

**LORD BYRON'S "BELIEF" IN MANKIND: AN
EVOLUTIONARY STUDY OF BYRON'S MAJOR
POEMS FROM 1812 - 1821**

ROXIE ANN FLEMING

To the Graduate Council:

LORD BYRON'S "BELIEF" IN MANKIND: AN EVOLUTIONARY
I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Roxie Ann Fleming entitled "Lord Byron's 'Belief' in Mankind: An Evolutionary Study of Byron's Major Poems from 1812-1821." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

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An Abstract

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ABSTRACT

LORD BYRON'S "BELIEF" IN MANKIND: AN EVOLUTIONARY

Lord Byron's poems contain two major types of man:

STUDY OF BYRON'S MAJOR POEMS

the "alienated man" (Byronic hero) and the "social man."

FROM 1812-1821

In his major poems of 1812-1821, Byron early establishes and maintains a dual attitude toward man: he is both sympathetic and indifferent, and further expresses little hope that either type of man can establish an ultimate purpose for his existence.

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through Gain (1821); **Presented to** as a superficial

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The alienated man is in conflict with the social man. At times, the conflict is external as in The Bride of Abydos (1813) and Gain; but the more important conflict is

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by

by **Roxie Ann Fleming**

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August 1970

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and indifferent, and further expresses little hope that
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existence.

Byron's social man, from Childe Harold (1812)
through Cain (1821), always appears as a superficial
creature in a continual state of deterioration. This type
of man lacks an inner life due to his submissions to tyrannical
worldly forces. Byron has no sympathy for this social
man and no hope that he may ever pull out of his decline.

The alienated man is in conflict with the social
man. At times, the conflict is external as in The Bride of
Abydos (1813) and Cain; but the more important conflict is
the hero's own inner struggle with self-reliance and
submission which is best expressed in the play, Manfred
(1817). If the hero is to win his inward struggle, he first
must escape from society and then he must inwardly and
externally reject or defy those forces in control of the
social man. The outcome of such action is death.

The only purposeful existence that Byron invariably
states for man is the recognition and total acceptance of

one's own identity, the self-reliant course for Byron's alienated man. Although this stance appears positive, its outcome is negative. The alienated man, upon realizing his goal, either dies or goes into exile because the social man forces him to do so. Byron establishes a purpose for existence only to portray the impossibility of its growth.

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Chapter 1

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The major works of George Gordon, the sixth Lord Byron (1788-1824) illustrate a belief in individualism, a belief that is a distinctive mark of the Romantic period in which he writes. However, in his position on individualism Byron is the least Romantic of the major Romantic poets. Unlike his contemporaries, Lord Byron does not support an absolute individualism. Byron can find no intellectual basis for believing in absolutes; at the same time, he finds it emotionally difficult to accept total dependence on one's own life force.

The results of this paradoxical outlook is evident in Byron's major poems where his Byronic hero, the man alienated from society, struggles with both the emotional aspect of individual independence and the intellectual impossibility of ever obtaining this goal. And very much related to this alienated hero's position is Byron's "social man." The social man is not a form in the same sense that Byron's hero is, but society, or the social man, is an existing force in Byron's poems because it is the obstacle that the alienated man must contend with.

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INTRODUCTION

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Generally, Byron creates a relationship between his two men that shows the social man or society as a

significant cause of the hero's problems. It is because of society's ways that the hero feels the need for individual independence, a need that he partially fulfills through the escape which occurs in Byron's works in various forms. The hero, through his escape, faces the turmoil of independence and either remains in a chaotic state or finds that he must actively defy the social man's ways. And it is because of society's massive force that the individual defier ends in death. This is Byron's paradoxical solution to the emotional struggle of independence and the intellectual impossibility of its being maintained.

Inherent in the specific conditions surrounding this relationship between Byron's alienated man and his social man is the poet's attitude toward or belief in mankind; and by looking at poems published early in Byron's career to examples from his middle and late poetic periods, we can discern whether or not the poet is consistent in his appraisal of man.

For the purpose of establishing Byron's overall position toward mankind, I have selected poems on the basis of their composition dates and their literary form. The second chapter of my thesis is concerned with works of Byron's early period and this period is here represented by Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Cantos I and II (1812), a descriptive-contemplative travelogue; and one of the poet's Turkish tales, The Bride of Abydos (1813) which is a verse

narrative. The next chapter focuses on only one selection, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III, which was published in 1816 as a continuation of the preceding two cantos. The fourth chapter covers examples of Byron's dramas, with the closet plays Manfred (1816-1817) and Cain (1821) used to represent the poet's later period. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto I and II was written in 1809-1810 as Lord Byron traveled the Continent; published in 1812, the poem (a descriptive-contemplative travelogue in Spenserian stanzas) depicts various foreign scenes and relates experiences of the poet's travels. These scenes and experiences do not contain any one particular theme, nor is there any one strong unifying device in the whole poem. Though Byron does try to unify his work by introducing the Byronic hero form, the attempt is not successful. The narrator himself develops as the stronger personality rather than the Byronic hero, Harold. Harold stays in the background and is only brought to the surface when the narrator changes topics and scenes. At the same time that the narrator speaks for Harold, he also attributes characteristics to this hero that lay the foundation for the development of future Byronic heroes. For this reason, the discussions of this poem employ "Harold" rather than "narrator" or "narrator/Harold."

Harold's social position in the poem is self-imposed exile from his English society. In exile, he becomes a solitary, restless wanderer who aimlessly travels to the

fringes of several societies but never becomes an active participant of any one. This inactive social role is an outcome of Harold's total disillusionment with life. He has no hope for himself or for the future.

Chapter 2

DISCOVERING MAN'S MEANINGLESSNESS is built on "reeds" (11.27).¹ Without hope for a meaningful existence

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Cantos I and II was written in 1809-1810 as Lord Byron traveled the Continent. (1.847).

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fringes of several societies but never becomes an active participant of any one. This inactive social role is an outcome of Harold's total disillusionment with life. He has no hope for himself nor for mankind, "whose hope is built on reeds" (11.27).¹ Without hope for a meaningful existence for himself and mankind, Harold "loathe[s] his present Youth state" (1.847). ~~degraded--Honour lost--~~ (11.311). Love,

viewed - Byron does not indicate the exact cause or causes for his hero's total disillusionment, but the poet does show us that Harold is obsessed with seeing time as a destroyer. Throughout the poem, Harold is unable to see life without seeing time as the "ungentle tide" (1.287) to human aspirations and gains; but other than this view of time, the hero's personal reasons for loathing his mortal state to remain hidden in his mysterious past, and this obscurity purposely enhances a general feeling of doom or fate and his inability to cope with the mysterious ~~visioning force~~.

During Although the precise reason for Harold's personal state remains mysterious, his contact with the social man and societies offers reasons for maintaining the state of disillusionment. Viewing these societies, either from a distance or from within and always retaining the non-active role, Harold relates to societies only in an inward sense: he identifies his sense of disillusionment with those aspects

¹Citations from Byron in my text are to Lord Byron: Selected Poems and Letters, ed. William H. Marshall (Boston: Riverside Editions, 1968).

of society that appear to nourish disillusionment. An example of this inner identification is evident in the approach to love in stanzas 28-35, Canto II. Within this passage, Harold sees man submitting to love only in terms of passion. The social man is a "whining crew" (ii.297) so enslaved by passion that he is left with "Youth wasted--Minds degraded--Honour lost--" (ii.311). Love, viewed as synonymous with passion that controls and eventually degrades man, is a disillusioning force, and Harold responds to this force by standing aloof from man's submission to passion. He does not deny his own awareness of the "beauteous form" (i.819) nor does he deny passion's existence, which he describes as an incurable disease (ii.314-15); but he does deny passion the opportunity to enslave him simply by remaining passive and physically isolated from man.

Love is not society's only disillusioning force. During the course of the two cantos, man's desire for materialistic gain and his concept of religion and death emerge as other disillusioning elements. For the disillusionment of materialistic gain, we need only look at the frequent passages on war in Canto I (stanzas 29, 38-44, 49-53). Within these stanzas, Harold views the ultimate situation that arises as man becomes blind with or blind to the desire for worldly progress. On one side is tyrannical force pictured as a Giant of Destruction (st.39) paving his way with human hearts to his own dream of worldly gain;

while on the other side are those who, blind to the desire for materialistic gain, become "Ambition's honoured fools!" (1.450), their deaths being nothing more than fertilizer for the battlefields (1.449). In Harold's view, both the tyrant and the man who submits to his power can rightfully claim to only the dust that each makes by his own death (1.457-58). Seen from this viewpoint, society's efforts for materialistic progress are meaningless. *creed (11.23-27) man can*
transfer The social man is enslaved by tyranny, and in gain submitting he is as much a maker of war as the tyrant. This enslaved and enslaver position is a condition characteristic of society that Harold finds disillusioning. War itself need not be a meaningless act of society. In Canto II, stanzas 73-93, Harold recalls the ruins of Greece and advocates war (11.720-21), but in this passage he calls for war in the name of freedom from tyranny.

Harold sees the social man as enslaved not only by *that little urn saith more than thousand Homilies,* passion and material progress, but also by his blind *(36)* acceptance of the established church. By accepting Christianity, man supposedly lives for immortality, but when Harold views the social man he does not see his actions as preparations for an eternal life. In Canto I, stanzas 68-79, Harold looks at the actions of man on a typical Sabbath around the country and finds that Spain, on this "day of blessed rest" (1.684), offers a "mad crowd" (1.691) roaring for more of the freshly torn entrails displayed during a bullfight; while London celebrates "the Jubilee of man"

(1.693) by exhibiting her outward wealth as coaches parade through the parks. Others around the country also participate in various diversions, and in all this Sabbath-day activity Harold discovers man as an earthly creature neither all good nor all knowing, but one who must seek pleasures to sustain his earthly identity. Harold does not condemn man's pleasures. He simply does not accept the belief that through Christianity or any other creed (11.23-27) man can transcend his basic actions and earthly position and gain immortal identity. He sees mortal man's predicament of, he being "Bound to the Earth" (11.28) and sees the social man combating this predicament by lifting "his eyes to Heaven" (11.28). For Harold, this is blind acceptance of an absolute truth. He, on the other hand, would have man place his eyes on an urn containing the remains of mortal man:

Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies:
That little urn saith more than thousand Homilies.

stream, vacantly (st.33); the rustle of farne, (11.35-36)

Harold is unable to submerge his identity in creeds that are beyond mortal comprehension, but he can see and understand the relevance of dust as proof of the end to man's existence.

For Harold, all of these forces active in society turn this social order into one large unit that submits to worldliness. The social man, by submitting to passion, materialistic gain, and a belief in absolutes, becomes enslaved. Harold discovers that he cannot tolerate the social man's enslavement, thus, the hero finds himself

alienated from the social man's way of life. ^{mountainous}
 Alienated from man, Harold escapes to nature, of the
 especially wild nature, as a relief from society's ways.
 For the most part, nature remains nothing more than this
 physical relief. At times, Harold does sense a spirit with-
 in her, but he does not see nature as being a teacher or as
 being a means of overcoming his despair. Instead, he for-
 identifies his desire for freedom from the social man's ways
 of life with examples of nature's freedom, "the wild flock
 that never needs a fold" (11.222); and in this identity, he
 finds both a degree of companionship and an atmosphere for
 meditation. <sup>of South and Mountains, the choice retreat
 And were it humbler it in sooth were sweet;
 And Pleasure, leagued with Pomp, the zest of both destroys.</sup>
 (11.571-76)

During this passive relationship with nature, the
 alienated hero views man, individually and collectively, who
 dwells in this atmosphere. Beginning with the individually
 man in Canto I, Harold examines a shepherd, a rustic, and a
 muleteer and finds that the shepherd stares at a peaceful
 stream, vacantly (st.33); the rustic or farmer, with his
 frightened mate, no longer plays his castanet in merriment
 but guards his land that soon may succumb to tyrants' ^{ely}
 desires (st.47); and the muleteer, once a singer of hap-
 piness, now "checks his song" (1.509) to chant "Vivā el
 Rey!" (1.508) and curses the day that placed him under a
 tyrant (st.48). Unlike the social man, all of these indi-
 vidual men are pictured as being aware of man's tendency to
 aspire for worldly power and aware of the doom that will
 follow.

Harold. Again, in Canto II, the caloyer and mountaineer share this same awareness, but with the introduction of the wild Albanians (st. 47-72) Harold qualifies his picture of man close to nature. He admires this organized group for their savage aspect, their uninhibited mirth, desires, and truthfulness; but he also sees in them the same mortal ambition that spurs tyrants to their goal, the desire for materialism. Harold becomes continually standing apart from

his . . . quickly wearied with that spacious seat
Of Wealth and Wantonness, the choice retreat
Of sated Grandeur from the city's noise:
And were it humbler it in sooth were sweet;
But Peace abhorreth artificial joys,
And Pleasure, leagued with Pomp, the zest of both destroys.
than actual hatred. (11.571-76)

It appears that organized man close to nature has the same tendency to mar his environment with his own meaningless desire for materialism as does the social man. Only the individual man in nature stands aware that man's way of life is doomed by conforming to false values deemed necessary by society, but this awareness does not alleviate the individual man's position. He, like Harold, awaits society's threat of enforced conformity without actively asserting his individuality against it so that both the individual man and the social man are existing in a world made meaningless by the unquestioning acceptance of established values.

Harold's attitude toward this world situation is hatred (11.243); however, he does not view the makers of meaninglessness "with misanthropic hate" (1.829). For

Harold, the social man is as a herd of animals blind to what leads them and not questioning the force that keeps them on their over-crowded path (ii.st.26). They are helpless creatures whose pleasures are feigned, whose loud laughter "distorts the hollow cheek" (ii.912), and whose smile is nothing more than a "writhing lip with ill-dissembled sneer" (ii.917). By eliminating hatred toward this picture of the social man and by continually standing apart from him, Harold places man in such a lowly position that he need not register any attitude toward this animal. His forced indifference toward the social man is more damning than actual hatred.

This forced indifference is a means of protecting himself from his own human tendencies to submit to passion, materialistic gain, and a belief in established absolutes. While Harold is definitely concerned about these worldly submissions that are the means for continual conformity and disillusionment, it is not an altruistic concern. He, like the individuals close to nature, is only concerned for the effect that submission has on his individuality, not on others'.

By remaining the isolated wanderer who cannot find a motive to be active because the world has been made totally meaningless by social man, Harold emerges as the sympathetic character. We feel sympathy for this hero because he illustrates the unresolved conflict of being aware, but unable to act.

In creating sympathy for the hero's inability to overcome his conflict, Byron reemphasizes both the meaninglessness that social man perpetuates and his own indifference toward those who submit. To show that this position is characteristic of Byron's early period, we can look at another of his early poems, The Bride of Abydos.

This verse narrative, one of four Turkish Tales that Byron published during 1813-1814, is a more clearly defined piece of work than Childe Harold. The literary form itself demands a plot that was not necessary in the travelogue; and unlike the "narrator/Harold" situation, Byron's narrator here remains detached from the poem's characters and action.

In this more clearly defined poem, Byron adapts social situations similar to those found in Childe Harold. There is a social man's society, acceptable to the world, within the framework of this poem, and an escape, here in the form of an outlaw society that does not conform to the accepted establishment. Both of these social orders exist in a world where all is divine except "the spirit of man" (15). The Byronic hero, Selim, is a member of both societies and, like Harold, he experiences an inner conflict.

The social man's world that Selim lives in is one of brute force led by financial giants who rise and fall according to their evil ingenuity. By fraud and force each giant establishes his own kingdom and once enthroned begins to prepare and connive for greater materialistic gain. Selim's father, Giaffir, is a typical member of this society.

Giaffir is a tyrant who rules his kingdom and drills his warriors in mimic wars for future gains; yet, in the end, Giaffir always uses fraud, not force or strength, to gain his victories.

Giaffir deals with his immediate family just as he treats the mass. They, too, are manipulated as a means to his own thirst for power. His daughter, Zuleika, appears to gain his favor because of her beauty and goodness, "Affection chained her to that heart;/[however] Ambition tore the links apart" (191-92). She is her father's means for future fraudulent gain when the time is right for arranging her marriage to another tyrant.

Selim, on the other hand, is the object of his father's open disapproval, and this too is a consequence of Giaffir's desire for fraudulent gain. According to Giaffir, his son is too weak, sensitive, and feminine to be an active male member of his household or society:

I never loved him from his birth,
And--but his arm is little worth,
And scarcely in the chase could cope
With timid fawn or antelope,
Far less would venture into strife
Where man contends for fame and life--
(134-39)

Giaffir continually subjects Selim to negative appraisals which leave his son confused and inactive. Selim's only strength comes from his love for Zuleika, but even this must be restrained to avoid incest. Selim is forced by his society's values to be, like Harold, a non-participating member of a world made meaningless.

The yoke of inaction enforced on Selim partially lifts when he uncovers the mystery of his background and finds that Giaffir is not his father, but his uncle who (for material wealth) poisoned Selim's real father. With this secret knowledge of an identity separate from the established norm, Selim feels free to defy inwardly his uncle and a society that grows by tyrannical fraud; but, like Harold, he does not yet have a motive to be brave and assert his defiance openly in a meaningless world. Revenge for his father's death would not be the motive he needs to assert his new found individuality. This act would only make him as Giaffir is; instead, Selim maintains a dual role. Within Giaffir's society, Selim outwardly retains his former enslaved position, but he is not what he appears to be (381) because he has also become the leader of an outlaw society that dwells in the wilderness. (918-19)

The outlaw society enables Selim and his men to exist as individuals who are individuality and the freedom to maintain separate, a lawless brood, rather than accept forced conformity. And every creed, and every race, intimately With them hath found--may find a place: (845-48)

With all their differences, these men have a common love for freedom from the social man, but the meaninglessness of the world causes them to wander like Cains or Harolds seeking a motive to be active. Selim's escape is not a total answer to his inner conflict. Man not only continues without meaning, but he also still has the tendency to be evil.

Evil in man is a recurring idea in Byron's works. In The Bride, evil is allied with man's concept of power. Selim feels that power relies on either "fraud or force" (917). Those who create fraud, like Giaffir, are interested in an outward power that enslaves, while those who use their natural force or strength are interested in an inner power that gives freedom. Selim chooses force:

I like the rest must use my skill or strength, and
But ask no land beyond my sabre's length:

(914-15)

He wants only what is necessary to insure that his individuality exists apart from those who enslave and are enslaved. At the same time, Selim is aware that the outlaws, like the wild Albanians in Childe Harold, are not free from the tendency to use fraud:

... in time Deceit may come the hero and
When cities cage us in a social home:

(918-19)

The only difference between Selim's outlaw society and Giaffir's society is individuality and the freedom to maintain separate human identities rather than accept forced conformity. Byron's concern in this poem is ultimately concern for the individuality of man. In The Bride, an individual's "reason to be" is to defy what he does not accept and through defiance, outward and inward, man reaches his height in a meaningless world.

In order to reach a zenith, man must be awakened by a motive. Selim, as a member of Giaffir's society, had no motive because his only strength was love for a sister, a

love that had to be controlled. When Giaffir makes his next move for power by arranging Zuleika's marriage to Osman the sultan, the outlaw Selim is still not motivated to action. Only when Zuleika, unaware that Selim is not her brother and unaware that he is an outlaw, promises she will not marry without his consent nor be separated from him, does he post become active. By freely asserting her own individuality under the repressive conditions of her father's rule and going against all the traditional beliefs of her society, Zuleika spurs Selim to merge his own divided personality and appear as a unified being. As a whole man, he openly defies Giaffir and his society and, through his defiance, death comes to both Selim and Zuleika.

The consequence of their becoming unified beings, death by the tyrant, creates sympathy for the hero and supports Byron's continuing contempt for those who do submit, the social man. By allowing Giaffir's society to be outwardly victorious, Byron shows that the ways of social man inwardly and outwardly kill individuality; but through active defiance, even if it brings an outward death, man "lives." Selim's death is his inner victory over meaninglessness but it is also outward proof that meaninglessness prevails.

In both The Bride of Abydos and Childe Harold, Cantos I and II, Byron illustrates the meaningless values in control of man's existence. He sees this enslavement arising out of the shallowness of the social man's belief in

worldliness. Passion, a belief in absolutes, and materialism are all worldly forces for Byron's social man, and these forces are endowed with sufficient unquestioning allegiance from society to insure that each thrives to tyrannical proportions. Byron has no sympathy or concern for the man who allows himself to be controlled by these tyrants. The poet is indifferent to mass man's condition because he has no hope that society, as a whole, can overcome this enslaved condition.

The poet is, however, concerned for the individual who discovers that worldliness is meaningless. Byron portrays both Selim and Harold as dissatisfied, disillusioned heroes who are unable to find any meaning to life as practiced by the social man. The heroes feel the need to escape from society's meaningless existence. Harold wanders, both through nature and societies, while Selim turns to an outlaw society that also wanders through the wilderness; yet, neither of these heroes finds a purpose to his individual existence. Escape serves an outward purpose. It allows the alienated man to experience a physical freedom from worldliness, but escape is not the source for the hero's inner freedom.

Although Harold never obtains inner freedom, Selim does. Selim reaches the point of having power over himself when he asserts his identity actively against Giaffir for the purpose of protecting his freedom from materialistic tyranny. It is an act that ends in death for Selim with

Giaffir as the outward victor. Selim's outcome, as well as, Harold's inability to act both show that Byron is sympathetic toward self-reliance but has no hope that it can prevail over mass submission to worldliness. If an individual inwardly refuses submission, like Harold, his life is a living death. If he openly defies, like Selim, he physically dies and inwardly "lives" while he seeks from death nothing more than silence or a void. This momentary flash of life in man's total life span is the only meaning that Byron can see in man's existence. Few are able to reach even this meaningful experience.

"Harold" and "narrator" where applicable and at the same time remember that Harold is an aspect of the speaker's personality. "Harold/narrator."

Chapter 3

Another difference: A MOMENT OF HOPE sees an individual

treatment of this canto is Byron's approach to nature. Compared to his previous descriptive handling of the subject, literary style developed in the poem's preceding two cantos; nature appears in a more significant relationship with man, however, there are differences of sufficient importance to warrant separate treatment of this canto.

Unlike the poet's first-hand reaction to his travels and a variant approach to nature, an individual and experiences in Cantos I and II, the third canto is a recollection. (It was composed in Italy, 1816, during evolution of Byron's attitude toward man. And, as in the Byron's first year of a life-long, self-imposed exile from previous chapter, the alienated man's position in relation England.) Through recollection, Byron continues the to the social man's world and the hero's world of escape: descriptive travelogue form, but the form does not dominate and the two means for establishing the attitude expressed. Canto III as it does in Cantos I and II. Instead of emphasizing surface descriptions of man's activities, Canto III Harold's social position is similar to his previous. He is still the self-exiled wanderer who sings a expresses Byron's ideas about man's actions and his ideas "dreary strain" (111.32) of life's meaninglessness, but his are emphasized by his creation of dramatic unity.

attitude toward his own position differs from the earlier Harold: The basis for Canto III's dramatic unity is in the

relationship between Byron's narrator and hero. Instead of the very knowledge that he lived in vain, the speaker and Harold appearing as two separate identities had each his own a smilingness attitude, competing for poetic development as they do in Cantos I and II, the two become one in Canto III. Harold is the speaker's

alter-ego, or in the speaker's words, Harold is "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind" (111.20). Thus, in terms of Canto III appears to accept it as his belief. By this discussion of Canto III, it is necessary to employ both taking a critical view. There is, in negative, this hero

"Harold" and "narrator" where applicable and at the same time remember that Harold is an aspect of the speaker's personality. "Harold/narrator."

Another difference that justifies an individual treatment of this canto is Byron's approach to nature. Compared to his previous descriptive handling of the subject, nature appears in a more significant relationship with man.

Since Canto III was written four years after the composition of the first two cantos and contains dramatic unity and a variant approach to nature, an individual handling of it is valid as a source for establishing the evolution of Byron's attitude toward man. And, as in the previous chapter, the alienated man's position in relation to the social man's world and the hero's world of escape are the two means for establishing the attitude expressed.

Harold's social position is similar to his previous role. He is still the self-exiled wanderer who sings a "dreary strain" (iii.32) of life's meaninglessness, but his attitude toward his own position differs from the earlier Harold: early cantos, on the basis of man's acts of sub-

The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild . . .

Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

Rather than discovering man's meaninglessness, the hero of Canto III appears to accept it as his belief. By taking a stand, even though it is negative, this hero

emerges as a personality having potential for more objectivity. He no longer needs to convince himself that the ways of man are disillusioning; he now accepts it as true and reacts accordingly. Thus, Harold, unlike his predecessor, has the following aim: to find "A life within itself, to breathe without mankind" (111.108).

If the speaker can sustain Harold's creation and aim, he can fulfill "a life within itself"; in the words of the speaker:

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now--
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou, [Harold]
Soul of my thought! . . .

Man's first reaction to the rumor is questioning (111.46-51)

On the other hand, it follows that if he fails to sustain Harold, the speaker is "nothing" breathing along with the rest of mankind.

For the most part, the narrator does sustain his creation of Harold when his subject is the social man and his society. Harold relates to these societies, as he did in the early cantos, on the basis of man's acts of submission; but, in this canto, he concentrates on man's mission; but, in this canto, he concentrates on man's condition--the enslaved and the enslaver. Illustrating this situation is another of Byron's war passages (st.17-45) in which Harold visits the battlefield of Waterloo. At the battle site, Harold does not dwell on the futile deaths that occurred; instead, he recalls life in situations that

lead up to and follow the battle.

In stanzas 21-35, Harold imagines the night before the battle in terms of an annual ball where gay, light-heartedness rules; however, a personified rumor of war also insists on being recognized. At intervals throughout the night, the rumor breaks through the gaiety in increasing intensity until finally, by morn, the roar of a cannon signifies the beginning of battle. Man's reaction to this intrusion, from its obscure beginning to its undeniable reality, signifies a condition not merely bound to this particular event but characteristic of Byron's social man in general. (st.36-45). In one respect, Napoleon is

Man's first reaction to the rumor is questioning his own awareness:

Did ye not hear it?--No--'twas but the Wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
(iii.190-92)

Not relying on his first impression, man seeks for confirmation or denial either from within or from another; but, here, his awareness is denied growth by submitting so readily to the "No." He further submits by fabricating possible causes that he does not investigate. The "Wind" and the "car" are sensible answers and because of them he can continue to enjoy the present activity; but, also because of these unexamined reasons, his awareness is enslaved by his own lack of initiative. When man is finally made to distinguish the real from his illusions, it is not

surprising that Harold, without sympathy, pictures him as struck "with terror dumb,/Or whispering, with white lips-- 'The Foe! They come! they come!'" (111.224-25).

Choosing to remain unaware, man gains a momentary security, but his security is false in terms of reality. In submitting to a false security of his own making, he is his own enslaver. Because of man's own inner weakness, cause Byron sees this social man as being easily manipulated by an external enslaving force. His outward refusal to submit,

The external force that Byron creates in this military passage is Napoleon, seen here after his defeat at Waterloo (st.36-45). In one respect, Napoleon is pictured very much like the man that he enslaves. He, too, has the tendency to submit to false values. For example, fame woos him to God-like proportions, but in the end he is "nothing, save the jest of Fame" (111.328). Also, being skilled in understanding men's spirits, he can control an individual or an empire; yet he cannot control or understand himself. He submits to his own "pettiest passion" (111.339), the desire for worldly gain that Harold deems worthless.

Like the social man, Napoleon is enslaved by his own false values and lack of self-knowledge; but believing himself to be more than man, he is unable to recognize man's submitting tendencies inherent in him. So when he falls, he stands unbowed and full of scorn toward the social man, the previous means to his power. At first glance, this stance might seem identical to Harold's own position, but

it is not. Harold does not justify Napoleon's use of man, nor does he justify the basis of his scorn:

Ambition steeled thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn, which could condemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turned unto thine overthrow:
(111.353-58)

Napoleon does not have "just habitual scorn" because his ambition to gain worldly power is an act of submission to a meaningless obsession. His outward refusal to submit, to stand unbowed before man, loses its impact because he has submitted inwardly to a false value. His final stand is only an outward show to convince himself and others that he is more than man when actually, from Harold's point of view, he, like the social man, is self-enslaved. "that Napoleon

Although Napoleon is like social man, he is able to tower over him. This is partially due to man's unawareness that causes acceptance of false security but it is also a result of Napoleon's own driving spirit, misguided as it is. Harold recognizes this spirit as when he has actual contact

... a fire
And motion of the Soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.
... (111.371-78)

Harold can identify with this "fever" because he, too, feels a driving spirit to be other than a social man. At the same time, Harold cannot accept the "fever's" usual

results. It makes submission, but when he is with man

... Conquerors and Kings, having forces that charac-
 Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
 Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
 Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
 And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
 Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
 Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school (the
 Which would unteach Mankind the lust to shine or rule:
 Harold tries to avoid submission (111.380-87)

The spirit to be more than man by tyranny or by the creation
 of myths for others to follow only furthers a state of
 enslavement. The alienated hero sees man in need of being
 "untaught" that submission is meaningful--"untaught" that
 the ways of societies are just. not resolve, the conflict
 To be untaught that submission is meaningful creates
 an inner freedom that Harold's spirit strives toward, of
 especially through the "just habitual scorn" that Napoleon
 failed to have. The justification for Harold's scorn is not
 only his awareness that the social man submits to false
 values and in turn breeds internal and external enslavement;
 but that he (Harold) also has the same submitting tendency.
 This is especially evident to him when he has actual contact
 with man: the first level is a surface relationship between

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mixed like his
 Again in fancied safety with his kind,
 And deemed his spirit now . . . firmly fixed
 And sheathed with an invulnerable mind,
 . . . divine work . . . that is admirable . . .

But who can view the ripened rose, nor seek
 To wear it? who can curiously behold
 The smoothness and the sheen of Beauty's cheek,
 Nor feel the heart can never grow old?
 Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold,
 The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
 (111.82-85.91-96)

Harold's spirit defies submission, but when he is with man his spirit is weakened by the enslaving forces that characterize man's ways. He is aware that he, like the social man, can become a victim of worldly desires.

While in societies, actually or imaginatively (the war passage), Harold tries to avoid submission by figuratively turning away from man; but his contempt for man does not completely check his own tendency to submit when he is with man. Harold's conflict is not only with society but also between submission and self-reliance within himself. Harold lessens, but does not resolve, the conflict between himself and society by choosing literal isolation from man. His inner conflict thus becomes the point of emphasis during his escape.

Harold's search for inner freedom from the social man's ways begins by escaping to nature. Beginning in stanza 46 and occurring intermittently throughout the remainder of the canto, a relationship between man and nature develops on three levels of increasing significance.

The first level is a surface relationship between the alienated hero and nature. Here Harold, like his predecessor in Canto I and II, views nature as indifferent evidence of divine work that is admirable for its varied external beauty:

... Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
An "active" participant in nature. The Chorus (iii.410-12)

Besides the surface descriptions, Harold further (111.50), relates to external nature by comparing her works to man's and finds that nature's external beauty stands as a "mockery of man's art" (111.586), just as her mountains "show/How the Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below" (111.598). Nature then is not only indifferent but superior to man. With the assertion of the narrator's personality,

One aspect of nature's superiority is especially pertinent to Harold: the previous external descriptions,

The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam, Leman
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language; clearer than the tongue
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For Nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake.
(111.113-17)

actual experience described by the narrator, but only that The extremes of wild nature in these lines represent a it has occurred and that it is superior to his experiences freedom inherent in nature that Harold identifies with his with social man.

own desire. Their "mutual language" of freedom gives him In these four main stanzas, the narrator recognizes a welcome relief from the "language" of conformity and an upheaval in the ordered universe: submission in societies. Thus, at the surface level,

Harold's relationship to nature is a passive acknowledgment of her beauty and superiority that create an environment where he appears self-reliant. Yet he does not assert his self-reliance; rather he remains the passive hero that he is in Cantos I and II.

A second and third level of the man/nature relationship develops in this canto when Harold begins to fade as the passive wanderer, and the narrator begins to emerge as an "active" participant in nature. The change from third to

first person takes place early in this nature section (st.50), but the narrator recalls Harold's position in stanza 52 with "Thus Harold inly said" However, beginning with the passage on Lake Lemn (st.68-98) to the last stanza of the canto (118), the narrator does not sustain Harold, nor does he recall him.

With the assertion of the narrator's personality, the relationship between man and nature undergoes a substantial change from the previous external descriptions. Within the introductory stanzas (72-75) to the Lake Lemn passage, the narrator tells of an intense inner experience with nature. At this second level, we do not know of the actual experience described by the narrator, but only that it has occurred and that it is superior to his experiences with social man.

The narrator poses the question: if he submits to nature's spirit will he, as a mortal, not be able to experience an upheaval in the ordered universe:

... I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures . . .
(111.683-86)

The narrator, like Harold, acknowledges nature's superiority over man; however, unlike Harold, the narrator further describes a relationship with nature whereby man can rise above his lowly position:

Nature's way to be more than man involves an act of submission, a belief on the part of the narrator that he can achieve permanence to his existence by merging his identity with nature's spirit. The degree to which he accepts this experience as a lasting source for meaning is the third and most important level in this canto's man/nature relationship.

I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me . . .

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part, he
 Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
 (111.680-81.707-708)

This is basically a pantheistic stance. By merging
 his identity with nature's spirit, the narrator becomes a
 small part of the whole. He feels he can spurn "the clay-
 cold bonds which round our being cling" (111.697) and
 experience a vision of an absolute truth that could possibly
 bring some meaning to his existence.

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
 From what it hates in this degraded form, (111.st.75)

. . . shall I not
 Feel all I see less dazzling but more warm?

The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
 Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?
 (111.698-99.703-706)

The narrator poses the question: if he submits to nature's
 spirit will he, as a mortal, not be able to experience
 immortal thoughts? We assume that he has submitted and
 experienced such thoughts: "even now, I share at times the
 immortal lot" but we are not told of the actual experience
 nor the ultimate knowledge gained.

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Within the four stanzas under discussion, the narrator qualifies his acceptance through his approach. By casting his ultimate experience in rhetorical questions, he implies that he experiences an ultimate truth through nature; but his overuse of the rhetorical question suggests insincerity: with nature's spirit comes in the storm climax

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and my Soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not condemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?
(iii.st.75)

Besides the narrator's overuse of the rhetorical question, he further qualifies his position with nature in the concluding stanzas of this Lake Lemman passage (st.86-98). Within these closing lines, the narrator does not allude to a past experience as he does in the introductory stanzas; instead, he relates first hand reactions to his involvement with nature as it occurs. In this instance, we see him still aware of the spirit but doubting a purposeful relationship with it:

There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy

Ye Stars! which are the poetry of Heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,--'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you
(iii.819-20.824-29)

In both of these passages, the narrator checks his belief by doubting its reality, first, on the basis of his imagination and second, on his ability to be more than a lowly limited mortal.

The height of the narrator's withdrawal from a relationship with nature's spirit comes in the storm climax (st.96-97). He becomes involved in the storm's violent activity, especially lightning. In reaction to the storm, he states, by escaping to external nature, but he does not

Could I embody and unbosom now

That which is most within me,--could I wreak

My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw

Soul--heart--mind--passions--feelings--strong or weak--

All that I would have sought, and all I seek,

Bear, know, feel--and yet breathe--into one word,

And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

But as it is, I live and die unheard,

With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

(111.st.97)

Lightning is short lived but it breaks through the darkness the narrator shows the human tendency to submit to some bringing light and often leaves a mark. The narrator cannot outside force and, more important, he shows the need to do this. He is unable to speak or leave the darkness of believe that all is not meaningless. In this sense he is life's meaninglessness--he is unable to merge totally his identity with nature's spirit as a possible source for along with the rest of mankind in an act of hope. However, meaning to his individual existence.

At this third level, we find the narrator withdrawing from a complete or lasting belief in nature's spirit. He leans once again toward the earlier stance that Harold has in Canto I, II, and the first part of Canto III--that of recognizing the presence of a spirit in nature, but not actively participating with it as a source for truth.

The narrator returns to the characteristic self-reliant position.

Overall, nature does not stand as the solution to the alienated man's inner conflict. As long as Harold is maintained, he represents a passive self-reliance. He does not enter into an active relationship with nature or man; at the same time, he does not actively assert his self-reliance against meaninglessness. Harold, then, remains free of the social man by escaping to external nature, but he does not escape from his inner meaninglessness.

When the narrator fails to sustain his creation of Harold, he reveals a need for action involving him in a tentative relationship with nature. The degree of activity is questionable on the basis of the qualifications that exist; but, by turning to an outside force for an answer, the narrator shows the human tendency to submit to some outside force and, more important, he shows the need to believe that all is not meaningless. In this sense he is the "nothing" previously described [Cf.p.21], breathing along with the rest of mankind in an act of hope. However, his definite inability to maintain the relationship with nature reestablishes his former view of life in which he sees man existing without any purpose and without any hope.

Having tried for hope and failed, the narrator emerges as the sympathetic character and gains further sympathy by becoming the self-reliant "hero" whose action can only take the form of renewed candor toward his own

position in relation to the social man's: hero who, like

I stood and stand alone,--remembered or forgot. the social

I have not loved the World, nor the World me;

I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed

To its idolatries a patient knee,

Nor coined my cheek to smiles,--nor cried aloud

In worship of an echo: in the crowd

They could not deem me one of such--I stood

Among them, but not of them--in a shroud

Of thoughts which were not their thoughts . . .

(iii.1048-56)

As the canto's final statement toward the social man, these lines assert with more gusto the "just habitual scorn" that Harold expressed earlier. They also recall the final stand of the earlier Harold in Cantos I and II. These narrator-heroes condemn the social man's ways in order to strengthen their own position. As in the above quote, the narrator's attitude is not an altruistic concern, but an egocentric concern for his own desire: freedom from the social man as a figure and as a tendency within himself.

This canto, like Cantos I and II, does not portray the narrator/Harold as completely succeeding in this desire. His final stance is one of self-reliance; yet he is unable to assert his position actively. By keeping the narrator/Harold passive, Byron again supports self-reliance but without the hope that it can prevail over meaninglessness. The narrator/hero, like the social man, has no ultimate purpose. Only a "sense" of meaning exists for the individual when he passively condemns the social man.

Unlike Byron's earlier hero, Selim, Harold of Canto I, II, and III is unable to actively assert his belief in

meaninglessness. For the ultimate Byronic hero who, like Selim, does establish his total independence from the social man, we must turn to examples from Byron's later works.

Chapter 4 THE DESIRE FOR DEATH

Childs Harold, Canto III ended on the note of self-assertion and self-reliance. This tone is the keynote to Byron's dramas, Manfred (1816-1817) and Cain (1821). The alienated man of both plays is characterized by his independence from society's established values as each play stands as a record of growth toward the alienated hero's recognition and acceptance of his own identity.

As in the earlier Byronic heroes' situations, escape is the means to a possible independence for both Manfred and Cain. Manfred, from the beginning to the end, is in isolation from the social man. His home is a castle in the remote peaks of the Alps and only a few mortals are present to serve or try to serve his needs. The basis for this hero's isolation in nature is two-fold. Characteristically, he is guilt-ridden. The exact cause of his suffering remains mysterious, but in some manner he has sinned against a woman that he loves (Astarte). There are numerous suggestions that the sin is incest, yet an outright statement to that effect is avoided by such obvious techniques as in these lines:

... her, whom of all earthly things
 That lived, the only thing he seemed to love.--
 As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
 The lady Astarte, Chapter 4

Hush! who comes here?

(III.iii.44-47)

THE DESIRE FOR DEATH

Besides a personal sin or sins that established

social Childe Harold, Canto III ended on the note of self-assertion and self-reliance. This tone is the keynote to Byron's dramas, Manfred (1816-1817) and Cain (1821). The alienated man of both plays is characterized by his independence from society's established values as each play stands as a record of growth toward the alienated hero's recognition and acceptance of his own identity.

Must mourn the deepest e'er the fatal truth,

As in the earlier Byronic heroes' situations, escape

(I.i.10-12)

is the means to a possible independence for both Manfred and Cain. Manfred, from the beginning to the end, is in achievement can answer the most important question of isolation from the social man. His home is a castle in the alps--the "why" or meaning of his existence. To Manfred, remote peaks of the Alps and only a few mortals are present accumulated knowledge is merely an exchange for another to serve or try to serve his needs. The basis for this kind of ignorance (II.iv.58-63).

hero's isolation in nature is two-fold. Characteristically,

Manfred does not discover this truth after he he is guilt-ridden. The exact cause of his suffering literally isolates himself from society. His belief formed remains mysterious, but in some manner he has sinned against and made itself known to him while he was with the social a woman that he loves (Astarte). There are numerous sug-

gestions that the sin is incest, yet an outright statement

to that effect is avoided by such obvious techniques as in

these lines: From my youth upwards
 I have looked upon the earth with human eyes;
 My first of their ambition was not mine;
 The aim of their existence was not mine;

My joys--my griefs--my passions--and my powers,
 Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
 I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
 (II.ii.50-57)

In these lines, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seemed to love,--
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The Lady Astarte, his--
With man, the Hush! who comes here?

(III.111.44-47)

Also felt a destructive power enforced on his individuality:

Besides a personal sin or sins that established
For if the beings, of whom I was one,--
social mores would see sentenced to some form of isolation,
I felt myself degraded back to them,--
Manfred's intellectual heights further isolate him from the

social man. His knowledge makes him feel superior even
The reason for Manfred's degraded feeling is in the general
though it is futile and leads to unhappiness. Manfred
attitude taken by all Byron's alienated heroes toward
states the basis for his feelings in these three lines from
society. Byron's heroes see society as a breeding ground
the play's opening soliloquy:

for conformity--conformity that can result in making man
. . . they who know the most
must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
collective group at the expense of a spec (I.1.10-12) dual's

This intellectual giant realizes that no amount of worldly
achievement can answer the most important question of

all--the "why" or meaning of his existence. To Manfred,
accumulated knowledge is merely an exchange for another

A mighty thing amongst the mean--and such
kind of ignorance (II.iv.58-63). led to mingle with the
A herd, though to be leader--and of wolves.

Manfred does not discover this truth after he
literally isolates himself from society. His belief formed

and made itself known to him while he was with the social

man: a leader of the "herd" requires only that one become

a larger . . . From my youth upwards I was en masse, like
My Spirit walked not with the souls of men,
Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes; Manfred's
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine; to submit
My joys--my griefs--my passions--and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form, in order
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
to prevent himself from weakening on this (II.11.50-57) on

In these lines, he recalls the isolation he felt even when he was within society.

With man, the hero not only felt isolated but he also felt a destructive power enforced on his individuality:

For if the beings, of whom I was one,--
Hating to be so,--crossed me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,--because
And was all clay again
(II.11.76-79)

The reason for Manfred's degraded feeling is in the general attitude taken by all Byron's alienated heroes toward society. Byron's heroes see society as a breeding ground for conformity--conformity that can result in making mass man adhere to values established and upheld by an obscure collective group at the expense of a specific individual's belief. Manfred comments on this when he answers why, as an intellectual giant, he did not stay in society and become a leader:

And be a living Lie, who would become a religious
A mighty thing amongst the mean--and such
The mass are; I disdained to mingle with in the end,
A herd, though to be leader--and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I. . . .
. . . . for I would not make, at the end of the
But find a desolation
(III.1.119-23.126-27)

To be a leader of the "herd" requires only that one become a larger, single copy of the social man en masse, like Napoleon as depicted in Childe Harold, Canto III. Manfred's sense of individual identity does not allow him to submit to any meaningless force connected with mass man. In order to prevent himself from weakening on this point and from

experiencing the feelings of isolation with man, Manfred
 escaped to nature. -- principally, the hero's desire to have
 knowledge. The alienated hero's escape gives him physical
 freedom from the desolated existence maintained by society.
 In nature's atmosphere, this alienated man does not
 purposely seek an ultimate meaning to his existence because
 he thoroughly believes all mortal life is without purpose.
 His realization of knowledge's worthlessness causes him to
 despair and to be motivated only by his intense death-wish.
 In Byron's use of escape undergoes a reversal treatment
 in his play Cain. Here, the hero remains in society
 experiencing the inner isolation that individualism meets
 when opposing conformity; specifically, Cain's isolation
 results from his individual belief that man's existence is
 meaningless under his family's tyrant-god concept. Cain
 actively and openly asserts his individual beliefs by
 questioning and rebelling against his society's religious
 basis from the very outset of the play until he, in the end,
 is forcefully exiled into the wilderness. In this forced
 separation from the social man, Byron, at the end of the
 play, leaves Cain to inwardly struggle with his total
 independence from man whereas in Manfred he depicted this
 struggle in the play itself. Darkness, Arianism; and finally
 the "Besides this final exile, there is another type of
 escape within Cain similar to the escape that Manfred enacts
 in his isolated setting. Cain temporarily leaves the social
 man to embark on a cosmic journey with Lucifer (Act II).

which promises to answer the hero's questions on man's role under a tyrant-god--principally, the hero's desire to have knowledge of death. Manfred also embarks on a type of journey, within his own mind, to meet death but not for the same reason that Cain does so. Manfred simply desires to have an end to his personal suffering over the mysterious sin in his past as well as desiring to end his meaningless condition, a mortal condition he fully accepts without questioning. Cain, on the other hand, desires knowledge of death in order to disprove the belief in original sin. Cain feels that this belief forces self-punishment and sacrifices to be made to a tyrant-god for the sake of winning a questionable immortal identity.

Parallel to Cain's escape from mankind in his journey with Lucifer is Manfred's escape into the world of spirits. To open the gates of this world, Manfred uses his intellectual powers, which he had previously deemed worthless. Within the play, Manfred contacts spiritual forces in four different instances. He begins by calling upon the Seven Elemental Spirits and, in the course of the play, he moves on to Nature's Spirit, represented by the Witch of the Alps; to the force that controls this world, represented by the Prince of Darkness, Arimanes; and finally to the Evil Spirits whose purpose is to punish the sinner.

The activity that occurs between the hero and each of these forces is of a singular nature. Manfred asks of the four forces to be given either forgetfulness or death.

Although they all demand that Manfred bow to their "superiority," they are without the power to satisfy the hero's desire. This alienated man's unwavering answer to these forces can best be seen by examining one of the hero's four encounters with the spirits--the Witch of the Alps, the spirit in nature. When Manfred summons the Witch, he states that it is only "To look upon thy beauty--nothing further" (II.ii.38); yet when she arrives, he allows himself to be gently prodded into confiding in her. Telling of his past life with the social man, his misguided knowledge, his sins, and his despair, the hero ends by asking for death. The Witch's answer and Manfred's reaction in the following passages are typical of the hero's attitude toward all the spiritual forces:

Manfred: "That is not in my province; but if thou wilt swear obedience to my will, and do my bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes. I will not swear--Obey! and whom? the Spirits whose presence I command, and be the slave Of those who serve me--Never!" (II.ii.155-60)

The mind which is immortal makes itself immortal. Manfred defies this spirit because her demand is unjust. Admitting her limited power, she still demands control of Manfred but the hero chooses to rely on himself. Manfred's defiance of this particular force is also

important in terms of Byron's overall works because it repeats the rejection of pantheism made by the narrator in Childe Harold, Canto III. Manfred defies, like the narrator

rejects, any submission to nature's power. At the same time, when Manfred allows himself to confide in the Witch, he reveals a recognition of nature's spirit that he does not show for any of the other forces. In dealing with others, the hero simply makes his request and defies their answers without giving any details about his suffering. Nature, then, remains in Byron's works as the external escape for the alienated man, as well as a spirit, but a spirit that exerts no control over the hero.

After his encounter with the Witch of the Alps, Manfred's defiance gains momentum as each of the other forces are met, until at the end of the play, Manfred stands totally independent, inwardly and externally, from any force other than death. When this self-reliant hero meets his fated outcome, he with pride and satisfaction states, "'tis not so difficult to die" (III.iv.151). Manfred does not find dying difficult because in his process of seeking death he progressively asserted his dependence on his own identity to the point that he recognizes

The Mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,--
Is its own origin of ill and end--
And its own place and time: its innate sense,
When stripped of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorbed in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
(III.iv.129-36)

The intellect, free from all forms of restraint, is extremely important to the alienated man throughout all of Byron's poems and Manfred is the illustration of this

concern. Cain also exemplifies a freedom from restraint, but this play is a freeing from one particular enslaving force, society's tyrant-god.

Cain's temporary escape, his cosmic journey of Act II, serves to free the intellect that is bound to a tyrant-god and the religious cant surrounding this enslaved condition. Cain embarks on this journey with Lucifer only after he has refused to bow to his society's god during his family's prayer in recognition of their god's all-good nature (I.i.22-30), and only after he has refused to bow down to Lucifer (I.i.310-18). Openly rebellious and in a highly dissatisfied state because he, like all Byronic heroes, cannot "Reconcile what I saw with what I heard" (I.i.169), Cain actively seeks knowledge about death to clarify and support his belief that his society's existence is without meaning. Lucifer promises this knowledge.

The cosmic journey enables Cain and Lucifer to rise above man and his world, look down at mortal existence, and comment on the picture below them. Cain, who previous to this journey felt meaninglessness prevailed, is confirmed in his belief by Lucifer's tactics. As they travel, Lucifer repeatedly calls to Cain's attention "thy little world" below, "thy little life," and "thy dull earth" (II.i.14.15.46) to emphasize the smallness and insignificance of mortal life, compared to the vastness of the whole universe; he contrasts man's life and world to the "phantasm of the world; of which thy world/Is but the wreck" (II.i.152-53).

"crowd." In this "phantasm of the world," Cain views the pre-Adamite, his worlds and his animal kingdoms, and the hero sees life as vastly superior in form and intellect to what he knows as man. Life, then, in all its forms has degenerated. Cain's human form is a reduced, faded-out example of previous life. As Lucifer points out, the only thing Cain has in common with the pre-Adamite

Is Life, and what ye shall have--Death: the rest
Of your poor attributes is such as suits
Reptiles engendered out of the subsiding
Slime of a mighty universe, crushed into
A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with
Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness--
A Paradise of Ignorance, from which
Knowledge was barred as poison
(II.11.95-102)

By showing man as the product of "subsiding slime" left over from the wreck of a "mighty universe" and by showing man inducing self-blindness as a way of life, Byron expresses his characteristic belief in mortal degeneration. This same appraisal of man's condition appears in Manfred when in the following quote, the Destiny, Nemesis, reports of her work for the Prince of Darkness, Arimanes:

I was . . . repairing shattered thrones--
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties--
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goading the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh--for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance--and to speak
Of Freedom, the forbidden fruit
(II.111.62-71)

Both of these passages recall Byron's continual usage of terms in Childe Harold and The Bride, such as "herd,"

"crowd," "cage," "fold," etc. to denote the loss of individual freedom--the loss of control over self. loses any sense of This view of man causes Cain, as it causes all of Byron's alienated heroes, to despair. At the end of the cosmic journey, Cain tells Lucifer as a prince of darkness rather than light.

Alas! I seem
Nothing.

After his return from the journey, Cain's open rebellion against his society's prince of darkness and Lucifer replies

And this should be the human sum
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness; Bequeath that science to thy children, and
'Twill spare them many tortures. really gains knowledge of death. By preceding this act by the cosmic journey, (II.ii.420-24)

As a whole, the cosmic journey's main intent is to establish Cain's motive as stemming from the hero's aid Cain in fully realizing his "mortal nature's realization that man is "nothing." For his action, which is committed in a moment of uncontrollable anger, Cain gives Cain this final advice:

One good gift has the fatal apple given,--
Your reason:--let it not be overruled by his
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling: in
Think and endure,--and form an inner world
In your own bosom--where the outward fails;
(II.ii.459-64)

Society, throughout Byron's poems, does not allow Lucifer's advice, dependence upon one's own life force, is an individual to openly question, let alone defy. the same self-reliant position Manfred illustrates while established way of life. The social man in Cain fears the freeing his identity from all tyrannical forces, just as questioning might have. When Cain first defies Selim does on a smaller scale in The Bride, and the hero of the tyrant-god, Eve bears of him to "Content thee with what Childe Harold strives to do.

Not only is this self-reliant advice common to all of Byron's heroes, but its source, too, is shared by the alienated heroes. In Cain, Byron reverses the "God is good,

Lucifer is evil" view because the poet sees that man, in bowing to a tyrant-god, becomes enslaved and loses any sense of an individual life force. Byron does not see this as a "good" condition in Cain, nor in Manfred where the poet creates the god-of-this-world as a prince of darkness rather than light. Manfred deals with his

After his return from the journey, Cain's open rebellion against his society's prince of darkness culminates in his move against his brother's sacrificial altar and against Abel himself. Cain ironically gains knowledge of death. By preceding this act by the cosmic journey, Byron establishes Cain's motive as stemming from the hero's realization that man is "nothing." For his action, which is committed in a moment of uncontrollable anger, Cain feels immediate remorse; at the same time, this action is his move to strip the delusion of religious cant from his own mind and the minds of his society. The hero fails in this attempt for society.

Society, throughout Byron's poems, does not allow an individual to openly question, let alone defy, an established way of life. The social man in Cain fears the outcome questioning might have. When Cain first defies the tyrant-god, Eve begs of him to "Content thee with what is" (I.1.45), and Abel asks

Why wilt thou wear this gloom upon thy brow,
Which can avail thee nothing, save to rouse
The Eternal anger?
(I.1.52-54)

Lacking an understanding of Cain's inner turmoil, the social man asks only that Cain refrain from any further acts of disobedience to society's established ways.

This is similar to the reaction that Manfred experiences with the few mortals who serve or try to serve his needs in isolation from society. Manfred deals with his servants, an Abbot, and the Chamois Hunter (a man of nature) during the course of the play. Unlike the social man in the Cain, all of these figures appear more aware of the hero's inner conflict; but their awareness ironically creates the same void between themselves and Manfred that exists to see between Cain and his family.

Both Manfred and Cain, in facing The relationship between Manfred and his servants is minimal, but with both the Abbot and the Chamois Hunter a level of communication exists. During the play, the Abbot approaches Manfred twice. From his encounters with the hero, the Abbot concludes that Manfred is an individual who has the potential for being a "noble creature" (III.1.160); however, the Abbot states further that all the elements are unbalanced. Instead of being a "noble creature," Manfred is "an awful chaos" (III.1.164). The Abbot's view is not incorrect. Manfred is "an awfully, chaos;" or from the Chamois Hunter's point of view, the hero's life is a "convulsion" (II.1.43). The Hunter reaches this conclusion because Manfred confides in this man of nature at one point in the play when he attempts to commit suicide and the Hunter intervenes and leads him to

safety. Manfred allows himself to be led and tells the Hunter of his inner turmoil. In this instance, Manfred repeats the same conditions here that exist during the hero's meeting with the Witch of the Alps. Manfred relates to nature, whether it be a spirit or a man of nature; but just as he defied nature's spirit earlier, he also rejects the Chamois Hunter when the Hunter advises him to seek "The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience" (II.1.34), the exact course that the Abbot is striving for.

Both the Abbot and the Hunter see Manfred in need of the established church and Manfred flatly refuses to see it as an answer to his despair. Both Manfred and Cain, in facing others with their belief, meet an answer that they cannot accept. This is generally true of all Byron's heroes. Society has no satisfactory answer for the hero with his sense of meaninglessness. For the individual who tries to assert his belief, Byron's social man makes one of three moves. Either he places a yoke of inaction around the individual that destroys him inwardly, a condition that all Byronic heroes feel while in societies; or the social man puts an end to the alienated man's earthly life, as Selim's outcome reveals; or the hero is forced directly, like Cain, or indirectly, like Manfred, to a life of exile.

The social man is the victor in the outward struggle between self-reliance and conformity. Neither Manfred, Cain, nor any other of Byron's alienated heroes are able to win this outward victory. For Byron, this is the outcome

of mankind's mass degeneration. The poet sees the social man and his society so hopelessly deteriorated that no individualism can survive within this social world. If one escapes from society and establishes total self-reliance, outward death follows.

Byron has no hope for his social man and no sympathy for his condition. He also has no hope that the independent man can survive. All appears meaningless in both Manfred and Cain except for that crucial moment when the hero fully realizes and accepts his own identity, his own life force as the only purpose to his existence.

accomplishments while his world is deteriorating. It is a condition that can give rise to conflict within and between man and his society. The conflict of the man and his society depends on the individual's attitude toward mankind.

Byron's attitude toward the individual's existence is two-fold. There is evidence that the individual is not alone. There are two positions: one is the individual as indifferent toward man and further away from the world, the other is the individual as a part of the world, the individual as a part of the world.

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Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Childe Harold, Cantos I, II, and III, The Bride of Abydos, Manfred, and Cain are selections from Lord Byron's major poetic works. They differ in literary style and composition dates, but they all contain Byron's interpretation of man's experience with worldly values. In these selections, Byron's interpretation exhibits a theme which expresses the belief that man moves forward in worldly accomplishments while his inner life deteriorates. It is a condition that can give rise to conflicts within man or between man and his society; but whether or not man resolves his conflicts depends on an individual poet's attitude toward mankind.

Byron's attitude toward man's deteriorating existence is two-fold. From the selections cited above there is evidence that Byron early establishes and maintains these two positions: he is both sympathetic and indifferent toward man and further expresses little hope, in either instance, that man can maintain a purposeful existence amidst his material developments.

Byron's sympathy and indifference becomes clearer when we consider that he creates two major types of man.

One is a "social man" who conforms to the ways of his society and the other is an "alienated man," or Byronic hero, who does not accept the social man nor society's ways. To the first of these men, the poet is indifferent, in that he shows no altruistic concern for the social man's condition or his ability to overcome it. But to the alienated man, the poet expresses a sympathetic attitude: he has sympathy for the alienated position, for the inner and external conflicts the hero experiences in his seemingly hopeless quest for a satisfactory solution.

This by no means defines Byron's attitude to its fullest extent. A just treatment of the poet's position calls for specific evidence about the two types of man--his world, conflicts, and solutions within the framework of their literary existence.

In Byron's major works, the poet invariably describes the social man by emphasizing his superficial aspects, by frequent descriptions of his physical features. In general this man is depicted in terms of a tired, broken-down animal: his body droops, with his head bent and lusterless eyes cast downward, while his breath ejects a "rank" smell over his world; agony is written across his face and when he does express feelings of joy or happiness, the expression appears feigned. This is not a picture of one social man. The social man is representative of the mass because Byron associates this picture with collective terms, such as "crowd," "gang," "herd," "crew," or "fold,"

and he frequently modifies these nouns with words like "crushing," "whining," or "shocking." These terms not only describe the social man, but they also show us that his self world builds its foundation on conformity. Man gives up his identity to the crowd to the point that Byron sees man in his world as "striving where none are strong" religion, but (C.H.III.661). It is a world void of individualism, small and insignificant, just as the man is who resides here, as to the play Cain (Act II) illustrates so well. See, in Childs Herold. In a world where man appears to have no freedom, we wonder what his motivations might be. Byron sees the social man motivated by a belief in worldliness: material values, sensuous love, and a culturally controlled religion. In Byron's opinion, the social man's inner weakness allows his worldliness to take on the form of tyrannical forces-- forces that leave man without intellectual freedom, without any sense of an individual identity, and without a ~~does not~~ meaningful, just religious basis. To Byron, the tyranny of materialism and passion and a tyrant-god concept all work together for the social man's destruction or as the poet states in Cain, man's "mortal nature's nothingness" (II.11.422). The social man appears throughout Byron's poems as having no ultimate purpose. He moves forward in worldly success, but his tyrannical forces destroy his inner life; and, as long as the social man does not doubt this manner of existence, as Byron's social man does not, he remains degraded. is obsessed by finding some meaning to

Byron offers no solution for his social man's condition. The poet creates this type of degraded man in such a manner that there are no inner conflicts to be solved. All of the social man's conflicts are purposely external: man fights against man in order to gain materialism or he fights against man who questions his system or religion, but we never see Byron's social man struggling with himself. We see no inward struggle occurring in Giaffir when he plans to sell his daughter in marriage. Napoleon, too, in Childe Harold, Canto III, has no difficulty accepting the numerous deaths which result from his actions, nor does the social man in Cain have an inner conflict for he takes a preventive measure by banishing the questioner.

In order to offer any ultimate solution for this lack of an inner life, one would have to believe in mankind--believe that man can be made aware of his worldliness and the vacuum it can create. Byron does not believe this. The poet's lack of an altruistic solution is his "silent" statement that there is no hope for the social man to overcome worldly nothingness, no hope that society as a whole can overcome degradation.

Byron, however, does offer a way to deal with society's degradation. In his poems, the individual who escapes from the social man's worldliness is not the social man, but one who feels some sense of an individual identity, who realizes that worldliness is synonymous with meaninglessness, and who is obsessed by finding some meaning to

his existence or by finding death. Escape is not Byron's answer for man's degraded condition, but merely a temporary relief from society; the man that uses escape as a means to a possible end is the Byronic hero or the alienated man.

Byron does not give us knowledge about his alienated man in the manner he employs for his social man. He employs external characteristics to reveal the social man, and thus emphasizes his worldliness. On the other hand, Byron approaches his alienated hero by emphasizing abstractions that describe his personality, his conflicts, and his motivation. For example, the hero has a fierce love for freedom and a hatred for tyranny in any form. He is sensitive, intelligent, and meditative. He also suffers an inner conflict that stems from his own personal sense of guilt over a mysterious sin in his past and he inwardly and outwardly suffers from his belief that society has no ultimate purpose. His conflict with society is not due to his concern for all mankind. It is an egoistical struggle in freeing his own identity from worldliness, not mankind's. Thus, the alienated man is motivated either by his own need to assert his individual identity in a meaningful relationship with life or by his desire for death. He begins his search by escaping from society's worldliness. Within Byron's works there are several kinds of escape. One may escape from society yet still be within society's walls. Selim makes this kind of escape in The Bride of Abydos; but he, like all of Byron's other heroes,

does not find it satisfactory. Worldliness is too magnetic. It forces him to be inactive and full of frustration because he is with the social man but he does not share this man's motivations. Escape within society also forces the alienated hero down to the social man's enslaved level that all Byronic heroes feel and cannot tolerate.

In Selim's case, this hero finds a more satisfactory means when he becomes the leader of an outlaw society whose membership requirement is simply a pure love for freedom. Selim realizes though that having external freedom does not guarantee an ultimate purpose to man's existence. In their escape, the outlaws still have no meaning and they find themselves wandering from place to place in search of their goal.

Wandering is another type of escape that is frequently used by Byron's alienated man. His heroes move from one society to another and/or they wander through nature's wilderness. Harold represents the alienated man who, at times, moves among several different societies. The outcome of his wandering is the same that Selim experiences: Harold withdraws inwardly from man, finds himself unable to be active, and finds himself susceptible to society's conformity. Harold finds wandering in nature a more satisfactory alternative.

For the most part, wandering in nature remains a type of escape for Byron's alienated man. All of his heroes have close physical contact with external nature: Manfred's

home is in an isolated setting in the higher realms of the Alps; Selim's outlaws wander through the wilderness, just as Cain is compelled to do and Harold chooses to do. These heroes are all sensitive to nature on the basis of her superiority over man and on the basis of the freedom thriving within her that the heroes can identify with their own desire for freedom. Nature is an external place where the alienated man can be outwardly free from actual contact with worldliness. Besides the alienated man's awareness and love of external nature, he also senses a spirit dwelling within her. All of Byron's heroes sense this spirit, but for the most part they do not enter into any relationship with it. Only the narrator/hero in Childe Harold, Canto III, describes an experience with nature's spirit. In this instance, nature is no longer an escape, but a possible way to experience an ultimate truth that could give meaning to his existence. The narrator's experience is momentary and one from which he progressively withdraws until he reaches the point of doubting the validity of merging his identity with nature's spirit. In Byron's narrator experiments with pantheistic teachings which he rejects within the same canto and also in the play Manfred written during and after this third canto of Childe Harold. In the play, the hero actively defies pantheism by refusing to acknowledge any authority in nature's spirit, represented by the Witch of the Alps.

Nature, then, remains in Byron's works generally as an avenue of escape and not the answer for overcoming degradation. Manfred and Cain are Byron's major statements on

All of these modes of escape--wandering in nature and societies, establishing outlaw societies, and/or remaining with the social man yet inwardly withdrawing from him--aid the alienated man's external conflict with worldliness but they do not solve his inner conflict. He still struggles inwardly for his independence from established worldly values. Escape only further clarifies to him that he has no place or force to turn to except himself.

Depending entirely upon one's own life force, develops along two lines of action for Byron's alienated heroes: they either passively or actively illustrate their independence. Byron's early heroes show more passivity than the alienated man in the poet's later works. Harold of Cantos I and II is the most passive hero of all. He is at the end of his wandering escape much the same man that he was in the beginning and his inability to actively assert his identity against meaninglessness leaves him without hope of overcoming degradation. Selim, another early alienated man, is also passive; however, when the crisis presents itself, this hero does actively illustrate his belief in self-reliance by openingly defying the tyrant, Giaffir and his materialistic society. Thus, Byron early establishes the idea that active defiance against society's meaninglessness is the only purpose for the alienated man's

existence, the only possibility for him to overcome deterioration.

Although Manfred and Cain are Byron's major statements on active defiance, they do not reflect any fundamental changes in his beliefs. The basic foundation for active defiance is laid early in The Bride and expressed again by the narrator in Childe Harold, Canto III when he rejects pantheism. The only alteration the poet makes in his later plays is in expanding the literary approach of his initial position. Whereas Selim and the narrator become active heroes, the plays' alienated man is active from the outset. Selim moves forward to the crisis in which he defies Giaffir's society, while Manfred begins by defying all forms of tyranny of the intellect and Cain by defying religious tyranny.

The results of the Byronic heroes' active defiance is death. Giaffir and his materialistic society kill Selim in battle yet the hero is the victor. His defiance is his inner victory over worldliness. Manfred dies, too, but he has succeeded in defying all forms of tyranny over the intellect. And Cain brings death into the world as well as ending in a type of death himself, exile; yet he has defied Adam's theology, hence, Adam's tyrant-god.

None of these heroes outwardly win the battle against worldliness or degradation, but they do win their own inward struggle against it. Their moment of realizing an inner victory over worldliness is their proud moment of

realizing an ultimate purpose for their individual existence.

The alienated man's inner victory and outward death place him in a sympathetic light; but his inability to maintain his inner independence without society's destroying him creates a sense of hopelessness. Even though the alienated hero finds an answer to his deterioration it is an answer that dooms him to destruction by society. In Byron's works, there is no way for his hero to maintain his independence. Worldliness destroys him inwardly or if he overcomes his deterioration, by defying, he is doomed to a physical death and the only degree of meaningfulness for Byron's hero is his doomed moment of realizing inner self-reliance.

Byron's attitude toward mankind is rather negative. He believes only in the worth of the individual, yet he offers little positive hope that individualism can survive. Viewing mankind in this manner, Byron stands alone within the Romantic spirit of his age. He, alone, is unable to place his poetic man merging his identity with some force in order to realize perfectibility or attain meaning for mortal existence. Instead of presenting a system or myth for man to overcome deterioration, Byron presents a record of doubt. He doubts the meaningfulness of mortal's worldly existence just as he doubts mankind's ability to ever pull out of his decline.

Byron's inability to merge with some idealistic concept allows for a depressing element to characterize his

poetic works considered here and his doomed answer of active defiance does little to brighten mankind's condition. At the same time, Byron's factual scrutiny of man's nature and his worldly existence is penetrating and calls for a more honest evaluation of man in his relationship with worldly values.

It is perhaps here in spirit that Byron is more at home with twentieth century poetry than the Romantic of his time. Man's alienation, his insignificance and uncertainty, and his worldly progress at the expense of his inner life are themes we encounter frequently in twentieth century poems. We need only think of T. S. Eliot's continual references to man's inner hollowness, a Prufrock or a Sweeney; or E. E. Cummings' "busy monster manunkind;" or E. A. Robinson's "bewildered infants" as a few of the many twentieth century comments on the conditions and needs of man in respect to his worldly progress. And it is here within this twentieth century poetry that we find wide-range evidence of an intense doubt and a distinct cry arising from mortals in search of a meaningful sense of values. The nineteenth century Lord Byron passionately partook of this search that ended in the doomed "I defy" as his mortal answering cry to deterioration.

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