feelings, claiming Heathcliff as more than her twin, not unlike Byron’s Manfred and

Astarte. Manfred and Astarte share a distinct family likeness: “She was like me in lineaments—her eyes, / Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone / Even of her voice, they said were like to mine” (II.ii.106-9). Heathcliff and Catherine do not look alike. Rather, they have opposite appearances, Heathcliff being dark and Catherine fair. However, Heathcliff and Catherine share the same temperament and personality traits; they are both passionate and wild. Catherine cries, “‘he’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same [. . .]” (73). Manfred and Astarte are opposites in this regard. Byron writes that Astarte had

gentler powers than mine,

Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;

And tenderness—but that I had for her;

Humility—and that I never had.

Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own— (II.ii.112-16)

The second generation in *Wuthering Heights* further complicates the incest theme. At first it would appear that Cathy, Linton, and Hareton are all first cousins and therefore free to marry. However, looking little more closely at their lineage, reveals that the cyclical nature of the plot reinforces an enclosure of options, a limiting rather than an opening. In *Manfred*, there is a similar claustrophobia. There is simply no character of equal rank available as a suitable mate for either Manfred or Astarte. At the end of Emily’s novel, when Cathy and Hareton walk away arm in arm, it is clear that they intend to marry. Their union removes the mitigating influence of the Lintons. At last, Catherine in the form of her daughter Cathy gets to be with her Heathcliff, in the form of Hindley’s son Hareton. But, their parentage makes them in blood closer than the original Catherine

and Heathcliff, who were supposedly unrelated. In Byron's drama, while the exact relationship between Manfred and Astarte is undisclosed, it is also never really in doubt. It was "The deadliest sin to love as [they] have loved" (II.iv.124).

The intensity with which romantic feelings are felt in Byron and Emily Brontë's works, more often than not, dissolves into generalized violence. The death of Medora in Byron's *The Corsair* precipitates Conrad's quest to murder Seyd. The marriage and death of Catherine similarly set Heathcliff on the path to destroy the Linton family as well as what's left of Wuthering Heights. But violence is also tied directly to the relationships themselves, making them sadomasochistic in nature, with the conventional definitions of each term employed.⁴¹ Catherine tries to warn Isabella of this before she marries Heathcliff. Catherine says,

Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness. Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without civilization: an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone. [. . .] He's not a rough diamond—a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. [. . .] he'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. (93-4)

Heathcliff tortures Catherine when he returns, with the same relish and pleasure he demonstrates in the torture of his wife Isabella. Heathcliff tells Nelly that "If [Isabella] desired to go, she might: the nuisance of her presence outweighs the gratification to be derived from tormenting her!" (139). In the same scene, Isabella has also turned to sadomasochism: "I just hope, I pray, that he may forget his diabolical prudence, and kill me! *The single pleasure I can imagine, is to die, or to see him dead!*" (emphasis added

⁴¹ Both sadism and masochism refer to pleasure derived from pain; masochism (derived from Ludwig von Sacher-Masoch's name) describes enjoyment from experiencing pain, while Sadism (derived from the Marquis de Sade's name) involved the pleasure enjoyed from inflicting pain.

139). Manfred admits that his love for Astarte has killed her, lamenting, “I loved her, and destroyed her! / [. . .] Not with my hand, but heart—which broke her heart— / It gazed on mine, and withered” (II.ii.117-19). In Byron’s *The Giaour*, the unnamed protagonist enjoys even the pain of having lost his beloved Leila. The Giaour claims, “Give me the pleasure with the pain, / So would I live and love again” (1118-1120).

In both Byron and Emily Brontë, the pain of failed relationships is fueled by a demand for blood, which links themes of incest and sadomasochism. The ties that bind are ties of familial blood and the blood gained from sadomasochistic torture, all called for by an almost demonic Byronic hero. In *Wuthering Heights*, after Catherine dies, she becomes a ghost-like banshee with an appetite for blood. At the beginning of the novel, Lockwood scrapes her wrist across the windowpane of the room Heathcliff and Catherine shared as children. As Lockwood explains, “Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes” (22). Immediately after Catherine’s death, Heathcliff rushes outside and smashes his head against a tree. Nelly reports that Heathcliff

dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears. I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably the scene I witnessed was a repetition of others acted during the night. (153)

Manfred too is full of filial blood. When the Chamois hunter prevents Manfred from committing suicide, Manfred raises a cup of wine to his lips only to find it transmuted into Astarte's blood. In a guilt-induced hallucination, Manfred cries,

Away, away! There's blood upon the brim!

Will it never—never sink in the earth?

[. . .]

I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream

Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours

When we were in our youth, and had one heart,

And loved each other as we should not love,

And this was shed: but still it rises up,

Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven, [. . .]. (II.i.20-29)

Later, Manfred confesses to spilling Astarte's blood: "I have shed / Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed— / I saw—and could not staunch it" (II.ii. 118-120).

But the aspect of *Wuthering Heights* that most closely mirrors Byron's works is the indomitable spirit of the Byronic hero, which is also the foundation of his antisocial personality. In *Childe Harold*, Byron writes that Harold is fiercely independent—

untaught to submit

His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd

In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,

He would not yield dominion of his mind

To spirits against whom his own rebell'd

Proud though in desolation; which could find

A life within itself, to breathe without mankind. (III.12.102-8)

In Byron, this powerful, yet solitary personality is commonly compared with immense forces of nature, typically mountains, storms, or the ocean.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;

Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;

[. . .]

The desert [sic], forest, cavern, breaker's foam,

Were unto him companionship; they spake

A mutual language, dearer than the tome

Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake. (III.13.109-10,113-16)

In Emily, the Byronic spirit is made akin to the savage moors and the icy wind that rips across them. Of course, the moors are much like the ocean in terms of size, and heather moving in the wind rolls like waves on land. After Heathcliff has eloped with Isabella, Catherine takes to her bed with a fever. She cries to Ellen, "I wish I was out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, free. [. . .] I'm sure I should be myself again were I among the heather on those hills." She commands Ellen to "open the windows wide." Ellen refuses, causing Catherine to throw them open herself, "careless of the frosty air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife" (115). Emily characterizes both Heathcliff and Catherine as forces of nature, who either should not, or cannot be domesticated, for such a betrayal against the self usually means death. Heathcliff remains true to his inner nature though he is softened enough by the end of the novel to accept Hareton and Cathy's relationship. By contrast, when Catherine betrays her love for Heathcliff, also a denial of her own nature, and marries Edgar Linton, Emily punishes her

not only with death, but with a restless, tortured and tormenting death. Heathcliff cries to Catherine, ““*Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. [. . .] You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears: they’ll blight you—they’ll damn you. You loved me—then what *right* had you to leave me?”” (147). Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights* strides out of the stanzas of Byron without much alteration.

Anne Brontë’s judgment on Byron and the Byronic hero in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is, in comparison to Emily’s, a rather substantial and harsh rejection. As perhaps the most stereotypically Victorian of the Brontë sisters’ novels, Anne’s seems to indicate that Byron and his Byronic heroes have no place in a real world that they are ill-prepared to face. *Tenant* does include portraits of Byronic heroes, however, they must be either reformed, or if they are incapable of redemption, abandoned. The fact that they ignore the call to duty sounded by societal and religious obligations to God and family in favor of the self makes them largely unredeemable.

As Arnold Craig Bell has noted, “It would be more than futile to deny that one of [Anne’s] purposes in penning the novel was, by presenting the reader with a horrific but at the same time a realistic picture of debauchery, to warn him of the evils and the inescapable results of such conduct. That was the moral lesson she set herself to teach” (42). The novel is almost too stoic in its tone, which at times makes it almost too didactic and preachy for modern audiences, which in turn has left it radically unpopular in contrast to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Bell also provides a useful connection between the novel’s message and Byron explicitly, writing that “Anne Brontë sets her story in the later days of the Regency because, like most Victorians, she came to regard

the age of Byron [. . .] as a particularly dissolute one” (Bell 52). The Byronic heroes that emerge from Anne’s text are especially invested with attributes taken directly from Byron’s work and biography.

The most immediately obvious Byronic hero in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is Arthur Huntington. He is selfish, egotistical, lecherous, vain, wasteful, and bored, but he also has appealing qualities. He is fun, dangerous, and overtly sexual. Not unlike Lamb’s epithet for Byron, Arthur is “mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” Arthur’s overt, Byronic sexuality is very appealing to the inexperienced Helen. Helen’s aunt warns her about this aspect of Arthur’s character, but her advice goes unheeded. She advises, “First study; then approve; then love. Let your eyes be blind to all external attractions, your ears deaf to all the fascinations of flattery and light discourse.—These are nothing—and worse than nothing—snares and wiles of the temper, to lure the thoughtless to their own destruction” (125). Helen’s aunt adds, “If you should marry the handsomest, and most accomplished and superficially agreeable man in the world, you little know the misery that would overwhelm you” (125). But, it is hard to resist the Byronic seducer. Helen, unable to do so, marries Arthur. In the beginning, Arthur is all romance, but his unchecked sexuality makes him selfish, leading to his infidelity. Though Arthur’s affair with Lady Lowborough, while she is a guest in his home is well known, Arthur’s lechery also leads him to commit adultery with his son’s governess, Miss Myers, which is more private. It is Arthur’s infidelity that, in effect, ends his marriage. The same, of course, seems true of the Byron marriage, ended due to Byron’s affair with his half-sister Augusta.

As with *Wuthering Heights*, intensely felt emotions often erupt into violence in *Tenant*; passion often becomes sadomasochistic. The same is true in Anne's *Tenant*. Arthur Huntington uses his sexuality as a weapon against his wife Helen. He enjoys tormenting her by flaunting his affairs, even in front of their mutual friends. In this novel, the couple's child also becomes the basis for spousal abuse. Arthur's corrupting influence on his son is begun in part to torment and upset Helen. Helen writes, "my child must not be abandoned to this corruption: better far that he should live in poverty and obscurity with a fugitive mother, than in luxury and affluence with such a father. [. . .] [Arthur is] the most injurious of the whole, his child's worst enemy" (336). Immediately after Annabella delivered Byron's daughter Ada, his only legitimate offspring, Byron was heard to say: "Oh, what an implement of torture I have acquired in you!" (Marchand 209), which seems to imply that he would use the child much as Arthur uses his. For as long as Helen stays with Arthur, she, like Lady Byron, plays the role of the dominated masochist. It is not until Helen actually leaves Arthur that she can entertain another role.

In many ways, Arthur's behavior has much in common with Byron's during his year-long marriage to Annabella Milbanke, Lady Byron. According to Moore's 1830 biography, the public had a vested interest in following the scandal of the Byron marriage. When their union was dissolved by legal separation, the public was ready "with an ample supply of reasons for the breach." Moore says that these all tended "to blacken the already darkly painted character of the poet," which seemed to view him "as a finished monster of cruelty and depravity" (652). Moore's reasons for the separation, however, tended towards faults on both sides. First, he notes Byron's "long indulgence of self-will," then details his "unbridled career" and the "rapid and restless course which his

life had run along, like a burning train, through a series of wanderings, adventures, successes, and passions” (649). Annabella, on the other hand was simply too stable, steady, and pious for her husband. In this, she is a lot like Helen Huntington. In a letter to Byron, Moore writes that he feared Annabella “might have been too perfect—too *precisely* excellent—too matter-of-fact a paragon for [Byron] to coalesce with comfortably” (648). Altogether, the Byrons were simply unsuited to each other; the public overwhelmingly saw “the excellences of the wife [as] proof positive of every enormity they chose to charge upon the husband” (Moore 652).

One of the chief causes of their split was assumed infidelity on Byron’s part. One story surrounds Byron’s “unlucky connexion [sic] with the theatre” (Moore 651), specifically his membership in the Drury-lane Committee. In detailing the account, Moore is decidedly uncommittal. While he admits that Byron often “gave way” to temptation and had a “reputation which he had previously acquired for gallantries, and [. . .] reckless and boyish levity,” even admitting that these tendencies made it “not difficult to bring suspicion upon some of those acquaintances which his frequent intercourse with the green-room induced him to form” (651), he says that Byron remained faithful to his wife. Simultaneously, however, Moore leaves the door to doubt open, claiming both that “it can but little surprise us that, in the space of one short year, he should not have been able to recover all at once” (650) from his previous lifestyle, and that “in the course of the noble poet’s intercourse with the theatre, he was not sometimes led into a line of acquaintance and converse, unbecoming, if not dangerous to, the steadiness of married life” (653).

It was also known that Byron and his wife lived with Augusta for the first few weeks of their marriage. In fact, Byron often played the women against each other to make them both jealous. Marchand tells us, “in his blacker moods Byron’s impulse to torment both women increased to a mania. The evasion of the one and the martyred innocence of the other poisoned all his normal impulses to kindness. He drank to forget, and that made him more uninhibited in his speech” (198). Speaking of the new fashion to wear proper underwear, Annabella records that Byron said to Augusta, “‘*I know* [you wear drawers]—or to me, ‘*I know A* [wears them]’” (Marchand 198), indicating, of course, that Byron knew more than he should have.

This strategy is also employed in Anne’s novel, using similar language. Before his marriage, Arthur uses Miss Wilmot, the character named Annabella in *Tenant*, to try to make Helen jealous. One good example of this occurs just moments before Arthur proposes. Arthur says, “‘You don’t hate me, you know. [. . .] It is Annabella Wilmot you hate, not me.’” “‘I have nothing to do with Annabella Wilmot,’” Helen returns, “burning with indignation.” “‘But *I* have, you know,’ returned he, with peculiar emphasis” (148). Arthur, like Byron, suggests that his dealings with Annabella are far from innocent. The name Annabella in Anne’s scene makes for a strange inversion to the Byron story, where Annabella is the injured spouse. Eventually, Annabella Wilmot becomes Lady Lowborough, one of Arthur’s mistresses. What’s more, Moore’s biography, which we know the Brontës owned and read repeatedly, includes the story that Byron married his wife at all in order to take revenge on her: “it is accordingly stated, and almost universally believed, that the noble lord’s second proposal to Miss Milbanke had been put

with a view to revenge himself for the slight inflicted by her refusal of the first, and that he himself had confessed so much to her, on their way from church” (652).

Byron’s behavior was not just humiliating, however, he could also be quite terrifying. During the course of the marriage, Byron was daily either drunk or under the influence of laudanum, causing him to become both violent and paranoid. Byron manhandled his wife when she was pregnant, slept with dueling pistols under his pillows, and often shot off rounds in the home at random just to terrify her. This story is recorded in Moore as follows: “he was employed in darkly [. . .] tormenting his lady by all sorts of unmanly cruelties,—such as firing off pistols, to frighten her as she lay in bed” (653). Annabella reported that she often woke in the night with his hands around her throat. Another example of his violent tendencies involves the destruction of “a favourite [sic] old watch that had been his companion from boyhood, and had gone with him to Greece. In a fit of vexation and rage, brought on by some of those humiliating embarrassments to which he was not almost daily a prey, he furiously dashed this watch upon the hearth, and ground it to pieces among the ashes with the poker” (653).

What’s more Annabella, in real life, was just as dominated as Helen Huntington in Anne’s novel. The most pitiful of Annabella’s recollections is as follows: “I went down stairs—the carriage was at the door. I passed his room. There was a large mat on which his Newfoundland dog used to lie. For a moment I was tempted to throw myself on it, and wait at all hazards, but it was only a moment—and I passed on. That was our parting” (reprt. in Marchnd 212).

More than this, Arthur can also be said to be modeled on Byron’s rejection of religion, the trait that makes Arthur completely unredeemable. Much like Helen, who

thinks that she can instruct Arthur by way of her own right action to show him “the way” to salvation, Annabella too was first partly attracted to Byron because she thought it was her duty to try to save him from himself. Writing to her mother about Byron, Annabella says, “I consider it as an act of humanity and Christian duty not to deny him any temporary satisfaction he can derive from my acquaintance [. . .] He is not a dangerous person to me [. . .] I cannot think him destitute of natural religion—it is in his heart” (reprt. in Marchand 122). Annabella also wrote in her diary that she was “convinced that he is sincerely repentant for the evil he has done, though he has not resolution (without aid) to adopt a new course of conduct and feelings” (reprt. in Marchand 122), indicating via the parentheses that she was the one who could supply the resolve Byron lacked. Likewise, Helen writes of Arthur, “If he has wandered, what bliss to recall him! If he is now exposed to the baneful influence of corrupting and wicked companions, what glory to deliver him from them! –Oh! If I could but believe that Heaven has designed me for this!” (143).

As a result of the scandal of the Byron separation, Moore records that “such an outcry was now raised against Lord Byron as, in no case of private life, perhaps, was ever before witnessed” (653). Moore recalls an especially vindictive poem, “A Poetical Epistle from Delia, addressed to Lord Byron,” published in 1816. The anonymous author writes,

Hopeless of peace below, and, shuddering thought!

Far from that Heav’n, denied, if never sought,

Thy light a beacon—a reproach thy name—

Thy memory ‘damn’d to everlasting fame,’

Shunn’d by the wise, admired by fools alone—

The good shall mourn thee—and the Muse disown. (reprnt. in Moore 654)

Both Byron and Arthur seem to need saving. Both willingly confuse good and evil, implying that God, who created both, must also be somewhat wicked. Just as Byron writes in *Cain*, “Goodness would not make / Evil; and what else hath He made?” (I. i.145-5), Helen says to Arthur, “I would have you [. . .] not call evil good, and good, evil” (195-6). Also, just like Annabella, Helen is unable to save her demonic husband.

Ultimately, of course, it is not so much a failure of the wives to save their husbands’ souls as it is a character flaw in the husbands themselves that causes their downfall. Both Byron and Arthur are too proud to bend to the will of God because they are not like the common herd of men. Just as Byron once wrote in *Childe Harold*: “in a crowd / They could not deem me one of such; I stood / Among them, but not of them” (III.113. 1053-55), Anne has Arthur proclaim, “I flattered myself, at times, that though among them, I am not of them” (339). Their arrogance is also partly due to the fact that they have retained their Byronic skepticism of religion, even to the bitter end.

It is through religious contemplations that Anne most clearly echoes Byron, especially *Manfred*. Anne writes that Hattersley “knows not what to say,—unless it be a timid suggestion that the clergyman might be sent for. But Arthur will never consent to that: he knows he has rejected the clergyman’s well-meant admonitions with scoffing levity at other times, and cannot dream of turning to him for consolation now” (426). Despite Arthur’s past, Helen pleads with him in the same way that the Abbot pleads with Manfred. Of repentance, Arthur says, ““What, for *me*? [. . .] Are we not to be judged according to the deeds done in the body? Where’s the use of a probationary existence, if a man may spend it as he pleases, just contrary to God’s decrees, and then go to Heaven

with the best—if the vilest sinner may win the reward of the holiest saint, by merely saying, ‘I repent?’” To this, Helen replies, “‘But if you *sincerely* repent—”” And Arthur affirms, “‘I *can’t* repent; I only fear”” (429). In Byron, the Abbot says,

I come to save, and not destroy—

[. . .]

there still is time

For penitence and pity: reconcile thee

With the true church, and through the church to heaven. (III.i.47, 48-51)

Manfred replies,

whate’er

I may have been, or am, dost rest between

Heaven and myself.—I shall not chose a mortal

To be my mediator. (III.i.52-55)

But the Abbot insists, “I did not speak of punishment, / But penitence and pardon” (III.i. 57-8). Manfred, of course, rejects this for the same reason Arthur later rejects repentance. It is has not been in his nature all along to seek forgiveness, and it cannot be done now that life is over. Otherwise, the acceptance of God becomes the rejection of the self and as Manfred says, “I could not tame my nature down” (III.i.116). And later, when the devils come to take Manfred to Hell, he remains as indomitable as before:

Thou didst not tempt me [. . .]

I have not been thy dupe, nor am I thy prey—

But was my own destroyer, and will be

My own hereafter. (III.iv.137-40)

This, of course, also sounds much like Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*.

Gilbert too can be seen as a Byronic hero in the beginning of *Tenant*, especially in terms of his emotional being. He has an overdeveloped attachment to Helen, even before he really knows her. His passion fuels his jealousy, which in turn leads him to assume that Lawrence is Helen's suitor. The truth, of course, is that he is Helen's brother, making Gilbert's mistake a charge of incest. Believing that the siblings are lovers is one cause for the whipping Gilbert inflicts on Lawrence. However, unlike Arthur, Gilbert is capable of reform, though he has less need of it. When Gilbert visits Lawrence after the beating, he sees and accepts the consequences of his actions; he is capable of feeling remorse, and thus able to be improved. Arthur, to the end of the novel, like Manfred before him, is simply unable to recognize and accept any limits placed on him. Thus, he is unable to make any lasting changes.

Also like *Wuthering Heights* and Byron's poetry, *Tenant* discusses vampirism, but as an implied metaphor. From the very beginning of their relationship, Arthur feeds on Helen: on her fear, her excitement, her love and later in the novel, her hatred, and rejection. In fact, the more she grows to hate him, the stronger Arthur becomes, until Helen finally leaves him and he is left without a feeding source, gets sick, and eventually dies. Arthur uses his final deathbed illness to regain his wife's attention, almost becoming like a vampire victim, wasted and exhausted. Arthur's illness, brought on by his own debauchery makes his helplessness pitiful, but to a mother like Helen, it also makes him somewhat appealing. When Arthur needs Helen the most, she again provides the nourishment he requires, even if she is unable to save him.

All in all, Anne's novel stands in sharp contrast to Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, despite its echoes of Byron's biography and works. To Anne, Byron's actions and Byronic passions in general are frightening. Anne indicates that they are to be suppressed, repressed, and stoically denied or they will cause unhappiness, disease, and ultimately, death. Men need to be tamed by the domestic obligations they undertake, while women provide the civilizing voice necessary for stability. Obedience to God is demanded and God's forgiveness is almost as impossible to earn as Helen's is when dealing with such an egotist as Arthur, who simply cannot ask for it. Anne's judgments on men who fail to live up to their duties is harsh; Arthur dies and Gilbert sees the need to remake himself. Overall, Anne's notions of marriage and gender roles are conventional, rather than challenging. Helen is a far cry from Jane and even farther from Catherine. As Harold Bloom has said, "Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw [. . .] are simply too wild, too Byronic, too Romantic, to keep company with the grand array of heroines of the Protestant will" (Bloom 2) found in *Tenant*. Anne's treatment and final judgments of Byron in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are quite clear. Byronism is a kind of debilitating disease, which needs to be excised from the text in the form of Arthur Huntington's death and from life in the form of making the Byronic hero as unappealing as possible. Charlotte revises this position slightly.

That Byron would be one of Charlotte's favorite poets is hardly surprising considering the wide-spread acceptance of Byron during her lifetime.⁴² However, what is a little surprising is the complicated response Charlotte experienced when dealing with his influence, for Charlotte provides yet a third way of looking at Byron during the

⁴² Charlotte was actually born on 21 April 1816, the very day that Byron signed the final deed of separation from his wife. It seems fitting that the most famous of the sisters should be born on the day that Byron became infamous.

middle of the nineteenth-century. While Emily seems to adopt Byron whole-heartedly and Anne seems mostly to reject Byron's influence, Charlotte can be seen as employing both reactions, sometimes simultaneously, making her reaction to Byron ambivalent at times. It may be more accurate to say that Charlotte seems able to accept Byron and things Byronic only after they have been purged of their inherent danger. Charlotte herself recognizes this characteristic of Byron in a letter to Ellen Nussey when asked by her friend what she should read. Charlotte advises,

If you like poetry let it be first rate, Milton, Shakespeare, [. . .] Pope [. . .] Scott, Byron, [. . .] Wordsworth, and Southey. Now Ellen don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were great men and their works are like themselves, you will know how to choose the good and avoid the evil, the finest passages are always the purest, the bad are invariably revolting you will never wish to read them over twice; Omit the Comedies of Shakespeare and the Don Juan, perhaps the Cain of Byron though the latter is a magnificent poem and read the rest fearlessly. (Barker, *The Brontës* 220)

Barker adds that Charlotte did not inform Ellen that she had "not only read *Don Juan* and *Cain* herself, but had lingered over the more salacious passages." Barker considers Byron "the only unusual inclusion" (Barker, *The Brontës* 220), but Byron would have been expected in such a list generated at the time. Barker herself points out a few connections between Byron and Charlotte. One is that Charlotte's portraits were often

associated with one of her favourite poets, Lord Byron. She copied ones of Byron himself and his patroness, the beautiful Countess Blessington, [. . .] whose portrait had appeared in Moore's *Life of Byron* and even

illustrations to his poems such as ‘The Maid of Saragossa.’ The women are invariably large-eyes, long-necked, ringletted and bejeweled; the men are effete in feature and form, with elaborately curled hair and military dress. Undoubtedly these idealized portraits represented the heroes and heroines of Charlotte’s imaginary world [. . .]. (Barker, *The Brontës* 213)

Charlotte’s real life portraits sound much like Jane’s described in *Jane Eyre*.

In Charlotte’s work, the sexuality of the Byronic hero is intact but less overt. Rochester is not a typical seducer; he does not mesmerize Jane the way Arthur does Helen in *Tenant*. This could be partially due to Rochester’s relative unattractiveness. Arthur is conventionally handsome, even strikingly beautiful. At the beginning of their courtship, Helen can only describe Arthur with abstractions: his charm “cast a halo over all he did and said” (136), making him “an angel of light, come to announce that the season of torment was past” (*Tenant* 137). Like Heathcliff, Rochester is considerably less pleasing to the eye. Observing Rochester by firelight, Jane notes his “broad and jetty eyebrows, his square forehead, [. . .] his decisive nose, more remarkable for character than beauty; his full nostrils, denoting [. . .] cholera; his grim mouth, chin, and jaw.” About his body, Jane notices “a good figure in the athletic sense of the term—broad chested and thin flanked; though neither tall nor graceful” (*Jane Eyre* 137). Byron embodied both these descriptions. Though his face and especially his profile were considered conventionally beautiful, Byron’s clubbed foot checked his physical attractiveness.

While Rochester may not look like a typical Byronic seducer, he is, like Arthur, well-experienced in love; Rochester has a checkered sexual history. Charlotte allows Jane

to consider Adèle his daughter, and Rochester certainly hints as much himself. After giving Adèle a pink silk frock, Rochester explains, “in a few minutes she will re-enter; and I know what I shall see,— a miniature Céline Varens, as she used to appear on the boards at the rising of— but never mind that” (158). Rochester makes his affair with Céline quite clear much later, when he denies that Adèle is his daughter. He also reveals that he had two other mistresses: Giacinta and Clara (350).⁴³ Byron’s heroes have mysterious sexual pasts as well, something unique to Charlotte’s version of him. The best example of this in Byron is *Lara*, in which the title character appears to have a homosexual attraction to his valet. The biggest difference between Byron and Charlotte, of course, is that Byron flirts with homosexuality in a way Charlotte’s heroes rarely do.

However, in *Jane Eyre* Charlotte deliberately confuses and reverses traditional gender roles. In this regard, she is like Emily, who similarly challenges such notions more than Anne, who supports the status quo. At their first meeting, Jane is in the role of the male, leaving Rochester the more helpless role of the female. Jane actually becomes Rochester’s savior after Rochester and his horse have slipped on a sheet of ice. Charlotte has Jane physically support Rochester, reversing their conventional, fairytale gender roles. The maiden in distress is supposed to sprain her ankle, not the other way around. Jane says, “I cannot think of leaving you, sir, at so late an hour, in this solitary lane, till I see you are fit to mount your horse” (130). In a moment that enacts the male gaze, Rochester redeems his power and restores the traditional balance of power. “He looked at me when I said this: he had hardly turned his eyes in my direction before. ‘I should think

⁴³ The name Clara could be a reference to the affair Byron had with Mary Shelley’s half-sister, Clare Clairmont, which resulted in his illegitimate daughter Allegra.

you ought to be at home yourself,' he said" (130), Charlotte writes. This type of reversal is also commonly found in Byron's Oriental tales like *The Corsair* and *Don Juan*.

Despite its beginning, throughout most of the novel, Jane and Rochester's relationship is one of equals, as in *Wuthering Heights*, where Catherine and Heathcliff are also equals, different parts of the same whole. Manfred and Astarte are also well matched as Manfred recalls: "She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings, / The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind / To comprehend the universe" (II.ii.109-111). Early on in their relationship, Rochester says, "The fact is [. . .] I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: [. . .] I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience" (152). Their equality is discussed as a kind of sameness strikingly similar to Heathcliff and Catherine in Emily's novel and Manfred and Astarte in Byron's drama. Jane reflects as she observes Rochester's interactions at a party at Thornfield Hall: "He is not to them what he is to me. [. . .] he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine;—I am sure he is,—I feel akin to him;— I understand the language of his countenance and movements" (199). The same language of equality and kinship is repeated during Rochester's marriage proposal: "My bride is here,' he said, again drawing me to him, 'because my equal is here, and my likeness.'" (285).

Charlotte actually offers two versions of the Byronic hero in her novel, both based on Byron's models. The first is the tamer sort, Jane herself. Jane is self-possessed and independent. As Harold Bloom points out, "Jane is indomitable; [. . .] altogether 'a free human being with an independent will'" (Bloom 3), like Byron's Harold. It needs pointing out, however that there are limits to Jane's freedom. While she is remarkably independent given her gender and the time period, she is also caged, limited by some of

society's conventions. Rochester recognizes this tendency: "I see, at intervals, the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close-set bars of a cage: a vivid, restless, resolute captive is there; were it but free, it would soar cloud-high" (158). Rochester works to free Jane from her prison, but he can only coax her so far. She refuses to become his mistress after they fail to get married, even when Rochester threatens her; "'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stooped and approached his lips to my ear) 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence'" (340). Part of Jane wants to yield to Rochester. Jane considers; "Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law—no man being injured in the breach? [. . .] who will be injured by what you do?" Her famous answer is: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself" (356). Over the course of the novel, Jane gains true self-possession, which allows her in the end the courage to test more deeply ingrained gender conventions. After Jane's inheritance and Rochester's injuries, Jane becomes the family financier, making her husband dependent on her. This reversal, even today, is rare, demonstrating that Jane and Charlotte are indeed proto-feminist.

The other kind of Byronic hero in Charlotte's novel is more dangerous, the Byronic hero "gone berserk," as John Clubbe says of Heathcliff (209). In *Jane Eyre* Bertha and Rochester are modeled on Byron's more sinister heroes like the Giaour and Conrad in *The Corsair*. Unlike Harold and Jane, these characters are actually criminals, something they have in common with Rochester and Bertha. Bertha is passionate and hot-tempered. Like her husband, she feels the right to ignore societal demands in favor of following her own inclinations. This is played out in Bertha's supposed loose morals and infidelity, and when her husband rejects her, in her subsequently understandable violent

outbursts. Rochester, as his narcissism leads him to believe, is the real injured party. Thus, he feels justified in tricking or trapping Jane in a bigamous marriage, something that Jane would never knowingly do. As a Byronic hero, Jane is interested in independence, but only to the point condoned by society. She would never say, as Rochester does when his bigamist plot is revealed: “I had determined, and was convinced that I could and ought” (349). Likewise, Bertha feels justified in increasing her hostilities toward Jane and her husband as their wedding day approaches. The chief motivation for Bertha is also Byron’s for the Giaour and Conrad, revenge. Byron’s Giaour murders Hassan after he sews the Giaour’s lover Leila into a sack and drowns her. The Giaour is unrepentant, believing his actions justified. Byron writes,

I lov’d her, friar! nay, adored—

But these are words that all can use—

I prov’d it more in deed than word—

There’s blood upon that dinted sword—

A stain its steel can never lose:

‘Twas shed for her, who died for me , [. . .]. (1029-34)

Bertha’s only recourse against her husband, as she attempts to retain some power, a difficult proposition considering her imprisoned status, is violence, not too unlike Conrad in Byron’s *The Corsair*. Conrad hunts Seyd for revenge for his own murdered Medora. But, Conrad is unable to murder Seyd in his sleep, which Bertha has no problem attempting with Rochester, and which Gulnare actually accomplishes for Conrad. Bertha, however, does not stop at her first failed attempt. She not only sets fire to Rochester’s bed

while he is asleep in it, again forcing Jane to rescue him, but she also sets the fire that destroys Thornfield Hall, that she dies in, and in which Rochester becomes disfigured.

While passion motivates seeking justified revenge, another attribute Charlotte shares with Byron is the tendency for erotic passion to turn into sadomasochistic torture, even among lovers. In *Jane Eyre* as in Byron's Oriental tales, it is not uncommon to find the blending of sex and violence in relation to the eroticized "Other," the female Oriental with whom the male protagonist comes in contact. This is obvious in the case of the Rochesters. Edward and Bertha seem to live to torment each other. Less obviously, it also applies to Rochester as he tries to pull Jane into his sadomasochistic games. One is dressing up like an old gypsy to give Jane false predictions about the future. Later, they discuss Rochester's supposed coming wedding to Blanche. Jane asks, "It is known that Mr Rochester is to be married?" His reply is "Yes; and to the beautiful Miss Ingram" (225). As Jane is reeling from this news, Charlotte ends the torture; "Mr Rochester stepped out of his disguise" (228), revealing himself, but also catching Jane with her feelings. Jane suspects that Rochester has disguised himself to "draw me out—or in; you have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense," (228) in order to measure how she really feels about him. In the last completed canto of *Don Juan*, Lady Adeline Fitz-Fulke also disguises herself, but as a ghost to mine similar information from Juan. Both incidents not only employ disguise in order to gain personal information, but both also require cross-dressing. While Rochester dresses like an old Sybil, Lady Adeline dons the "sable frock and dreary cowl" of a monk (XVI.123.1029).

Another game is more brutal. Rochester allows Jane to be insulted by Blanche and the rest of the party at Thornfield as they discuss previously unpleasant experiences with

incompetent governesses. Rochester takes pleasure in probing Jane afterwards for the depths of her anger and humiliation. Rochester employs Blanche in a by now familiar technique to rouse Jane into speaking her passion for him out loud, by igniting her jealousy. Jane in fact, feels jealous about Blanche Ingram when she believes Rochester plans to marry her. The depths of Jane's love are still masked to herself. She knows that she is not of the same social position as Blanche, that Blanche has the better claim to make as Rochester's wife, but at the same time, she cannot admit that they are properly suited. Jane supposes, "Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling. [. . .] She was very showy, but she was not genuine: [. . .] she was not good: she was not original: [. . .] I saw he was going to marry her, for family, perhaps political reasons; [. . .]" but, importantly, "*she could not charm him*" (210-11). Jane is clearly jealous, though she denies this even to herself. A similar ploy is used in *Tenant* when Arthur flirts with Annabella Wilmot.

Both of these have precedence in Byron's biography, mimicking incidents from the Byron marriage. According to Annabella Milbanke's journal, if she lingered too long with Byron and Augusta after dinner, he would chide her "We don't want *you*, my charmer" (Marchand 197), demonstrating that Annabella was an obstacle to his real object of love, his own half-sister. One difference is that instead of dismissing Jane, Rochester insists that she remains after dinner to be insulted. As Moglen indicates, Charlotte became "obsessed with the implications of sexual domination" (27). Playing with power dynamics is inherent in Rochester's relationships with Bertha and Jane, clearly making him a sadist, much like the real life Byron. However, Rochester's victims rarely remain masochists.

In *Jane Eyre*, as in *Wuthering Heights*, sadomasochistic relationships often produce a call for blood. In the scene when Bertha's presence is finally revealed, Charlotte describes the ensuing action thusly; "the *lunatic sprang and grappled with his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equaling her husband, and corpulent besides*" (emphasis added 328). Bertha is not an ordinary woman. She possesses supernatural strength, especially so for someone who has been denied regular physical activity for a number of years. It is unusual to find a nineteenth-century woman with such strength. When Jane recalls the destruction of her veil to Rochester, she believes that Bertha is a vampire. Charlotte writes, "she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass." Jane says that the figure reminded her "Of the foul German spectre—the Vampyre" (317).⁴⁴ Moreover, when Bertha attacks and bites her brother Richard Mason, her bite is evidence of feeding on familial blood as in Byron's *Manfred*, or in Emily's *Wuthering Heights* after Catherine dies. As Doctor Carter examines Mason, he notes that "'The flesh on the shoulder is torn as well as cut. This wound was not done with a knife: there have been teeth here!'" To which Mason replies, "She bit me" (239). The damage inflicted from Bertha is further scrutinized by the doctor: "'I must look to this other wound in the arm: she has had her teeth here, too I think.'" Mason says, "'She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart'" (239). The tendency for the vampire to feed on his family is also described in Byron's *The Giaour*:

⁴⁴ Byron's connections with vampire fiction are also discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent;
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race,
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life
[. . .]

Thy victims ere they yet expire
Shall know the daemon for their sire. (756-60, 763-4)

But this is not the only discussion of incest in the novel. The proposed marriage between Jane and her cousin St. John Rivers is also implied incest, not because they are first cousins, but because their relationship *so far* has been one of brother and sister. Yet, as Jane contemplates the situation, she realizes that St. John would insist on a “real” marriage, “which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe” (451), meaning, of course, consummate. Jane objects to the marriage on these grounds herself saying, “I regard you as a brother—you, me as a sister: so let us continue.” St. John replies, “We cannot [. . .] it would not do” (451). While Jane “freely consents” to go with him as a helpmate, she utterly refuses to become his wife, eventually exclaiming, “I scorn your idea of love” (454). In *Manfred*, of course, Astarte and Manfred have “loved each other as [they] should not love” (II.i.27).

Jane herself also has connections to filial blood especially in relation to the Reeds. In the red room sequence at the beginning of the novel when Jane is a child, familial blood causes a kind of psychic breakdown in her much like Manfred’s. As Jane enters the room, she recalls, “I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and

was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering” (17). The blood is due to John River’s previous attack on Jane. While Jane is locked in the red room, itself a physical manifestation of blood, as her uncle died in the room, her wound continues to bleed: “My head still ached and bled with the blow and fall I had received” (22). Staring at her reflection in the mirror, Jane experiences a hallucination akin to Manfred’s. Jane describes a “strange little figure there gazing on me, with a white face and arms speckling the gloom and glittering eyes of fear moving all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit” (21), until she finally falls unconscious from her own fear. This sounds like the hallucination the Giaour has of Leila in his final moments:

Yet still—‘tis here—in silence stands,
And beckons with beseeching hands!
With braided hair, and bright-black eye—
I knew ‘twas false—she could not die! (1298-1301)

Finally, when Jane returns to Gateshead to nurse her dying Aunt Reed, not too unlike Helen’s final visit to Arthur in *Tenant*, Charlotte links familial blood and sadomasochism directly. One of the last things Aunt Reed says to Jane acknowledges their mutual suffering. ““You were born, I think, to be my torment” (268), Aunt Reed exclaims. Jane replies, ““Love me, then, or hate me, as you will”” (269). Manfred, of course, knows no limits to the guilt he feels about Astarte’s death. When Nemesis calls Astarte’s phantom forth, Manfred cries, “Thou lovedst me / Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made / To torture thus each other, though it were / The deadliest sin to love as we have loved” (II.iv. 121-24). One difference between Charlotte and Byron is that Charlotte’s characters have the ability to choose. They can either give up their guilt, as

Jane has, or be trapped in it, unable to move forward like Aunt Reed. Byron offers no such choice to Manfred. Charlotte's characters are actually freer than Byron's, demonstrating Charlotte's acceptance and simultaneous rejection of Byron.

Purging dangerous, self-contaminating Byronic characteristics, like consuming guilt or an uncontrollable sexuality, seems to be the goal of *Jane Eyre*. Rochester may well have imprisoned Bertha in the first place to help reform her, an attempt that failed. Caging a Byronic hero like Bertha is not a pathway that leads to redemption. It only stirs more resistance. Rochester has the better option. He can be made worthy of Jane if he can be cured of the deadly aspects of his Byronic self. However, Jane too needs some improvement, but in the opposite direction. Jane needs to embrace her Byronic independence more fully before she can feel comfortable ignoring certain gender roles, specifically those pertaining to power and wealth. Jane will have to become "the man" in her relationship with Rochester. Charlotte's impulses lead her both away from and towards the Byronic hero, demonstrating that she is searching for the appropriate middle ground in employing the character type.

When Rochester is left blind and crippled at the end of the novel, he suffers. This suffering, brought on by the burning of Thornfield Hall, is not too unlike the fires of purgatory, cleansing Rochester of his sins, burning away his Byronic past, and helping him see the errors of his ways. Through his disfigurement and loss of material possessions, Rochester is forced to accept the limits placed on the self; he can no longer take care of himself and is dependent on others for his basic survival. Once stripped of his power and wealth, Rochester becomes solely dependent on his own character, which he realizes needs revitalization. Rochester learns to accept the limits placed on the self by

ironically only having himself left. Bloom has corrected a common misconception regarding Rochester's punishment writing, "I do not think that we are to apply the Freudian reduction that Rochester has been somehow castrated, even symbolically [. . .]" although "he has been rendered dependent on Jane, and he has been tamed into domestic virtue and pious sentiment" (Bloom, *Modern Critical* 3). After all, Jane does give birth to their son at the end of the tale. Rather, Bloom posits a connection between Rochester and Byron that is fairly convincing. He argues that "Byron is both the literary father to a strong daughter [Charlotte], and the idealized object of her erotic drive" (Bloom, *Modern Critical* 3). This tension in Charlotte herself gets resolved when Rochester, as a stand-in for Byron, is redeemed. Bloom views Rochester's punishment as "what I am afraid must be regarded as Charlotte Brontë's vengeance upon Byron" (Bloom, *Modern Critical* 3). When Charlotte "disciplined Rochester" and "forgave his Byronic past," she also forgave Byron, for "Charlotte could not allow Byron to be forever beyond her" (*Modern Critical* 3). Thus, through the wedding of Rochester and Jane, Charlotte gets to figuratively achieve the fulfillment of her own erotic drive for Byron. If Charlotte indeed felt an erotic longing for Byron, this suggests one reason for the Byronic tensions found in her work, her interest and attraction but approval only when limitations are imposed. In relation to her sisters' novels, Charlotte's walks the line between Emily's full adoption and Anne's rather harsh rejection.

In the following chapter, another "scribbling" woman responds to Byron, George Eliot, perhaps the only other author as powerfully drawn to and repulsed by Byronism as the Brontë sisters. Byron figures in *Felix Holt: The Radical* and in *Daniel Deronda*, but

Eliot's version of the Byronic hero reveals a rather startling co-option of Byron by the end of the nineteenth-century.

CHAPTER 5. GEORGE ELIOT AND THE LATE VICTORIAN RESPONSE TO BYRON

Like many late Victorians, George Eliot did not like the man Byron, whom she thought sexually immoral; similarly, she disapproved of Byron's works generally because she found them vulgar. Despite these personal views, however, Eliot's works, especially *Felix Holt, the Radical* and *Daniel Deronda*, often invoke both Byron the man and his poetry because they are useful to her project of reform. Eliot recognized that Byron was a large part of the communal memory of what it meant to be English, especially the mythic Byron of Greece, who embodied the noble political aims the English should employ globally; thus, Eliot references the mythic image of Byron as a model for national reform.

The public's overall interest in Byron, which had dwindled from the years 1840-1868, with "no single year produc[ing] over twelve items that deal with Byron" (24-25), shifted dramatically in 1869, which opened with some sixty-eight pieces published about him, "the highest total since the year of the poet's death and a spectacular indicator that a Byronic revival is underway" (Goode 30). The chief cause of this sudden interest is not hard to find; the epicenter was a re-examination and confirmation of Byron's incestuous sex scandal, produced by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Stowe's article "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" was published in September of 1869 simultaneously in the *Atlantic* in America and *MacMillan's* in England. According to Jennifer Cognard-Black, the piece "initiated a transatlantic media blitz so virulent and wild that Oliver Wendell Holmes called it the 'Byron whirlwind'" (63-4). Stowe's article created the "major impetus to the revival of interest in Byron" (Goode 31) on both sides of the Atlantic. Stowe apparently believed that, in blasting Byron's memory, she could weaken the influence of his

immoral writing and permanently destroy the last of his reputation. In less than six months, Stowe rewrote the article into the book-length *Lady Byron Vindicated* (1870).

The nucleus of Stowe's argument was "an unsubstantiated conversation" (Cognard-Black 65) with Annabella Milbanke, Byron's wife. The story goes that, on a trip to England in 1856, Annabella requested a *tête-à-tête* with Stowe, in which she shared the secret of her marital estrangement, claiming that Byron fathered a child with his half-sister Augusta and maintained their incestuous relationship even after his marriage. Byron is said to have blamed his dissipation on Annabella's frigidity. Stowe decided to share this information with the public thirteen years after the event due to a memoir written by the Countess Teresa Guiccioli, Byron's last mistress. Guiccioli portrayed Annabella as a "narrow-minded, cold-hearted precisian' who stifled Byron's art and drove him to seek solace in other women" (Cognard-Black 65-6). Stowe said she was angered by the blatantly one-sided attack on an innocent victim and frustrated that English writers lacked the compunction to come to Annabella's defense; thus, she decided to attempt it herself. The result of "The True Story" for Byron studies was extraordinary; it produced dozens of "ad hoc biographies, digests, and treatises related to the case" (67). Even Medora Leigh, the supposed product of Byron and Augusta's love, published an account of her parentage in an attempt to acquit her uncle. Most found that Medora's memoir actually corroborated Stowe's case.

For stirring up such controversy, Stowe herself was attacked in the press. Algernon Swinburne actually took to calling her "Harriet Bitcher Spew." Other "literary critics denounced her impropriety as a woman, Christian, and American." Stowe's gender and self-claimed piety, set her up for accusations that she was behaving in an

“unwomanly and ungodly manner by spreading sexual scandal and breaking feminine confidence” (66). Just as Stowe portrayed Byron as a liar and a cheat, “the press retaliated in kind” (Cognard-Black 82) so that not even the fantastic reception of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* eighteen years before could guarantee her standing as a credible author.

Of the sixty-eight items published on Byron in 1869, “more than 40 deal with the controversy, a startling 60 per cent of the year’s total output on Byron” (31), with nearly all the material expressing disapproval of Stowe’s revelation in favor of Byron’s defense. Almost every reviewer derailed Stowe’s article for lack of proof. Theodore Tilton of *The Independent* wrote, “Startling in accusation, barren in proof, inaccurate in dates, infelicitous in style, and altogether ill-advised in publication, her strange article will travel around the whole literary world and everywhere evoke against its author the spontaneous disapprobation of her life-long friends” (reprint. in Cognard-Black 69).

When Stowe expanded her article into a book, she dramatically altered her approach to the subject, remaking her argument into an “archive of dates, documents, cross-referenced data, and named sources” (Cognard-Black 69). According to Cognard-Black, Stowe had to adapt her role of a writer-novelist into that of the lawyer, “who would put Byron on a literary trial,” a psychiatrist, “who would establish Byron’s moral illness and its infection of the entire British nation,” and an “impartial, investigative journalist” (69). Stowe added layers of documental evidence in every chapter of her book, except for “its narrative climax” (Cognard-Black 72), which still sounded more like a novel than objective reporting. Stowe returned to the genre of novel-writing for Annabella’s confession, pitting Stowe’s word, as a woman and worse an American, against Byron’s silence. While Stowe seemed to comprehend “the import of speaking out

on such a topic and against such a favorite as Byron [. . .] she couldn't have foreseen the universal wrath she would incur" (Cognard-Black 80-1). As Stowe says in the book, "The world may finally forgive the man of genius anything [. . .] but for the woman there is no mercy and no redemption" (*Vindicated* 74). Stowe was accused of smearing Byron's name in the pursuit of fame and money. Taking on Byron's myth, as a totem of male Englishness, even almost fifty years after his death, proved detrimental to Stowe's career; her book failed miserably on both sides of the Atlantic. The end result of the Stowe controversy was the opposite of what she ultimately sought; it created a "movement that establishes interest [in Byron] on a more stable and permanent basis" (Goode 32-33). Byron's reputation took a turn for the better as dozens came to his aid. However, even during the darkest of times, Byron's poetry never ceased to be read; the personal scandals of his life actually seemed to "make his poetry more attractive than ever" (Goode 38). Rounding out the close of the nineteenth-century was *The Works of Lord Byron* (1898), the first thoughtfully completed collected works and letters. Edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, the poet's son, and Rowland Prothero Ernle, it was published simultaneously in England and America.

George Eliot had a vested interest in the Byron scandal. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer says, the "revival of public attention to the connection between Byron and his half sister Augusta Leigh shocked and enraged Marian, who could not bring herself to refer to it except as 'the Byron subject' or 'the Byron question'" (237). Eliot once wrote that "the fashion of being 'titilated [sic] by the worst is like the uncovering of the dead Lord Byron's club foot'" (Bodenheimer 238). And Eliot's letters of the time discuss the topic in some detail. Writing to the largely forgotten novelist Sara Hennell on 21

September 1869, Eliot remarked on the dangers of publicly discussing the scandal: “As to the Byron subject, nothing can outweigh to my mind the heavy social injury of familiarizing young minds with the desecration of family ties. The discussion of the subject in the newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets, is simply odious to me, and I think it a pestilence likely to leave very ugly marks” (*GEL* 366). Eliot was disgusted by the nature of the sexual scandal itself and not by Stowe’s attacks on Byron’s reputation. Eliot claimed that she was divorced from Byron defenses. In fact, in the same letter to Hennell, Eliot wrote, “As to the high-flown stuff which is being reproduced about Byron and his poetry, I am utterly out of sympathy with it. He seems to me the most *vulgar-minded* genius that ever produced a great effect in literature” (emphasis Eliot’s 366).

Interestingly, Eliot was on very friendly terms with Harriet Beecher Stowe and even wrote her about “The True Story.” However, her letter only hints at the depth of her own judgments concerning the article’s immoral subject. Rather than chastise Stowe as others did, Eliot focused her attention on how women authors often experienced “harsh and unfair judgments” in the press. Eliot says, “with regard to yourself, dear friend, I have felt sure that in acting on a different basis of impression, you were impelled by pure, generous feeling. Do not think that I would have written to you on this point to express judgment; I am anxious only to convey to you a sense of my sympathy and confidence.” Of the Byron controversy specifically, Eliot gently admonishes, “For my own part, I should have preferred that the ‘Byron question’ should not have been brought before the public, because I think the discussion of such subjects is injurious socially (*GEL* 369).

Like Byron’s, Eliot’s life was not without its sexual scandal. She created a storm of controversy after eloping from England to Germany with the married father of six

George Henry Lewes in July 1854. On returning, Eliot took Lewes' name and they lived openly together as husband and wife despite being shunned socially. Eliot's brother Isaac showed his disapproval by cutting off communication with his sister (220). The *Brother and Sister* sonnets⁴⁵ record Eliot's desire to be reunited with Isaac and are "loaded with autobiographical regret" (221). The sonnet sequence can be read as "a pleading letter from a cast-off sister to her beloved brother" (Leighton and Reynolds 221), not unlike Byron's "Epistle to Augusta," a long, letter-like poem *from* a beloved brother *to* his cast-off sister.⁴⁶ It is almost as if the two poems create a whole when read together, with Eliot as the sister of her poem responding to Byron as the brother of his. Taken together, the poems complete the story with both siblings loving and missing the other, instead of being as one-sided as they are when read separately. The sonnets echo Byron's "Epistle" in the first-person confession of the closeness felt by the siblings, and more importantly, in detailing the after effects of losing that connection.⁴⁷

Eliot commonly reveals the conflicted nature of her complex responses to Byron in detail in her prose works, with Byron appearing as both a writer and as a man in *Felix Holt, the Radical* and in *Daniel Deronda*. In the case of the former, Eliot supplies a

⁴⁵ Eliot's sequence was written in 1869, the year the Stowe controversy ensued, but was not published until 1874.

⁴⁶ Byron left Augusta for exile after they caused their own sexual scandal.

⁴⁷ Much has been made of Eliot's responses to William Wordsworth in these sonnets; however, a close attention to the details of "Lines [. . .] Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798) reveals how different Eliot's subject is. In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth mentions his relationship with his sister, but this poem does not foreground that discussion. Even the end of "Tintern Abbey," which includes some details of the relationship, differs from Byron's and Eliot's in that there is no estrangement between the brother and sister under investigation. Wordsworth uses Dorothy as a convenient tool to explore how his mind has grown since he first contemplated the scene. As his sister revels in nature, she reminds Wordsworth of his own youthful exuberance. Despite the last lines of the poem, wherein Wordsworth briefly imagines that he might one day "be where [he] no more can hear/ [Her] voice" (147-8), the siblings are not actually apart. They have not really experienced the break in connection that Eliot and Byron focus their thoughts on in the *Brother and Sister* sonnets and "Epistle to Augusta."

discussion of Byron, which questions the value of his works as well as hints to the depths of his mythic importance. It is interesting to note that *Felix Holt* was first published in 1866, three years before the Stowe controversy began. As a testimony to Eliot's thoughts on Byron before the scandal broke, the novel seems to denounce him. Like Lady Caroline Lamb before her, Eliot's observations on Byron have much to do with the overlap of the political and the sexual.

In *Felix Holt*, the title character upsets Esther's sewing basket, revealing a hidden copy of Byron's works within. "'Byron's Poems!' he said, in a tone of disgust, while Esther was recovering all the other articles. 'The Dream'—he'd better have been asleep and snoring. What do you stuff your memory with Byron, Miss Lyon?'" (59). In response, Esther "reddened, drew up her long neck, and said, as she retreated to her chair again, 'I have a great admiration for Byron'" (59). It is very telling that Esther keeps her copy of Byron hidden from view; for, it seems to betray that she is ashamed of owning it. Eliot indicates Esther's sense of guilt about reading Byron: "Esther would not have wished [her father] to know anything about the volume of Byron, but she was too proud to show any concern" (59). Esther is embarrassed about being accidentally discovered and so unceremoniously exposed, perhaps in part because she reads Byron as a guilty pleasure; it is something that she apparently knows she should not do, but it is something she enjoys anyway.

What's more interesting is that Esther hides her copy of Byron's poetry in her sewing basket, a container she is likely to keep close by and readily available. It is also a symbol of Esther's position in the household and society in general; as such, it is a gendered personal item, an extension of Esther's identity. Stowing Byron securely into a

standard symbol of femininity, Eliot seems to be indicating the intimate connection between Byron's poetry and Victorian female readers. His poetry is being constantly read by women, but not openly. The question is why. It could be that perhaps women keenly felt both a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from Byron's poetry. Or, they feared reprisals for reading it, which would require hiding the fact from view in order to escape the judgments of others, especially from the men in their lives.

Whatever the case, Eliot makes it clear that neither Mr. Lyon nor Felix harbor any love lost for Byron. Eliot tells us that Mr. Lyon "knew scarcely anything of the poet." And yet, his judgments on him are quite sure. Mr. Lyon claims that Byron "'is a worldly and vain writer, I fear.'" One can assume that, as such, he would not openly condone his daughter reading Byron. At the same time, however, Mr. Lyon admits to the importance of Byron to the younger generation. He says that Byron's "books embodied the faith and ritual of many young ladies and gentlemen" (59). Eliot thus reveals several of the double consciousnesses inherent in reading Byron. While Byron is considered "worldly and vain," his works have become the "faith and ritual" of the young. Byron is a powerfully influential writer, despite his personal flaws. The reverence of him is not without its religious component. The young, it seems have faith in Byron and read him as a ritual or rite of passage. It's almost as if Eliot is suggesting that Byronism is a phase in the maturation process of English adolescents. Although his poetry is being read, it is not done so openly, in much the same way that puberty remains hidden from view. Moreover, reading Byron is a habit or compulsion the young feel guilty about, like

masturbation.⁴⁸ As this novel seems to indicate, women like Esther are reading Byron secretly for good reason.

Felix's opinions on Byron are much harsher than Mr. Lyon's and require a closer investigation. Byron is proclaimed as "A misanthropic debauchee," by Felix as he "lift[ed] a chair with one hand, and [held] the book open in the other [. . .]." By continuing to hold the volume open, Felix accomplishes two things. First, he lengthens the duration of Esther's mortification; and second, he seems to hope to reveal the hidden nature of Byron's immoral writing. Felix feels justified in exposing the hidden shame Esther is so obviously attempting to deny. It is also almost as if Felix expects the open book, the text of the poetry itself, to testify to its own immorality. When this does not happen, Felix supplies his own denouncements, by saying that Byron's notion of a hero was "that he should disorder his stomach and despise mankind. His corsairs and renegades, his Alps and Manfreds, are the most paltry puppets that were ever pulled by the string of lust and pride" (59). Like Lyon, Felix recognizes Byron's personal flaws. Calling him a "misanthropic debauchee," Felix reveals his own disgust at Byron's sexual past. Even more telling is that Felix sees that Byron's heroes are "paltry puppets" for the poet's identity. Because Byron himself was morally corrupt, his characters are too. What's worse is that Byron's heroes become merely expressions of the poet's "lust and pride." Having thus revealed his distaste for Byron, Felix wonders how Esther could stomach reading him by interrogating: "I should like to know how you will justify your admiration for such a writer, Miss Lyon." Felix's accusations are almost impossible for

⁴⁸ Dino Franco Felluga's book *The Perversity of Poetry: Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius* (2005) explores the connections between Byron as the figure of Romantic genius and the chronic masturbator.

Esther to counter, as she is aware of Byron's reputation. She only replies, "I should not attempt it with you, Mr. Holt." (59).

The subject of conversation then shifts to local political concerns only to return to Byron a page later. This time, Eliot discusses Byron in connection with fashion. Speaking of young ladies, Esther remarks, "A real fine-lady does not wear clothes that flare in people's eyes, or use importunate scents, or make a noise as she moves: she is something refined, and graceful, and charming, and never obtrusive" (61). Esther indicates all that is expected of women of her class, and she seems to think that she typifies them. Seeing his chance to call Esther out on her reading Byron, which, apparently, to him means that she is quite unlike the feminine ideal, Felix contemptuously retorts, "And she reads Byron also, and admires Childe Harold—gentlemen of unspeakable woes, who employ a hairdresser, and look seriously at themselves in the glass" (61). Here Felix admits that while Byron is standard reading for young ladies, the devotion they exhibit for Byron is misplaced. According to Felix, women who read Byron must be as frivolous as he was. While Childe Harold is a gentleman of "unspeakable woes," he also "employ[s] a hairdresser."⁴⁹ Obviously, Felix feels that these two inclinations are mutually exclusive. Serious men and real heroes do not care what they look like. They certainly do not "look seriously at themselves in the glass."⁵⁰ Women more commonly exhibit these attributes. Thus, Felix casts doubt on Byron's masculinity, all but calling him a woman. Having made the comparison rather explicit, Felix then further insults both women and Byron by suggesting that "A fine-lady is a squirrel-headed thing, with small airs and small notions,

⁴⁹ While Byron did not actually keep a hairdresser on staff, Lady Blessington observed that he "smothered [his hair] with oil to disguise the grey" (reprint. in Grosskurth 423).

⁵⁰ According to Lord Sligo, who befriended Byron in Athens, he once found Byron, "admiring himself in front of a looking-glass. Byron remarked he should like to die of consumption" due to the slimming effects of the disease (Grosskurth 1201-).

about as applicable to the business of life as a pair of tweezers to the clearing of a forest” (61). What women and Byron have in common is their lack of usefulness; neither fine ladies nor Byron are suitable for “the business of life.” They are too wrapped up in the superficial. Felix continues his attack on Esther, who to most would seem like the epitome of a fine lady; he does so by adopting the voice of Medora, the murdered wife of Byron’s protagonist in *The Corsair*.⁵¹ According to Felix, Medora ““wouldn’t have minded if they had all been put into the pillory and lost their ears. She would have said, ‘Their ears did stick out so’” (61). Again, Byron and his works are unsuitable for the harsh realities of the world. They belong to the superficial. The only reason Medora would have justified cutting off the ears of “fine-ladies” was because they were unattractive.

Felix, as a working-class man, believes in all that is honest, simple, and true, and expresses his doubts about those above him. Of course, Byron, and Esther, to a lesser extent, are both certainly members of the upper class. As such, when Felix calls Byron a “peacock” (61), all vanity and show, he is also indicting Esther. If Esther enjoys reading Byron, she must share in his frivolity; she too must be a peacock.⁵² To Felix, Byron, as a poet, lacks substance, and as man, Byron is hardly the epitome of the masculine.⁵³ And yet, as Felix knows, proper ladies and gentlemen were raised reading Byron. Felix believes, as Eliot may have, that the cult of Byron is a fashion that must be purged. Esther must learn to put her Byronism behind her before she can whole-heartedly chose to live a worthwhile life.

⁵¹ Medora was also incidentally the name of the daughter Byron supposedly fathered with Augusta.

⁵² As a bit of a coxcomb, Byron was extravagant in his personal dress. According to Christine Kenyon Jones, between January 1812 and September 1813 Byron spent almost 900 pounds with “one tailor alone, while in three months in 1812, he bought no less than 24 fine white quilted waistcoats” (112).

⁵³ Both of these were fairly common complaints about Byron by the end of the Victorian period.

There are two central ironies revealed in these brief exchanges between Felix and his future spouse. The first is the secretive nature of the sexual, which Byron seems to embody. This works in many ways. First, Esther hides her copy of Byron in her sewing basket, a symbol of her femininity, which no man would dare to defile. And yet, because of his reputation as a sexual libertine, Esther's hiding him in her sewing basket seems to tempt such defiling. What's more, Felix hides his own lust and sexual attraction to Esther by couching it as a distaste for the Byronic. As we know, Felix is interested in Esther; he is sexually attracted to her as evidenced in their marriage later in the novel. However, in these two scenes, he hides his sexual interest and instead focuses on the disgust he feels for a notorious womanizer. Perhaps Felix feels guilty about his own lust for Esther and wonders if he has too much in common with Byron. Or, it could be that Felix sees Byron as a rival for Esther's affections. Spilling her sewing basket, Felix realizes the position that Byron holds in Esther's estimation. The volume of Byron's poetry is made akin to secretive love letters from another man. Byron holds the position of a sexual mate, a space that Felix would like to fill himself. He can only express his outrage by attacking his rival, in an attempt to lower him in Esther's estimation. At the same time, Felix makes Esther equally guilty in the affair with Byron, hardly the best way to secure her lasting affection—unless it is to demonstrate that Felix is the better man, and thus able to save Esther from the lascivious clutches of one who would only like to debauch her. Or it could simply be that Felix is using Byron as a subconscious code to admit his own sexual interest in Esther by way of displacement. In this way, Byron becomes the voice for sexual desire that characters do not want to admit.

Another irony central to these exchanges is more political in nature. Felix Holt, as the novel's subtitle reminds us, is a "radical." Felix rejects Byron as a personal and political hero, refusing to accept that Byron was at the heart of sincerely liberal politics in England and on the continent during the beginning of the century. What he denies is that Byron was actually more radical in his politics than Felix is, as Eliot proves at the end of the novel. Felix only proposes modest reforms; he is certainly not interested in leading any revolutions. Instead of focusing his attention on the inclination to agree with Byron's politics, Felix rather harps on the fact that Byron is a self-confirmed sexual libertine. Thus, Felix only focuses his attack on part of Byron's myth; he conflates the political with the sexual. The logic appears to be that, since Byron's life was morally corrupt, his politics must have been insincere. Certainly, his politics could not have been an outward sign of an inner altruism, as that kind of selflessness would have been destroyed by Byron's egotistical sexuality. Or perhaps, like Lady Caroline Lamb, Felix seems to believe that the debauched liberal sexuality of Byron could contaminate nobler political aims, making it dangerous to test the theory. Whatever the case, as *Felix Holt* demonstrates, in 1866, Eliot was hardly at the forefront of Byronic defenses. This would change dramatically in 1876 with the publication of *Daniel Deronda*.

Like many Victorian authors, Eliot includes direct references to Byron in many of her novels.⁵⁴ Direct references to Byron abound in *Daniel Deronda*. Significantly, the opening scene is based on Eliot and Lewes witnessing Miss Leigh losing at roulette in

⁵⁴ Even the gothic *The Lifted Veil* seems to contain a few. As Latimer says, "I was standing outside the portico patting lazy old Caesar, a Newfoundland almost blind with age, the only dog that ever took any notice of me" (286). Byron's own Newfoundland dog Boatswain achieved lasting fame when Byron had the dog buried on the grounds of Newstead Abbey in a tomb complete with an elegiac poem. Also, a servant in *The Lifted Veil* who leaves to get married is named "Fletcher." Though Eliot makes it clear that this servant is female, the name may be a reference to Byron's lifelong valet, who was also present at his deathbed.

Homburg, 28 September 1872. Lewes' diary mentions: "Miss Leigh (Byron's granddaughter) having lost 500 [pounds] looking feverishly excited. Painful sight." George Eliot also mentions this scene, in a letter to John Blackwood, as "the saddest thing to be witnessed" (*GEL* 314). Thus, according to Jane Irwin, the "source of the dramatic opening paragraphs of *Daniel Deronda* was the painful sight of Miss Leigh's play" (xxvii). It has been difficult to determine with any certainty the exact identity of this young woman, as Lewes and Eliot only refer to her as "Miss Leigh." She appears to be Medora's daughter Marie, who died less than a year after this event in 1873 (Normington 190). What makes her losing at roulette so sad was the desperation of her play; according to Susan Normington, Marie, like her mother, spent most of her life in desperate need of money to sustain a lifestyle she could not afford (145).

Eliot also includes an allusion to one of Byron's more outrageous statements in the novel. In chapter 11, Eliot writes, "Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a *gourmet*, mentioned Byron's opinion that a woman should never be seen eating—introducing it with a confidential—"The fact is' —as if he were for the first time admitting his concurrence in that sentiment of the refined poet" (116). Byron's exact quotation was delivered in a letter to Lady Melbourne, Caroline Lamb's mother-in-law, on 25 September 1812: "a woman should never be seen eating or drinking, unless it be *lobster sallad* [sic] & *Champagne*, the only true feminine & becoming viands" (emphasis Byron's *BLJ* II 208). It has been argued that Byron's quote seems to indicate his own tendency to retain his lithe figure through starvation. Wilma Paterson has argued that Byron was so caught up in maintaining his own physical attractiveness that he displayed

symptoms of *anorexia nervosa* throughout most of his life (136-7). This included starvation diets, a grueling exercise routine, as well as the use of laxatives and purgatives.

Eliot uses Byron as a general backdrop to her novel, but she also connects Byron with her chief protagonist. In fact, Sir Hugo's The Abbey, the orphaned Deronda's home, is very similar to Byron's ancestral home Newstead Abbey. Eliot describes The Abbey as "one of the finest in England, at once historical, romantic, and home-like: a picturesque architectural out-growth from an abbey, which had still remnants of the old monastic trunk" (165). Byron's Newstead Abbey, which Sir John received from Henry VIII, "preserved much of the original structure and the monastic layout. The cloister still remains at the heart of the building. Likewise, the impressive 13th-century west wall of the priory church continues to enhance the size and grandeur of the entrance front" (Newstead Abbey 4). Further, Byron fostered ghost stories about Newstead when he had visitors, just as Sir Hugo does in chapter 35: "There used to be rows of Benedictines sitting where we are sitting. Suppose we were suddenly to see the lights burning low and the ghost of the old monks rising behind all our chairs!" (Eliot 408). Finally, it is also well known that Byron kept a menagerie of animals during his residence at Newstead. According to a brochure made available at Newstead Abbey, "Byron's tame bear and wolf kept him company [in the Great Dining-Room] together with numerous dogs, tortoises and a hedgehog. It is said that some of these animals occupied the chapel" (8). Likewise, in *Daniel Deronda*, the chapel has been converted into a stable: "Each finely-arched chapel was turned into a stall" (409). Even if mere coincidence, Eliot's

descriptions of The Abbey clearly resemble actual details of Newstead Abbey, which was quite popular with Victorian sightseers.⁵⁵

It can also be argued that Eliot provides Deronda with a tragic flaw that checks his vanity in much the same way Byron's vanity was checked by his clubfoot. The knowledge of his deformity was widely known during his own life and after. According to John Murray, the publisher's son, who remembered the meeting between Byron and Scot in the summer of 1815, "Lord Byron's deformity in his foot was very evident, especially as he walked downstairs. He carried a stick. After Scot and he had ended their conversation in the drawing room, it was a curious sight to see the greatest poets of the age—both lame—stumping downstairs side by side" (reprnt. in MacCarthy 428). Byron certainly felt impeded by his clubbed foot, and took pains to hide it. Interestingly, several of Byron's contemporaries seem to argue that Byron actually seemed more attractive due to his misshapen appendage. For instance, Sir Thomas Lawrence, the famed Regency portraitist remarked, "the general effect [of his beauty] is heightened by a thin spare form, and, as you may have heard, by a deformity of limb" (reprnt. in Eisler 6). Deronda's suspicion that he is a bastard is made analogous to Byron's deformed limb in chapter 16. The possibility that he is illegitimate comes to Deronda as "a surprise that [...] strengthened the silent consciousness [of] a grief within," which "might be compared in some ways with Byron's susceptibility about his deformed foot" (174). On the following page, Eliot says that this gave Deronda "the sense of an entailed disadvantage;" it was Deronda's "deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe" (175). Although

⁵⁵ In the summer of 2005, the Newstead Abbey Society offered a sizeable display of watercolors of Byron's home painted by Victorian tourists who were charmed by the romantic setting. It cannot be determined whether or not Eliot herself ever visited the grounds.

Deronda is not really a bastard, the damage from such a suspicion has already been accomplished by the time he goes off to school.

Byronic heroes find particular shape in Eliot's characters, especially in the novel's three main protagonists, Grandcourt, Gwendolen, and Deronda himself. The Byronic hero is commonly understood as an egotist whose primary characteristic is his refusal to recognize any sense of authority that claims to be superior to the self. According to K. M. Newton, he is a rebel, who thinks that "he can create his own values by an act of will quite independently of all generally accepted moral sanctions" (*Romantic Humanist* 28). To Byron, of course, these characters are heroes, but Eliot is openly critical of her Byronic egotists, attacking such egotism "when it becomes allied with narrow self-interest" (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 36). This is especially evident in the case of Grandcourt, the novel's unrepentant Byronic hero.

Henleigh Grandcourt's credentials as the epitome of Eliot's most negative Byronic characters seem unimpeachable. He is excessively egotistical, and feels completely uncompelled toward social action, resulting in intense ennui. Grandcourt's young daughter by Lydia Glasher, Antonia, observes: "He acquitted himself with all the advantage of a man whose grace of bearing had long been moulded [sic] on an experience of boredom" (348). In terms of his immoral character, Grandcourt is Felix Holt's "misanthropic debauchee" *par excellence*, as exhibited in his treatment of his mistress Lydia and their four children. He will not submit himself to traditional moral sanctions. His urge to dominate too manifests as an expression of his narcissism. One reason Grandcourt is attracted to Gwendolen in the first place is because she seems a challenge to him. Grandcourt sets out to tame Gwendolen's spirit, implying that his

domination will be accomplished sexually once they are married. This is best seen in the adventure of the second necklace, the diamond jewelry he has already given to Lydia, which he expects her to turn over to Gwendolen at their marriage. This necklace, like all the necklaces in the text, seems to operate like a kind of slave collar to Gwendolen.

Immediately after their wedding, Lydia forwards the diamond necklace to Mrs. Grandcourt; in fact, it is awaiting her arrival at their new home. Gwendolen refuses to wear it, knowing where it has been. Grandcourt, however, will not be subdued by her feminine histrionics; he will force Gwendolen to don the necklace as evidence of his control over her, as one bridles a horse or collars a dog. Eliot shares Gwendolen's thoughts: "Of what use was the rebellion within her? She could say nothing that would not hurt her worse than submission. [. . .] She fancied that his eyes showed a delight in torturing her. How could she be defiant? She had nothing to say that would touch him—nothing but what would give him a more painful grasp on her consciousness" (427). Gwendolen seems to recognize the symbolic significance of the necklace and wants to rebel, but feels powerless to do so without giving her husband even further power over her. Gwendolen considers, "'He delights in making the dogs and horses quail: that is half his pleasure in calling them his,' she said to herself, as she opened the jewel-case with a shivering sensation. 'It will come to be so with me; and I shall quail. What else is there for me? I will not say to the world, 'Pity me'''" (427). Grandcourt treats his wife, not merely as an animal he expects submission from, but like those animals, Grandcourt considers his wife one of his possessions. All this is evidence not only of Grandcourt's quest for power, but also of the egotism necessary to seek such a position. Like the immoral Arthur Huntington in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Grandcourt is

so dedicated to his narcissism that he is completely unredeemable; he must die. The irony of the situation is that ultimately Grandcourt's life rests in Gwendolen's hands; she is the one person who is literally capable of saving his life, which she refuses to do, preferring to see him drown so that she might be free.

Gwendolen consistently demonstrates her yearning to have dominion over her own life. It is painful for readers to think of Gwendolen submitting to the power her husband holds over her, especially since he seems to be so unworthy of her. For all along, she has been a relatively strong and independent woman, despite her social position. It should be noted that her quest for material comfort is brought about as a result of her gender and position in her family. As the eldest daughter in a destitute family, Gwendolen must marry to insure her family's survival, prostituting herself for the benefit of her mother and sisters. As her uncle Mr. Gascoigne makes clear, Gwendolen's marriage affects not only herself, but also her entire family. When considering a proposal from Grandcourt, the Rector reminds: "you have a duty here both to yourself and your family" (141). He continues, "You hold your fortune in your own hands—a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances—a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes it your acceptance of it a duty" (142).

Gwendolen is also a Byronic hero. Privy to Gwendolen's thoughts on marriage, readers know that she is not interested merely in making a suitable financial match, though this is important to her. Like Grandcourt, she too wants a spouse whom she can control; one who will allow her certain personal freedoms within the realm of her subjugation. On first considering Grandcourt as her future husband, he is attractive to

Gwendolen because he seems so disinterested in everything. Gwendolen muses, “the less he had of particular tastes or desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly” (137). The situation is quite different in reality. Ultimately, the price of Gwendolen’s autonomy is that she must become, if not an outright murderer, responsible for the death of her husband. And yet, her paralysis when Grandcourt falls overboard is understandable considering his domination and Gwendolen’s character. After the fact, she is emotionally exhausted by her guilt, and the only person Gwendolen can confess her crime to is her spiritual leader Deronda, who tells her that what she must do to purge herself of guilt is dedicate herself to the active and sincere service of others. She must rid herself of her egotism.

Deronda too is not without his own negative Byronic characteristics at the beginning of the novel. He spends a great amount of energy considering himself before he can act “for a larger social and moral vision” (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 38). Deronda suffers from intense self-consciousness and psychological alienation due to his belief that he is illegitimate. His extreme self-centeredness makes it seem “that his feelings and sympathies do not centre on any self at all” (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 189). He is so alienated that he loses himself. What Deronda needs to find is his own way in the world before offering advice to Gwendolen. What ultimately distinguishes Deronda from Eliot’s other Byronic egotists is that he is able to sublimate his egotistic energies and eventually accept the limits placed on the ego. This is the lesson he tries to instill in Gwendolen. Deronda manages to overcome his powerful social alienation to find a sense of identity compatible with societal roles.

Eliot reveals the process by which Deronda overcomes his obsession with himself in order to commit to a responsible course of action beneficial to society. Although at first the tendency towards social action seems highly opposed to Byron's myth, and out of character for a Byronic hero, it is actually borrowed from Byron's example. Newton reminds, "it is a significant feature of Byron that he refuses to give up his skepticism and defiance and accept any positive belief" (*Romantic Humanist* 32). Byron's skepticism features prominently in Deronda's character, especially as he confronts Mordecai's prophetic ideas and is drawn to his "enthusiasm and emotional power to renew his inner self" (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 193). Deronda is able to attach himself emotionally to Mordecai without necessarily sharing his metaphysical ideals; for, Deronda does not obtain a belief in Judaism but rather he develops "a sense of tribal identity" (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 198), without accepting the beliefs of Judaism. In adopting his new identity as a Jew, Deronda has discovered ideals he can support, and committing to them provides him with "an authentic form of self-realization [...] without adopting a metaphysical position" (Newton, *Romantic Humanist* 199). In other words, Deronda loses all his negative Byronic attributes because he retains his Byronic skepticism. This adaptation is incredibly significant because it shows that this kind of revival is possible not only for the Jews, but also for the English. In Byron's involvement in the Greek War for Independence, Eliot may have discovered a model for Deronda's ultimate goal, the establishment of a Jewish Palestine.

Byron's involvement in Greece had a phenomenal effect on his reputation, allowing him a position in Victorian culture as a hero. Andrew Elfenbein argues that Victorians looked back at the Regency and Byron, who was symbolic of the age, with

contempt for their moral emptiness but also with envy. While Victorians adored the Regency's "glittering elegance," they abhorred its "moral emptiness" ("Silver-Folk Byron" 78). Victorians were attracted to the Regency for two reasons; first, they believed that the purity of the upper class was stronger during Byron's time because the aristocracy had not yet merged with the middle-class, as it had by the Victorian era. Second, as Linda Colley says, the Regency prided itself on military achievement, a trait later glorified by Victorians. Colley argues, "aristocrats during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars" took great care "to identify themselves with military achievement, on the battlefield and with the cult of civilian heroism at home" (78). These two images merge in Byron; not only did Byron come from the purer Regency aristocracy, but he also martyred himself in the fight for Greek independence. Both these aspects of Byron's image fed into Victorian approval of him, and find their way into Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, wherein Deronda becomes a Jewish version of Byron's myth in Greece.

But, how did a *poet* get involved in the fight? Byron's life, by the time he was thirty-one, "subsided into quasi-domesticity" with the twenty-year-old Countess Teresa Guiccioli. Although she was married, Byron maintained his most enduring relationship with Teresa, becoming her Anglo *cavalier servente*. Through Teresa's father, Count Ruggero Gamba, and her brother Pietro, who were both "deeply involved in the struggle for Italian freedom," Byron turned his attention to the politics of his adopted home as Crompton explains; "after the Gambas were exiled after the failure of the Carbonari revolt of 1821, Byron followed them to Pisa and Genoa where he was briefly reunited with Shelley" (313). After Shelley's death, Edward John Trelawny urged Byron to help the Greeks in their war. Crompton notes, "Byron accepted the challenge as an

opportunity to give meaning to a life become dull and empty” (313). And, Byron was not satisfied with merely supplying funds for the revolution; he wanted to take an active role in the fight. Thus, he embarked for Greece.

It should be noted that Byron’s actual role in the Greek Revolution was rather limited. When he arrived on the scene, he discovered the war effort split by in-fighting amongst various political factions. This made it very difficult to get anything practical accomplished. Coupled with this, Byron quickly discerned the truth about his role. The Greeks were “not really interested in him at all but only in the publicity value of his name” (St. Clair 167); Byron’s presence was merely ornamental. Once Byron discovered this, he remained in order to at least “play at” being a hero. Byron enjoyed the theatricality of it all, especially his arrival. Byron wore an “impressive scarlet military cloak. A twenty-one gun salute was fired and crowds of Greeks and Philhellenes cheered him ashore. It must have been one of the best moments of his life” (St. Clair 169). Although Byron realized his role was largely ceremonial, he hired a private bodyguard of undisciplined Albanians with whom he would go riding in the plain outside Missolonghi “at the head of this motley army, no doubt imagining himself as a future conquering hero” (St. Clair 173). It was in this way that Byron’s perceived military role had an impact on the rest of the world. Merely playing his theatrical role allowed Byron “to enjoy the sensation of being a Philhellene while being in reality a tourist” (St. Clair 176).

Daniel Deronda’s involvement with the Jews is like Byron’s with the Greeks in several ways. First, Deronda adopts the political struggles of his people when he begins to suspect that he is Jewish, much like Byron did with the Italians and the Greeks once he began to consider himself a citizen of the world. Mordicai, as the Gambas did with

Byron, introduced Deronda to secretive political meetings. What's more, the political efforts of both Deronda and Byron are solidified through their relationships with women. Through the love he feels for Mirah, like Byron's for Teresa, Deronda dedicates himself to her family's political causes. And, it is not until Byron joined the fight, that the revolution fully took hold in the hearts and minds of the Greeks as well as the rest of Europe, though scholars disagree about the real benefits Byron produced. C.M. Woodhouse has noted that "it was the arrival of Byron on the scene [. . .] that transformed the phillhellenic movement into the great romantic crusade of the early 19th century. Though he died [. . .] within four months of his arrival [. . .] his brief intervention made it certain that Europe could not forget or abandon the Greeks" (140-1). Not only did Byron supply much needed financial support to the Greek cause, but when the news arrived in Europe more volunteers stepped forward to lend real and practical support to the war effort in the form of troops. Thus, "a new episode of practical philhellenism began" (St. Clair 159). There was something particular about Byron that his presence was enough to stir both the Greeks and the rest of Europe into supporting the revolution and that reason lay in Byron himself, in his personality and experience. St. Clair writes, "The political idealism of [Byron's] youth had not dried up as he grew older. His commitment to liberalism was totally sincere. [. . .] Greece appealed to him mainly as a fight for liberty, not as a fight for Greece as such" (151). Byron's role in Greece was begun in part due to his commitment to freedom. And Deronda too reinvigorates the Jewish cause once he joins it. But, there is another good reason that Eliot chose to model her hero on Byron; she knew that he had a direct connection to the Jewish plight: *The Hebrew Melodies*. This collection, published in 1812 at the height of Byron's fame, was actually written in

collaboration with the Jewish composer Isaac Nathan, a risky venture indeed during a period of intense English anti-Semitism.

Just as Byron once risked his reputation in taking up the Jewish cause as his subject, Eliot too was coping with her own reputation and fame at the time she wrote *Daniel Deronda*.⁵⁶ After the publication of *Middlemarch*, Eliot was generally seen, according to J. Russell Perkin, as “England’s preeminent literary figure.” The deaths of Thackeray in 1863 and Dickens in 1870 left her “without a serious rival for supremacy in the realm of fiction” (59). Eliot’s fame provided her control over her literary output, something Byron often lacked. According to Perkin, Eliot had never been restricted “by the demands of the literary marketplace to the same extent as most novelists of her time. Her relatively secure financial position saved her from the fate of the hack who had to turn out at least one three-volume novel a year” (62). The fantastic success and popularity of *Middlemarch* may have offered Eliot “the confidence necessary to experiment with a radically new type of novel in *Daniel Deronda*” (Perkin 63). The serialized publication of *Daniel Deronda* created a fantastic public spectacle. At the beginning of each month from February to September 1876, the public was “in full consciousness [. . .] participating in a major public event. This event—the enthusiastic reception of George Eliot’s new novel—was itself a topic of interest” (Perkin 61-2). As Henry James wrote in his unsigned notice in *Nation* 24 February 1876, “we must express our pleasure in the prospect of this intellectual luxury of taking up, month after month, the little clear-paged volumes of *Daniel Deronda*. [. . .]” (reprnt. in Carroll 362).

⁵⁶ Incidentally, around 1876, when *Daniel Deronda* was published, there were 66,000 Jews in Britain, accounting for 0.17 per cent of the population. In all of Europe in 1880, Jews numbered 4,100,000 out of a total population of 266,000,000 (Lewis 202).

Eliot fully utilized her authorial powers in attempting *Daniel Deronda*, which serves as both “a social critique” and an “examination of the metaphorical bases of English culture” (Perkin 64). What’s more, it is also seen as a direct attack on English anti-Semitism, much like *The Hebrew Melodies*. The resulting novel is “a scathing indictment of the state of English society in the 1860s, presenting [. . .] a decadent civilization whose culture has atrophied even as it embarks on its imperialistic venture” (Perkin 64). According to Reina Lewis, the English were sure to dislike the novel because of their habitual refusal to accept “their connectedness with other races and nations. It is this narrow-mindedness [. . .] that accounts for their petrified culture” (215), a stunted growth Byron felt somewhat responsible for.

The political viewpoint of the novel caused public reaction to *Daniel Deronda* to vary widely; it was seen as both Eliot’s greatest and worst novel, especially in regards to the controversy caused by its “Jewish part” or “Jewish subject matter.” *Daniel Deronda* was largely a failure with its English audience, because the plot demands that Deronda be accepted as both Jewish and Christian and this requires “a recognition of the Judaic roots of Christian culture,” which “is more than many can stomach” (Lewis 221).⁵⁷ The most openly anti-Semitic review of the novel is the unsigned notice in *Saturday Review* of 16 September 1876. The author writes of the Jewish characters, “not only are these personages outside our interests, but the author seems to go out with them into a world completely foreign to us.” He questions Eliot’s motives: “What can be the design of this ostentatious separation from the universal instinct of Christendom, this subsidence into

⁵⁷ This kind of double consciousness also worked for Byron at the time. There was a full recognition of both his faults and achievements; he was loved and despised, but created by the English culture itself, only to be cast out, recreated, and embraced finally as a war hero.

Jewish hopes and aims?” (reprnt. in Carroll 377). The characterization of Deronda as Jewish makes the anonymous writer feel particularly betrayed:

when a young man of English training and Eton and University education, and, up to manhood, of assumed English birth, so obliging also as to entertain Christian sympathies, finishes off with his wedding in a Jewish synagogue, on the discovery that his father was a Jew, the most confiding reader leaves off with a sense of bewilderment and affront [. . .]. (reprnt. in Carroll 377)

Eliot expected this reaction to a certain extent. She knew that English anti-Semitism remained unchecked; it was one reason she wrote the novel in the first place. In a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, who similarly confronted racial prejudices in publishing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliot discusses her understanding of the Jewish plot, which she apparently realized would create resistance in her usually supportive audience:

I [. . .] felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to. Moreover, not only towards the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace. [. . .] towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity, have a particular debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment. (*GEL* 301)

Eliot expresses profound disappointment in her own people as they come in contact with cultural “Others.”

Eliot may well have thought of Byron as the perfect example of her ultimate goal of tolerance “towards all oriental people with whom we English come in contact.” It can be argued that Byron went to Greece with good intentions. One of these intentions may have been to help correct for imperialism. As Nigel Leask states, “Byron [. . .] regretted imperialism as the harbinger of social and cultural corruption, the nemesis of civic order” (16-7). Byron’s Orientalism, which existed as a kind of misdirected ethnography, fostered negative images of “Others.” As he grew older, Byron became more dissatisfied with these depictions because they encouraged imperialism, when what he most admired was political freedom.⁵⁸ Leask writes, “Byron’s gaze [. . .] turned back reflectively upon his own culture as the world’s dominant colonial power, and upon the significance of this own complicity in the power as a poet of imperialism” (23). Byron may have felt guilty both for what he had done to other cultures as well as his own by encouraging imperialism. Byron eventually discovered “the extent to which English [. . .] culture had become permeated and corroded by what he regarded as the pernicious influence of imperialism” (Leask 23). To help correct for it, Byron acted in the international theatre, influencing the actions of nations. Not unlike Shelley’s last line in *A Defense of Poetry*, Byron became one of the “unacknowledged legislators of the world” (508), as Deronda also does at the end of Eliot’s novel. He leaves England behind, as Byron did in 1816.

⁵⁸ One brief example has direct bearing here. Byron cultivated a personal friendship with Ali Pasha on his travels to Turkey in 1810-1811. As Byron wrote: “He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son. Indeed, he treated me like a child, sending me almonds and sugared sherbet, fruit, and sweetmeats twenty times a day” (*BLJI* 227-8). Depictions of Ali Pasha ultimately affected Byron’s creative endeavors, especially *Don Juan* wherein he becomes the pirate Lombardo, “the mildest mannered man / That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat” (III.41.498). As Marchand says, Byron “was struck by the personality of Ali[; his] very ruthlessness made him the kind of romantic villain Byron was later to picture in his Oriental tales” (72). However, Ali Pasha also enslaved the Greeks, thus Byron by 1822, openly encouraged warfare between the Greeks and Ali Pasha.

Of the Jews who read it, most responded positively to *Daniel Deronda* just as they had to *The Hebrew Melodies*. Joseph Jacobs, writing for *MacMillan's* says of Eliot's novel:

Hitherto the Jew in England has fared unhappily: being always represented as a monstrosity, most frequently on the side of malevolence and greed [. . .] [or] still more exasperating on the side of impossible benevolence. What we want is truth, not exaggeration, and truth George Eliot has given us [. . .] in a marvelously full and accurate way all the many sides of our complex national character. (rprnt. In Lewis 204)

Deronda, however, is only a hybrid Jew. In him Eliot “fuses [. . .]—the English and the Jewish.” Deronda, as a Jewish messiah, can “symbolically revitalize English society and inspire Europe’s Jews *because* he is both Jew and Gentile” (Lewis 214). And Eliot bases this role on Byron’s example. It should be remembered that when Byron reached Missolonghi, “his welcome was compared at the time to the advent of the Messiah” (St. Clair 169). Thus, Eliot creates Deronda as a redeemer, much like Byron; both men can operate on a personal or national scale. Deronda’s initial act in the novel is “to redeem Gwendolen’s necklace, pawned for gamboling [sic], an act with messianic implications since he is leading her from the temptation for which gamboling [sic] is a metaphor” (Nurbhai and Newton 175). Throughout the novel, Eliot portrays Deronda as a savior, which both Mirah and Gwendolen recognize. Deronda saves both women, thus uniting both halves of the book. Mirah thanks him thus: ““The God of our fathers bless you and deliver you from all evil as you have delivered me. I did not believe there was any man so good. None before have thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor

and miserable, yet you have given me the best” (201). At the end of the novel, Gwendolen too expresses her gratefulness to Deronda as if he were her savior: “You have saved me [. . .] I should have been worse, if it had not been for you. If you had not been good, I should have been more wicked than I am” (701).

Before a detailed discussion on how England can learn from Byron’s and Deronda’s ability to transform themselves through the absorption of a new national identity, it is first necessary to detail Deronda’s transformation from an Englishman to a Jewish messiah figure. When the novel begins, as Kathryn Hughes points out, Deronda is restless and “unable to settle on any profession or course of action.” This is because “a man who does not know where he comes from is unable to lead a morally integrated life. It is only once Deronda discovers the truth about his birth that he can commit himself to love and to work” (Hughes 321).

Sir Hugo confesses he wants Deronda to take a career in politics. Just as Byron before him, Deronda is a minor member of the aristocracy, and his choice of career can be either prophetic or pragmatic. Byron experienced at best moderate success after taking his seat in the House of Lords. His pragmatic career was limited; however, after joining with the Greek cause, Byron at least appeared more successful. Of Deronda’s choice, Eliot writes, “[Sir Hugo] should be highly gratified if Deronda were pulling by his side for the cause of progress” (157). Sir Hugo tells Deronda in chapter 33, “the business of the country must be done” and that it could never be accomplished “if everybody looked at politics as if they were prophecy, and demanded an inspired profession. If you are to get into Parliament, it wouldn’t do to sit still and wait for a call either from heaven or constituents.” Sir Hugo insists that prophets are not “equipped to carry on the

business of the country” (383-84), but more down-to-earth men like himself. And yet, according to Alan L. Mintz, for Deronda, “it is precisely [the] prophetic conception of vocation [he] considers the less ridiculous” (158).

The fact that Deronda needs to feel “called” to his vocation is one reason readers like him. Deronda commonly exhibits “ready sympathy and generosity of mind” (Mintz 160). However, these qualities ultimately become an obstacle to achieving self-realization. Mintz explains: “he has the opposite problem of most Victorian heroes, whose [...] world bereft of meaning can be allayed by no amount of feverish activity. For Deronda the world is a plenum whose very fullness threatens the capacity to take meaningful action” (160). In other words, Deronda’s commendable sensitivity diffuses rather than concentrates his energies. In this, Deronda suffers from an affliction Byron also suffered from. This is especially evident in Byron’s “On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year,” written in Missolonghi where his energies for the first time were no longer diffused but concentrated in the effort to free Greece. In the poem, Byron deliberately pushes away his more sensitive feelings in an effort to collect his passion for a nobler cause than mere mortal love. He has been “called” to free the Greeks. Byron writes:

Awake my spirit! Think through *whom*

Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,

And then strike home!

[...]

Seek out—less often sought than found—

A soldier’s grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy ground,

And take thy rest. (26-8,37-40)

Deronda is looking for a similar call to “compress his wandering energies” (Mintz 161) and, when the call comes, it takes the form of “a disclosure of origins—Deronda discovers that by birth he is a Jew.” It is Deronda’s new identity that “affords a stage of action on the largest possible scale [...] nothing less than a messianic mission on behalf of an entire people” (Mintz 162).⁵⁹

However, before Deronda can undertake his messianic vocation, he must first separate himself from his Englishness. As Neil McCaw has observed, England itself provides the means by which Deronda comes to reject it; the process begins in Deronda’s childhood. Deronda is only partially a product of the English aristocracy, only a fringe member of the upper class. He is only a version of the English gentleman, as was Byron too, being half Scottish. But, Deronda has availed himself of Sir Hugo’s patronage and without this, “the ultimate Zionist quest could and would not even have been considered.” His education provides him with “enhanced powers of discrimination” (McCaw 127). These powers encourage Deronda to leave England behind him because she can not provide him with either social standing or politico-spiritual awareness first because he believes he is illegitimate and then because he is Jewish. Instead of becoming

⁵⁹ Some have argued that in order for Daniel to suspect that he is Jewish, all he need do is look down; his circumcised penis would have been a sign of his true ancestry. But, as Newton demonstrates, “in the period in which the novel is set, circumcision would not have been identified solely with Jews since it would commonly have been performed in cases of phimosis, and also to combat masturbation, and possibly, for hygienic reasons or to diminish interest in sex generally.” Thus, “Deronda has no reason to believe it to be a sign of Jewishness” (“*Daniel Deronda* and Circumcision” 225). Circumcision was also performed to correct for sexual overuse of the organ, which may provide yet another possible connection to Byron. A. E. Houldsworth, the People’s Warden of Hucknall Parish Church, oversaw the opening of Byron’s burial vault on 15 June 1938, and made note of the condition of his body, giving special attention to Byron’s “sexual organ,” which “shewed [sic] quite abnormal development” (Longford 225).

an important *English* figure, the novel sees Deronda give up his English life. It is through his new national identity that Deronda can gain social standing and politico-spiritual awareness. It is only then that Deronda is able to act as a catalyst in the founding of a Jewish Palestine. This allows Deronda personal growth and development while simultaneously providing for a Jewish “communal progress towards a defined destiny” (McCaw 128). The novel ends with Deronda leaving England for Jerusalem, just as Byron set out for Greece.

Hao Li has fully developed an explanation of how Deronda’s calling, an event that rejects England, actually calls for a reformation of English national identity. It is through the Jewish story that Eliot “puts English national consciousness in perspective” (Li 151). Primarily the novel’s thematic concern is “about reforming English national character” by accentuating “the need for such a reform” (Li 177) by exploring Jewish nationalism. Eliot’s novel reveals that it is possible to embrace Jewish national identity because the Jews have a cohesive identity based on shared memories of oppression. For example, Mirah in chapter 20 says, “it comforted me to know that my suffering was part of the affliction of my people, my part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through ages and ages” (Eliot 215). It is this notion of shared memories of pain that Byron captures so eloquently in *The Hebrew Melodies*. The last stanza of “The Wild Gazelle” expresses the Jewish anguish at being expelled from Jerusalem.

But we must wander witheringly,
In other lands to die;
And where our father’s ashes be,
Our own may never lie:

Our temple hath not left a stone,
And Mockery sits on Salem's throne. (IV.19-24)

Another poem in the collection discusses the need for a Jewish homeland, "Oh! Weep For Those":

Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
How shall ye flee away and be at rest!
The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave! (III.9-12)

For Jews, bereft of a physical homeland, "nation" is at the heart of their quest. The Jews experience intense emotional suffering at the loss of their physical homeland. And yet, they still retain their national identity because they share a tribal and racial unity. The Jews remain cohesive because they base their identity on shared memories. They carry their identity with them wherever they go because their memories provide them with their sense of national identity, even without a nation. The English already have a geo-political home. Their national identity is based in part on the fact that they come from England. However, what seems to be at stake for them is a deeper sense of identity, a kind of belonging that Deronda finds when he embraces his Jewishness.

Another possible connection between Deronda and Byron occurs when he identifies with Columbus, and wants to be "a greater leader, like [. . .] Washington" (Eliot 147). Deronda thinks of himself in terms of American forefathers. In Greece, Byron similarly cast himself in terms of American revolutionaries when contemplating the Greek cause: "to be the 1st man—not the dictator—[. . .] but the Washington [. . .] the leader in talent and truth—is next to divinity!" (*LBSLJ* 88). Again, in a letter to Joshua

Henslow Hayward dated 29 March 1823, Byron proclaims America more generally: “to America only can I look for anything like justice in the appreciation of my real sentiments on the rights of mankind” (*BLJ X* 131). Byron also expressed his admiration in his poetry. In *Ode on Venice*, interestingly enough, an Englishman in Italy celebrates America, but in terms of Greece. Byron writes,

Still one great clime, in full and free defiance,
Yet rears her crest, unconquer'd and sublime,
Above the Atlantic [. . .]
[. . .]
One spirit to the souls our father's had,
One freeman more, America, to thee! (IV.140-142,157-8)

America was on Byron's mind as he contemplated his involvement in the Greek War for Independence.⁶⁰ As Charles E. Robinson reminds, just two days before he died, Byron told Parry, the general in charge of the Greek militia, “of their plan to visit America” (52). Apparently, Byron was planning a journey to America to ask the United States to officially recognize Greek independence. This, of course, might not have been very successful considering President Adams' reluctance to get involved in global politics. However, as Robinson speculates, “not Byron's death in Missolonghi but his living presence in America would have had the greater effect on United States foreign policy from 1824 to 1833, at which time America finally recognized the new government of

⁶⁰ Many assume that Byron led the Greeks in order to model himself on Napoleon. Byron had grown up in the shadow of Napoleon's beautiful promises of revolution and his ultimate betrayal of them by crowning himself emperor. Some assume that Byron wanted to correct the sins of Napoleon in his own part in the Greek Revolution, however, there is less interest in Napoleon in Byron's journals at the time and more references to America than might be expected.

Greece” (52).⁶¹ Deronda’s models, like Byron’s, are “those who have shaped nations: they are seen as leaders in their own time, and historically represented as creators of nations” (Nurbhai and Newton 174). Byron is still seen by modern Greeks as an important founder of their free nation.

Unlike the Americans and the Jews, the English lack “an emotional and spiritual authority” (177). As Li says, such shared memories are not “so straight forward for the English.” The most striking feature of the English community then is its “lack of centripetal force in their emotion.” As a result, Eliot gropes “tentatively for specific qualities that she believes to be subsisting somewhere in the national tradition, which may be seen to promise an internal reform” (Li 185). These qualities are often invoked in the novel by the Jewish characters, but this does not mean that they are necessarily “Jewish” qualities. In essence, they are intense feelings of nationality brought forth from shared memories.

Eliot calls forth the figure of Byron in order to remind the English of their national identity and memory. She offers Byron as a connection to former Englishness; his life and works represent shared English experiences. While Eliot denounces Byron’s works as vanity in *Felix Holt* and condemns the lack of morality in his life in her letters, her reactions to him in *Daniel Deronda* are often more complex. Eliot realized that the myth of Byron lived on in the public’s imagination; thus, she employs him as a collective, cultural memory. By calling up the shadow of Byron, Eliot attempts to remind her English audience of their own national past. In this way, Deronda’s becoming a messiah for the Jews and Byron are connected in an effort to re-awaken English national

⁶¹ When news of Byron’s death reached America, ordinary citizens became more active with the Greek plight: “Altogether eight ships left the United States for Greece between 23 March 1827 and 13 September 1828, with a total cargo valued at \$140,000.” (Robinson 62-3).

identity. Exploring these past memories and their intense feelings, Eliot hopes to revive English national identity, in much the same way Deronda connects to his new national identity as a Jew.

CHAPTER 6. EPILOGUE

As Byron's career seems to demonstrate, it was eventually considered no sin for an author to seek and achieve fame, though this was not always the case, particularly for Byron. As Andrew Elfenbein points out, "Byron the celebrity was for Victorian writers a vivid and, to some, distasteful image of what fame meant in a capitalist literary system" (*Byron and the Victorians* 47). Authors, like other artists, were not supposed to accept financial gain for their efforts; art was supposed to be above such petty concerns. Still caught up in the long death of the old patronage system, which was the norm centuries before, English society considered it gauche to accept money for artistic achievement. Early in his career, Byron "donated" his gains to friends and family, even when he was facing certain financial ruin, with bailiffs actually taking up residence in his home at St. James Place (Marchand 206).

However, during Byron's life, the model of direct sponsorship of literary figures was rapidly collapsing. According to Frank Donoghue this was because "the nobility failed to keep pace with a mushrooming population of writers, and this pattern reduced individual patronage to an insignificant fraction of literary sponsorship." What came to replace it was "a variety of other more broadly based and indirect forms of patronage" (1) including publication by subscription and serialization and the open market. Accepting the influence of the open market allowed artists to more easily reap the financial benefits of fame. As such, "the book trade increasingly transformed readers into the social group capable of conferring fame upon authors" (Donoghue 1).

Byron was one of the first to achieve a phenomenal level of public notoriety and financial success, the effects of which are quite astonishing, even by the standards of

today's multi-billionaires. Near the end of his life, Byron cashed in all his available personal credit, some 94,000 pounds in order to finance the Greek Revolution, though he originally requested 100,000 (Marchand 426). What's more, Byron was named as "one of the commissioners in charge" of a massive international loan that put up as collateral "the whole of the national property of Greece." In total, had he lived, Byron would have helped to distribute some 800,000 pounds (Minta 245). Remembering that Jane Eyre is allowed to retire and found her own school in perpetuity from only 5,000 pounds, Byron's wealth involved truly fantastic sums according to 1824 standards. Without the promise of financial security of this kind, other writers might never have been able to seek or attain Byron's level of wealth from writing alone. Largely before Byron, it was impossible to earn a livelihood solely from writing. Although there are, of course, some notable exceptions such as Daniel Defoe and Aphra Behn,⁶² indicating in addition that publishing novels could be tremendously profitable for male as well as female authors.

Lady Caroline Lamb, it might be argued, almost began her life with a thirst for being known and a personality to achieve it. She cultivated extremely close-knit personal, political, and artistic friendships with various influential people. One of the reasons she was attracted to Byron in the first place may well have been because he was so famous. One of his first gifts to Lamb indicates this tendency. Byron is thought to have sent a rose and a carnation to the Melbourne house with a card reading: "My ladyship I am told likes all that is new and rare for a moment" (Marchand 121). This note incidentally also seems to indicate Byron's doubts about the longevity of his fame. In terms of her class, Lamb is radically different from the other novelists of this study. Like Byron, Lamb was titled,

⁶² Defoe and Behn were also rivals in the sense that, while many consider *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) as the first English novel, "some critics prefer to give that title to Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688)" (Wolf 1).

though in her case by marriage, and became a minor member of the aristocracy, which is one reason her novels sold so well. Readers believed that they were getting a glimpse into the seedy nature of those in the upper echelons of society. They felt much the same way about Byron's more salacious poetry. Certainly, *Lady* Caroline Lamb did not need the money. She considered the little income she earned from her writing as pin money, unnecessary for basic survival. Thus, she used it primarily for buying personal extravagances such as lavish liveries for her pages.

Charlotte Brontë was, as with all her family, middle-class; some might even argue that she was raised poor. Supporting a family of five and a small group of household servants on a country parson's salary was not easy, and required a nearly austere lifestyle. The sisters all worked as governesses from time to time to help support the family, though none but Anne, who spent four years in service, ever earned a consistent livelihood. None of the Brontë children lived on their own for very long. It can be argued that the sisters first started writing seriously at all in order to improve their financial situation. Discovering that *Poems* failed to attract an audience, the sisters switched gears and genres and began their fictions. The Brontës experienced a substantial change in lifestyle after the publication of their novels. In particular, *Jane Eyre* was immediately popular, though Charlotte's sisters' novels did not fair as well, as indicated by the mixed reviews they received. After her sisters' deaths, Charlotte's life radically changed. She befriended several influential authors in her travels, which themselves were rather extensive for a sheltered girl from Yorkshire with an aging and often sick father. Although Charlotte never really sparkled in her fame, never became a well-known

“personality” per se, her very real financial successes allowed her to enjoy what was left of her brief life in a wholly different style.

George Eliot, it seemed, benefited most from the new system. She lived very well from her earnings as an author, becoming the most popular living writer after the deaths of Thackeray and Dickens. She was never dependant on anyone else for her financial support, and the publication of *Middlemarch* secured her both a lasting reputation and assured economic stability for the rest of her life. Freed from the pressure to deliver only bestsellers and with the support of a sympathetic publisher, Eliot could take considerable risk in later novels like *Daniel Deronda*. None of these women might have been able to devote their lives solely to their works without substantial alterations in the book trade. Byron was one of the first to lead the charge into the maelstrom of the open market. The quest for fame may well have been one reason why female authors like Lamb, the Brontës, and Eliot choose to appropriate Byron.

What’s more, as Elfenbein points out, “Having an opinion about Byron marked one as belonging to the privileged social group consisting of the respectable members of society.” Regardless of the opinion on Byron expressed, having one to share created a category that could “unite men and women separated by older categories like rank.” Although Elfenbein limits his observations to class distinctions, arguing that Byron showed how “status conferred by commodities erases any other social categorization” (*Byron and the Victorians* 50), it can also be applied to subjects like gender. Thus, one possible reason women writers tended to reference and appropriate Byron was to erase the inferiority implicit in being female. Specifically, they may have been trying,

unconsciously or otherwise, to gain access to and entrance into the dominant discourse community, of which Byron was most certainly a part.

Also available was Byron's lost literary authority, not just over his character type, but also over his position in the marketplace. Novelists like Lamb, the Brontës, and Eliot ironically come to replace Byron by adopting the inauthentic Byronic voice and style, which were, themselves, by-products of Byron's interactions with female readers. As it turns out, Byron becomes a kind of middleman, a figure who helped to mitigate the communication between large discourse communities in the culture overall, as well as smaller ones such as the relationship between female reading audiences and female novelists. Both female readers and female writers spoke to each other through the middle ground of the Byronic, a topic open to all. In other words, female novelists employ the Byronic myth in part in order to gain access to female readership.

As Nicola Watson has pointed out, this process perhaps helps to explain the creation of *Don Juan*. Byron creates new characters in the poem "in defensive retaliation in order to escape [. . .] successive appropriations" (187). In looking at the three Brontë sisters and George Eliot, this seems the case. None of them sincerely try to appropriate the voice of *Don Juan* for themselves, although Lamb certainly did briefly co-opt the style in "A New Canto" to perhaps terrorize Byron with the thought that she could usurp even this new voice. However, Lamb never tried to publish a novel version of that poem in the way that *Glenarvon* attempts to replicate *Childe Harold*. All successive female novelists after Lamb consistently appropriate the more masculine, Byronic Byron, which itself underwent a feminizing effect as a response from female readers. Byron has to push the limits of this feminizing in *Don Juan* and simultaneously escape the genre of the

sentimental, which increasingly came to belong to women authors. *Don Juan* is not so much sentimental as it is satiric.

And yet it was through the sentimental and domestic that women writers first reached female readers. Domesticity and the public sphere were connected for women writers by print culture, which served “as a vital and complex intermediary connecting the two domains” (Long xvi). Through print, Elizabeth Long argues, women could “achieve voice, find an audience, and ultimately change their lives” as they “kindled intimate identification between women writers [. . .] and the women who read their work” (xviii). *Childe Harold* was written in the genre of the sentimental novel, while *Don Juan* is a mock epic, more akin to Pope than Radcliff. And yet, the figure that emerges from *Don Juan* is not traditionally dominant or particularly masculine. The only way Byron could escape appropriation was by becoming more feminine, while female authors worked to adopt his more masculine style.

Watson asks whether the female novelist could “do more than repeat the available dominant poetics of identity” (200). The answer tends to be no in some cases, and yes and no in others. None of Lamb’s four published novels⁶³ can break free of the Byronic identity. That is, all of Lamb’s protagonists are not merely Byronic heroes, but strikingly similar ways of rewriting Byron himself. In the case of the Brontës, neither Emily nor Anne had careers that extended much beyond *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* respectively. Of course Anne also published *Agnes Grey*, however, it too contains debauched Byronic heroes. In fact, the dysfunctional dynamics of the entire Bloomfield family can be seen as essentially rehearsals for the depths of Arthur

⁶³ *Glenarvon* (1816), *Graham Hamilton* (1822), *Ada Reis* (1823) and *Penruddock* (1823)

Huntington's depravity. While *Daniel Deronda* is repeatedly obsessed by the Byronic, George Eliot's other novels are just a little less so, for it can be argued that most of her male protagonists have Byronic qualities. What's more, even some of her female characters do, most notably Maggie Tulliver and her singular rebelliousness in *The Mill on the Floss*.

The situation is a little more complex in the case of Charlotte Brontë. While *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *The Professor* all have very distinctly Byronic characteristics, *Villette* is a quite different in parts. It would be difficult to convincingly argue the Byronic characteristics of Lucy Snow. The most modern of all Charlotte's novels, *Villette* and its articulation of the pain of internal and external repression, includes moments that approach surrealism. And yet, it too contains some characteristics in line with the gothic and certainly the sentimental. It seems that towards the end of her life, Charlotte was working towards creating the most individual poetic identity of all the novelists of this study though she does not quite achieve it. Overall, the female authors and the specific novels of this investigation tend to repeat the pattern of Byron's masculine identity in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; however, at the same time, it should be remembered that they are pushing this in a certain direction, changing it as they do so. They adopt and adapt at the same time, just as Byron's readers did.

Overall, these novelists participate in a "masquerade" in order to "destabilize myths of romantic (masculine) poetic identity" (Watson 200) in much the same way Byron did. Lamb, the Brontës, Eliot, and other female novelists become the voice of the Byronic as the century progresses. The difference is that Byron breaks free of that process in *Don Juan*, which completely destabilizes Byronic identity, but not without a

price, the near loss of selfhood.⁶⁴ The irony, of course, is that his new Byronic voice is a feminized one. In other words, the only way Byron could escape the appropriation and dominance of female novelists in the marketplace is by offering a truly feminized voice in *Don Juan*. The women novelists, on the other hand, were more interested in appropriating the dominant male voice and hence the authority of the Byronic, perhaps without realizing that this dominance was itself, an inauthentic voice created by Byron and his female audience in order to gain fame in the marketplace, ultimately also the end goal of all authors, male or female.

While certainly not an exhaustive investigation, this brief discussion demonstrates that the intersection of literary fame, gender, and Byron is an area ripe for continued examination. A closer and detailed discussion of it might produce much fruit.

⁶⁴ According to Lady Blessington, during the writing of *Don Juan*, Byron lamented in a letter: “Now, if I know myself, I should say, that I have no character at all” (220).

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VITA

Denise Tischler Millstein received two bachelors degrees from The University of Texas at Austin: a bachelor of science in radio-TV-film in 1996 and a bachelor of arts in English in 2000.

In 2002, Ms. Millstein received her master of arts in comparative literature from San José State University in San José, California. Her master thesis, directed by Paul Douglass, *Fame, Sexuality, and Exile: Lord Byron's Influence on Oscar Wilde* was awarded The Outstanding Master Degree Thesis for the College of Arts and Sciences in 2003.

Ms. Millstein began her doctoral studies in English in 2002 at Louisiana State University, with a focus in nineteenth-century British literature. In October 2005, her article "Lord Byron and George Eliot: Embracing National Identity in *Daniel Deronda*" was published in *Forum: The University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts*. Her chapter "The Effects of Fame on Lord Byron's Canon" will appear in the anthology *Media Stardom*, edited by Kylo Hart, in the fall of 2007. She also has extensive conference experience, serving as the Assistant Director of the EGSA 14th Annual Mardi Gras Conference in 2004 and the Administrative Assistant for the 20th Annual Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference under INCS president Elsie Michie in 2005. She has also presented at a number of difference conferences including the South Central MLA in New Orleans 2004, reading "Canon Reformation: Feminist Issues in the Study of Lady Caroline Lamb" and at the Media Stardom Conference in Plymouth State University in 2005, reading "The Effects of Fame on Lord Byron's Canon."

Currently, Ms. Millstein is serving as the Assistant Director of Composition at The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where she resides with her husband Isaac Millstein and their four-year-old Labrador Maggie.