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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

REVOLUTION AND ROMANCE: POLITICS, OPERA AND NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORICAL FICTION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

TIMOTHY O. GRAY

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CHAPTER I

RECEPTION AESTHETICS, HISTORICAL FICTION, AND OPERA

Contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship, focused on William Shakespeare in English literature and Giuseppe Verdi in Italian opera, has created what I will call a horizon of expectations that supports Shakespeare and Verdi as the ultimate relationship of mixed media.[1] Critical hindsight has made Otello (1887) a standard model for studying literature and opera. But Otello is late Verdi, who lived from 1813 to 1901, and a late work which sets a standard for study of earlier works presents a problem for reception study. Most of what happened on stages before Otello was quite different. In the early nineteenth century opera composers who turned to English literary sources turned not to Shakespeare or to the drama but to poems and novels about English history.

My study of historical fiction and opera concerns Walter Scott's Old Mortality (1816), Lord Byron's The Corsair (1814), and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Rienzi (1835). I will examine these three works as source material for Vincenzo Bellini's I Puritani (1835), Verdi's Il Corsaro (1848), and Richard Wagner's Rienzi (1842). This dissertation in part responds to two trends in interdisciplinary study. The first is the exclusion from

interdisciplinary studies of those works seen as not literary. Though many of us hold opera tickets, our professional ranks are mostly closed to music. The second is, at those rare times when music moves up the ranks of English scholarship, the focus is on famous achievements at the expense of less familiar works.

Although studies tracing the reception of poems and novels as operas are not in the mainstream of the English department, opera is indeed a part of literary history. Novels transformed into plays and films, and plays turned into films have long been accepted by English scholars. The transformation of one genre into another--novel into play or film--already has a place in the curriculum; a play is acknowledged to be a version of the novel on which it is based. Operas, however, do not seem to be as immediately connected to their literary sources as plays or films because music is involved in the translation. The translation of English literature into other languages and music has discouraged the inclusion of opera in English departments.[2] The general knowledge that an opera's source is a novel, for example, that Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor (1819) is the source of Gaetano Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor (1835), can be turned into specific literary knowledge when one sees the opera as an interpretation of its source.

Giacomo Puccini's Madama Butterfly (1904), one of the most recognizable operas in the repertory, provides an excellent model for reception study: a popular opera, based on a now obscure but once well-known play and story, which was adapted to another medium. Madame Butterfly, American writer John Luther Long's short story of 1898, provided a source for the American playwright David Belasco. Puccini, who saw the play in London in 1900, in turn used Belasco and Long as sources for his opera Madama Butterfly.[3] Of course, opera itself has a history of borrowing Oriental themes. Consider, for example, Leo Delibes's Lakme (1883) and Pietro Mascagni's Iris (1899). Once a listener views Puccini's opera as a link in a chain of reception, Madama Butterfly refers to the play, the short story, the Oriental preoccupations of some composers, and musical conventions of its time. The story of Butterfly was translated into a non-operatic film in 1932 which used some of Puccini's music as a form of leitmotif.[4] Such a genealogy suggests a series of sources whose chronology is apparent, but whose meanings are difficult to apprehend.

Scott's, Byron's, and Bulwer-Lytton's meanings were not translated to the opera stage as neatly as was Long's Madame Butterfly. If Butterfly is an excellent model for reception study because the opera closely fits its sources, then Puritani, Corsaro, and Rienzi are great candidates for reception study because their relationship to their sources

needs to be examined. None of I Puritani, Il Corsaro, or Rienzi is as familiar to operagoers as Butterfly, and they are examples of the cross-disciplinary works which are even now overshadowed by Shakespeare and Verdi.

The translations of Old Mortality into I Puritani, Bulwer-Lytton's novel into Rienzi, and The Corsair to Il Corsaro are complex issues, so we need a complex, subtle critical tool for studying them. I will employ Hans Robert Jauss's theory of reception to define operas with literary sources as receptions of the novels and poems on which they are based.

Reception Theory as a Critical Tool

My interpretation of reception theory stems from Hans Robert Jauss's Toward an Aesthetic of Reception and Question and Answer.[5] Jauss connects literary interpretation to cultural criticism--both of which are grounded in shared human experience. In Aesthetic, Jauss crosses disciplinary boundaries, using an aesthetic of cultural experience to connect literary criticism to literary history. In Question and Answer, Jauss refines his reception aesthetics and emphasizes that literature answers questions posed by previous literature. Jauss explicates the shared human experiences which produce literature through the horizon of expectation, the question and answer paradigm, and a

reception definition of classic works. The sum of these ideas is that literature is eventful, that literary history is a process, and that the literary scholar never fades from the horizon.

The task of the reception theorist is to uncover the processes of literary history as part of cultural history. Literature participates in history in several ways: First, literature both reflects the events surrounding its creation and informs events as people read it. Second, readers bring context and meaning to their engagement with texts through their horizon of expectations. Third, literature challenges readers, whose responses answer the questions the work poses.

The horizon of expectation and the role of the critic

Jauss's horizon of expectation, a term central to reception study, refers to a variety of interpretive-shaping circumstances and reveals literary history as a process. A horizon implies its own limits: if one looks at a horizon, one looks <u>away</u> from something else and <u>from</u> a vantage point; the vantage point determines the view on the horizon. Jauss's term, which potentially includes anything that shapes a reader's experience with literature, is actually quite specific in any given circumstance. Just as the horizon is the apparent intersection between the sky and the

earth, the horizon of expectation in literary and cultural terms describes the intersection between the past and present of reader and the interpretations which their history and circumstances make possible.

Scott, Byron, and Bulwer produced literature as the product of a specific horizon of expectation. The operatic interpretations of these were the products also of a specific horizon of expectation. The historical moment which created a context for these literary works was the political world of the early nineteenth century. To call a span of some forty years a moment might seem a gross reduction of the density of experiences contained in that time. My decision to describe forty years as an historical moment is based on the claims each author made to be engaged with the politics of his time, which we shall see in later chapters.

The claims of each author to the political timeliness of his writing reveals the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon, and their aftermath as a horizon of expectation determining audience reception.[6] The French Revolution created attendant effects in England. Not only did the English of the early nineteenth century bear witness to the revolution, but they also underwent political changes in their own country, which, although not as dramatic as the revolution across the channel, nevertheless shaped the way they would read and shaped the way in which authors wrote.

The French revolution created political reverberations in Europe that could be felt throughout the years covered in this study.

The revolutionary connection between literature and opera is not particularly apparent without the apparatus of reception theory, which places the historian in a situation where the view is available. Just as a physical landscape requires a spectator to realize a view as a specific horizon, a work's reception history requires the participation of a critic to be revealed as a horizon of expectation. The horizon engages critics in the past as active participants in the creation of meaning of the past for the present.

> This process, seeing old forms and problems, and new forms and solutions--forces the reader to include himself in the picture, since he is able to see both past and present, thereby mediating them.[7]

We can only recreate, not duplicate the past. Reception theorists represent the past and acknowledge the role of contemporary thought in their presentation. Reception theory, according to Robert C. Holub, engages us in the past, not just as passive spectators, but as active participants in the recreation of the horizon of expectations:

> The historian of reception will be called upon to rethink constantly the works in the canon in the light of how they have affected and are affected by current conditions and events.[8]

Our current reluctance to admit opera into the field of literary inquiry has obscured the view that could explain how Scott's, Byron's and Bulwer's writings were revised by opera composers.

The horizon of expectation includes the context of political conflict and revolution in which audiences understood fiction and opera. Political unrest in Europe encouraged readers, listeners, and opera composers to understand literature and music in terms of revolution. Scott's and Bulwer-Lytton's novels and Byron's poem had a particular revolutionary impact outside of England on Wagner, Verdi, and Bellini. Operas based on <u>Old Mortality</u>, <u>The Corsair</u>, and <u>Rienzi</u> expressed the political meanings composers and librettists found in historical novels. Bellini used a setting steeped in revolution for <u>I Puritani</u>, which underscored the characters' frustrations and madness. Verdi created a revolutionary context for <u>Il Corsaro</u>, which dramatized the Italian struggle for independence; and Wagner experimented with music and politics in <u>Rienzi</u>, which prefigured his later, more politically developed writing and operas.

The question and answer paradigm and eventfulness

Jauss explains the horizon of expectation through a hermeneutic question and answer paradigm to show literature as an event. Literature poses questions to which acceptance, rejection, or revision is an answer. This paradigm reconstructs possible ways in which previous audiences understood fiction and poems. The question and answer paradigm opens the study of little known works in order to acknowledge as many texts as possible that mattered to past audiences.

The answering capacity of writing reveals an eventful continuity of literature: "the next work can solve formal and moral problems left behind by the last work, and present new problems in turn...."[9] The Socratic nature of Jauss's method foregrounds the changing effects of literature as part of the changing needs and situations of its readers.

> The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, in the face of which a work was created and received in the past, enables one...to pose questions that the text gave an answer to, and thereby discover how the contemporary reader could have viewed and understood the work.[10]

The questions we pose to Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi must lead to the knowledge of the questions to which I Puritani, Il Corsaro, and Rienzi were the answers.

Reception theory, as a question and answer, problem and solution paradigm, would see historical fiction and operas as events whose meanings are constituted by transactions among socially-situated individuals. Jauss writes:

> A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it-if there are readers who again appropriate the past work or authors who want to imitate, or outdo, or refute it. The coherence of literature as an event is primarily mediated on the horizon of expectation of the literary experience of contemporary and later readers, critics, and authors.[11]

The critical inquiry performed in this study mediates the early nineteenth century and late twentieth century for contemporary audiences and realizes the eventfulness of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer for readers in our circumstances. Historical romance writers performed acts of mediation on the history they confronted in their fiction. The eventfulness of literature involves the complex mediations which Scott, Byron, and Bulwer performed on their literary histories, the mediation which Wagner in Germany and Bellini and Verdi in Italy performed on Scott, Byron, and Bulwer, and the mediations I perform as a twentieth century historian standing in relation to the history of historical romances.

A reception definition of classic works

Unlike Shakespeare's Othello and Verdi's Otello, none of the works in this study has survived as a classic. Works by Scott are respected today as literary artifacts, but are not widely read. Bulwer-Lytton's novels are neither respected nor read. The horizon of expectations surrounding Byron's works, however, is more stable. Byron retains fame for the Byronic hero, even in popular culture.

Jauss defines a classic in terms of a challenge to the reader and the change of his horizon. A classic presented a challenge to past methods of coping with texts which became assimilated as the norm for later readers. A work reached classic status when its horizonal changes have become the standard. Horizons change drastically, yet a work may maintain or even gain an audience for radically different reasons than when it was first published.

> When...the new horizon of expectations has achieved more general currency, the power of the aesthetic norm can be demonstrated in that the audience experiences formerly successful works as outmoded, and withdraws its appreciation. Only in view of such horizonal change does the analysis of literary influence achieve the dimension of a literary history of readers, and do the statistical curves of the bestsellers provide historical knowledge.[12]

Audiences have withdrawn their appreciation for Scott and Bulwer-Lytton, and even sometimes for Byron. But 160 years ago, the historical fictions of all three writers met the expectations of the already established audience while gradually changing them.

Problems of reception theory

The problems of Jauss's reception theory indicate the dynamic rather than static qualities of reception theory. I see three problems with reception theory: establishing the work's eventfulness; defining passivity and activity in terms of readers and authors; and identifying the critic's role in the question and answer paradigm.

Not many would argue against the idea that a work is eventful, but some might argue about the meaning of eventfulness. Accepting a work as an event requires us to shift our perspective from formal aesthetic concerns (unity, characterization, and theme) to reception aesthetics (when and why a work is popular, when and why it is not, and who is viewing it). This shift does not negate intentionality or literary qualities. Often the intentionality, unity, and characterization of a novel or poem can reveal how it was once popular and then not. As a reception study, this dissertation regards Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi as on-going events.

A second theoretical problem is the ambiguity of establishing the activity or passivity of a work. For example, readers who were alerted to revolutionary cues in Byron's The Corsair were guided both by the poet's reputation and by their own situatedness. If we are to view works as socially active both in the past and present, then we must wrestle with the problem of determining the interplay of activity and passivity as interdependent. Jauss, like historian Siegfried Kracauer, merges the active and passive elements of historical study.[13] For Jauss, activity and passivity reside in the works and the readers. For Kracauer, activity and passivity lie in the historian and the role of his raw material. The historian has to avail himself of all imaginable modes of explanation in recovering events of the past.

A third issue is the prominent role of the critic in establishing a dialogue between texts and their readers.[14] The critic, as Kracauer suggests, should avail himself of all the imaginable modes of explanation of the past, which means he must be aware of his own situatedness. Framing the chronology of works according to a question and answer paradigm allows the critic to see events of the past as specifically connected to each other and the world rather than as part of a general spirit of the age. Reception theory forces the critic to negotiate points of view for clear meaning.

While literary history is part of a historical process, reception theory is also implicated in an historical process of critical inquiry. In his Foreword to Question and Answer, Michael Hays writes that the works of Jauss no longer need an introduction.[15] This may be true, but without a sense of where Jauss's work finds its precursors, and what its problems of interpretation are, reception theory, rather than forming a solution to an interpretive problem, could become as codified and rigid as the ideas which it seeks to remedy.

Terry Eagleton sees Jauss's reception theory as a manifestation of this century's readership turning away from ideas of absolute meaning in the text.[16] Jauss himself is historically situated; Eagleton places him between Roman Ingarden (for whom the hermeneutic circle is put in motion, an important idea for Jauss), Wolfgang Iser and Jean Paul Sartre.[17] Eagleton summarizes reader-oriented theories as proof "that there is no such thing as a purely literary response."[18]

Holub, placing Jauss in a chain of reception, sees five precursors to reception theory: "Russian Formalism, Prague Structuralism, the phenomenology of Roman Ingarden, Gadamer's hermeneutics and the 'sociology of literature.'"[19] The complexities of the theory's history also show that my use of reception theory is an

interpretation of Jauss's work, not a "Jauss (or Eagleton or Holub, for that matter) authorized" version.

Reception Theory and Opera

Jauss does not discuss opera, although his approach invites the operatic into a literary study. Literature, he writes, is "like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material of the words, and brings it to a contemporary existence."[20] Jauss's musical reference appropriately reminds us that literature, as well as music, relies on an audience for its eventfulness.

Though opera based on a novel is foreign to English studies in both verbal language and musical language, one of the bases for that foreign opera's life is in the historical novel of nineteenth-century Britain. Opera has a great deal of relevance <u>outside</u> England of the nineteenth century. Rather than being a hindrance to further study, this situation ought to be an inducement, for it suggests the widespread fame of historical novels and the uses to which they were put. The novels and poems produced in Britain during this period reassert the literary importance of opera: these novels had a revolutionary impact outside of their country of origin. The importance of the historical

novel is that it provides a framework for connecting English literature to Italian and Germanic culture.

Jauss suggests that literature is of its time and "does not offer the same view to each reader in each period."[21] Similarly, opera does not offer the same view or sound to each listener in each period. We look at operas derived from literature differently today than past audiences did. The view we get does not automatically include the literary. Commentators on Lucia di Lammermoor remind us, usually in the program notes, that the libretto is "after Walter Scott," and we may wonder whether something about the novel was incipiently operatic. This is not necessarily a question the poem's and the opera's first audiences asked. More likely, this question is how we, a century and a half removed from the intersecting moment between Scott and Donizetti, find it most convenient to understand a complex transaction.

This study of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer examines the neglected history of the reception of historical fiction, which remains neglected in part because the focus on music and revolution is interdisciplinary. The English writers were examining conflicts of the past (Scott subtitled Waverly "'Tis Sixty Years Since"), while readers and continental composers were dealing with current conflicts. A reception study maintains that meaning and understanding of a work are products of the context of that work's

appearance and acceptance. In this case, historical novels of the early nineteenth century gained a revolutionary meaning in the revolutionary context of their production. The operas based on historical novels reflect not only the novels' operatic elements and structures, but also the revolutionary themes which audiences and composers found in the works. The political aims of composers and readers conditioned their uses and interpretations of historical novels, whose own origins (as we shall see in Chapter II) were not entirely separate from political situations. By analyzing historical novels in terms of the political and operatic events of the time, we realize that works of Byron, Scott, and Bulwer-Lytton have eventful character.

Jauss acknowledges the complexities of literary eventfulness--there are thousands more connections between literature and opera than I can address. My interpretation of reception theory, informed by its complexities, addresses the conditions under which an audience either rejects or accepts a work, the connections between literature and its forerunners and descendants, and the position of the contemporary scholar bringing past works into the present. The following chapters will explain points of intersection between opera and literature that articulate relationships hitherto neglected or unacknowledged.

Notes to Chapter I

1. On Verdi's use of Shakespeare, see Gary Schmidgall, Shakespeare and Opera (Oxford UP, 1990) and David R.B. Kimbell, Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism (Cambridge UP, 1981).

2. Although music seems to be more foreign to scholars of English literature than the visual arts. Perhaps this is because a painting can be described in literary terms. See Karl Kroeber, British Romantic Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) for an interdisciplinary study of art and literature.

3. Mosco Carner, "Giacomo Puccini," in The New Grove Masters of Italian Opera (New York: Norton, 1983), 317.

4. Madame Butterfly starred Marion Gering, Sylvia Sidney and Cary Grant. A reception study of John Luther Long's account of Butterfly--ostensibly but unexplainedly based on a true story--stretches from his sources all the way to the film career of Cary Grant.

5. Hans Robert Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) and Question and Answer, ed. and trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

6. See Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution, eds. K.J. Fielding and David Sorenson (Oxford UP, 1989). First published in 1837, The French Revolution, according to Fielding, introduces Carlyle's "self-quotation,...perhaps to show that we are reading a fallible writer rather than a dispassionately accurate observer" (xiv). Such a purpose seems sympathetic to Scott's.

7. Jauss, Aesthetic, 34 (emphasis mine).

8. See Robert C. Holub, Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction (New York: Methuen, 1984), 58.

9. Jauss, Aesthetic, 32.

10. Jauss, Aesthetic, 28.

11. Jauss, Aesthetic, 22.

12. Jauss, Aesthetic, 27.

13. Siegfried Kracauer, History: the Last Things Before the Last (New York: Oxford UP, 1969).

14. In Literary Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), Terry Eagleton defends the conscious use of theory to study literature in his Introduction: "...[W]ithout some kind of theory, however unreflective and implicit, we would not know what a 'literary work' was in the first place, or how we were to read it" (viii).

The hermeneutic circle is an old problem. For other discussions, see Hazard Adams's "General Introduction" in Critical Theory Since Plato (New York: Harcourt, 1971); and

Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight (University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 29-32.

15. Hays, "Introduction," vii.

16. Eagleton, 54.

17. Eagleton, 77.

18. Eagleton, 89.

19. Holub, 14.

20. Jauss, Aesthetic, 21.

21. Jauss, Aesthetic, 21.

CHAPTER II

FROM TERROR TO POLITICS: ROMANCE, HISTORICAL ROMANCE AND HISTORY

Later chapters detail the specific conditions of production of Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi. This chapter groups the poem and novels as an embodiment of a change in readers' expectations. The historical fictions of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer-Lytton arrived on the heels of the Romantic and Gothic movements in literature.[1] Gothic fiction interpreted medieval life for mid-to-late eighteenth century readers and eventually came to be associated with the supernatural.[2] The claim that works of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer-Lytton move away from the Gothic is based on their views of literary history, and the changing tastes of the audiences for whom they wrote.

Gothic novels specialized in the presentation of the past as a time filled with dramatic supernatural episodes.[3] Readers of Gothic romances learned to expect something extraordinary--such as terror and amazement at the representation of the past, with its confrontations between good and evil, sighing portraits, bleeding statues, hidden passageways, and a catalogue of other strange things. An horizonal change in their expectations disposed readers to

accept more realistic portrayals of the past during the time of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer-Lytton than during the time of Radcliffe and Lewis.

Despite the realism of Mortality and Rienzi, which is usually considered antagonistic to romance, I classify both novels as historical romances. Despite the different approach to reality in The Corsair, I classify that too as an historical romance.[4] Doing so indicates their connection to the fantastic literature of the past as well as their points of departure from it. Classifying them as historical romances also emphasizes their relationship to each other besides having served as source material for operas.

The Conventions of Gothic Fiction

The boundaries separating what we consider to be the romantic and Gothic strains in fiction had already been blurred by the time Mortality and Corsair were published.[5] When Rienzi appeared, the readers' shift away from Gothic fiction of their history toward what we call Victorian novels was nearly complete.[6] Nevertheless, these works participate in the romantic and Gothic literary traditions through their treatment of the conventions of those earlier forms of fiction. Scott, Byron, and Bulwer-Lytton negotiated the following tendencies of romantic fiction to

reflect their concerns with the presentation of history: one was the framing device as used by Horace Walpole in The Castle of Otranto (1764). Another was the exploitation of the past through the use of the supernatural. A third was the combination of villainy and nobility in main characters.

The framing device is a hallmark of the romance. Walpole's use of the frame in Otranto, a classic example, offers us a standard against which to measure the negotiations of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer toward their literary history.[7] Georg Lukács calls Otranto the earliest Gothic novel and "ostensibly" the first historical novel of the eighteenth century.[8] A rediscovery and reevaluation of medieval ideas prompted Walpole to exploit the past in his most famous Gothic romance. He invented an author, Onuphrio Muralto, for The Castle of Otranto to show that the story, which indulged in, and created, Gothic conventions, was not simply a wild flight of fancy. This was a way to make romance seem acceptable to a potentially skeptical audience. "The following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the North of England. It was printed at Naples ... in the year 1529."[9] He set the origins of the novel in the untraceable past and, in order to persuade the potential skeptics to accept his tale, he exploited the sentiments of Gothic piety and the lessons of virtue to be learned in his found manuscript.

Scott, Byron, Bulwer, and the framing device

Though Walter Scott was a medievalist and antiquarian, the frame he developed for Old Mortality did not rely on ancient history, as did Walpole's. Rather Mortality was set during an era in which the immediate ancestors of his readers lived. The events took place in Western Scotland, beginning with a lowland revolt in 1679 and extending to the Revolutions of 1688. Scottish history was a principal framing device for the novel, integral to the book, and not merely the background. Scott, the father of the historical novel,[10] broke the tradition of Gothic novelists (and practitioners of metrical romances) who used the remoteness of history from the daily life of its readers to display the heightened emotional responses of its characters. The behavior and responses of his characters render a historical reality nearer his readers.

Although he deviated from Walpole's use of the frame, Scott did not completely abandon the precedent of the introduction to The Castle of Otranto. He imagined the events of Old Mortality through the use of Jedediah Cleishbotham, a fictional schoolmaster who collected, arranged, and sold his manuscripts to a publisher. The manuscript was composed by Peter Pattieson, an associate of Cleishbotham who had pieced together the tales of those he interviewed. Scott used multilevel narration to show that knowledge gets handed down from person to person. Scott

placed his characters in the midst of events which actually occurred, and Walpole imagined events from a past nearly untraceable for its distance from his readers. Their use of the device of found manuscripts suggests that both were keenly aware of the audiences' expectation of at least the pretense of reality.

The framing device of The Corsair, if it can be called such, is more subtle than that used by Scott or Walpole. Old Mortality is credible because it is based on actual history. Any credibility Otranto achieves owes to its time frame--it could be true, but because it happened so very long ago, we cannot be sure. Corsair is neither actual history nor fanciful history. But just as Scott adapted romance to relate Old Mortality, Byron adapted romance and metrical romance in particular to produce The Corsair. The subject of Byron's poem links it to metrical romances, of which Scott was the main practitioner before Byron.

In a sense, the frame of the metrical romance was the form itself. Scott had written The Lay of the Last Minstrel in 1805, in which an ancient minstrel, the last of his race, tells his lays using simple diction and ballad stanza. The minstrel's narration of Scottish border ballads gained authority from having been told and retold--in a sense The Lay is a found manuscript in the tradition of Otranto. The oral poet handed down history. As history was passed, each

person relating it stood further from the origins of the tale. Thus, gradually, history became romance.

Scott abandoned the metrical romance because he bowed to what he perceived as Byron's superiority in the form. The Corsair links Byron to the tradition of romance and gothic fiction. Byron formalized metrical romance using heroic couplets which were usually associated with neoclassicism rather than romance. Scott had avoided heroic couplets for the sake of freedom of form. By setting The Corsair in the unnamed recent past, Byron's narrator assumed the role of minstrel. Of course, despite having a frame descended from both Gothic romance and metrical romance, The Corsair courted the actual credibility of no one. My point is that Byron participated in the history of romance by sifting through the devices used before him and taking up those he could adapt to fit his purpose.

While readers of Mortality were asked to believe the tales of Old Mortality as filtered through Peter Pattieson and Jedediah Cleishbotham, readers of Rienzi were asked only to place their faith in Bulwer. Bulwer assumed custodianship of Rienzi and completely abandoned the opening gambit of Walpole and Scott as he presented his story of the last Roman tribune. Bulwer dispensed with the artificiality of the frame, invoked his readers' indulgence, and claimed that the fictional elements of the life he had portrayed

would make the history of the tribune more humane than that of any traditional historian.

Bulwer may have avoided the outward frame which Scott employed, but he framed Rienzi as a revision of received historical knowledge and indulged in the romance of the endnotes, which connects him to Scott. Scott wrote notes to both The Lay of the Last Minstrel and Old Mortality. The notes contributed to the narratives by telling a parallel story which suggested a basis for poetic license. Bulwer's annotation of Rienzi framed the story; he noted additional information about the tribune, historical discrepancies, and evaluated the historical sources from which he deviated. The parallel story of Rienzi in Bulwer's notes authenticates Bulwer's rendition of the tribune and suggests that his elaborations are not simply flights of fancy.

Scott, Byron, Bulwer, and the exploitation of the past

The three historical romance writers adapted a second component of the Gothic strain in fiction: the way in which authors indulged in the excesses of the episodic over the plausible to exploit the past. Gothic writers, and not just Walpole, incorporated the supernatural throughout their stories--huge helmets fell, portraits sighed, and curses were freely invoked. Virgins routinely fled purely evil characters only to get lost in catacombs. Forbidden acts

such as murder, rape, and incest were all gateways to the release of excess emotion, presumably held in check by the surfeit of reality which otherwise faced readers.

Scott has been faulted as indulging in excesses, but he was not as freewheeling with them as his literary ancestors had been. Curses do appear in Scott's works, and the minimal element of the supernatural is presented--usually in the superstitions of people of the lowlands, as in The Bride of Lammermoor, where Old Alice, though blind, possessed clairvoyant powers. Scott did not traffick in the wholesale business of supernatural excesses. Any excesses he portrayed were predicated on the behaviors and situations of characters rather than on the conventions of Gothic romance fiction. For instance, he gestured toward the supernatural in Old Mortality as Edith Bellenden pines for the long-exiled and thought-to-be-dead Henry Morton. Henry, having returned to his homeland, catches glimpses of Edith--she subsequently catches a glimpse of him and faints from having seen, she is sure, a ghost.

In Byron's The Corsair the episodic still takes precedence over the plausible. There is, however, a complete absence of the supernatural in this and other of his Eastern Tales. Instead of using the supernatural to make sense of his characters' situations, Byron created mysterious circumstances to substitute for the supernatural. The behavior of his characters is often unexplained,

although service to the ideal of honor created their confrontations with political circumstances. He is nearest the Gothic romance in this regard compared to Scott and Bulwer. He was also as far from it as they were because his poem used the element of mystery to look back at the earlier tales with an ironic knowingness.

Whereas Walpole's use of the supernatural was unconfined by conditions of reality, Scott's use was confined by the context of credible history, and Byron substituted the mysterious for the occult, Bulwer had no use for the supernatural in Rienzi. The supernatural elements of Gothic fiction led to the charges of excess that one finds in criticism. As with his disavowal of the romantic and Gothic frame, Bulwer had also disavowed the use of the unexplained in his novel. The whole reason for the existence of Rienzi is to explain. This does not, however, release him from the charge of indulging in excesses. The main carryover from Gothic fiction as typified in 1764 to the historical romance of 1835 was the authorial use of excesses to recreate the past. Early excesses were the products of situations and later excess were created by the wealth of narrative details.

Bulwer, even less read today than Scott, embedded a wealth of detail in narrative. The excesses in which he indulged were not the traditional Gothic sighing portraits; his were in the service of plausibility. Bulwer dwelled on

characters' clothing, visages, habitats and other details to clearly define the time of ancient Romans for the time of his contemporary English (and subsequently European) readers. Scott, Byron, and Bulwer each adapted a Gothic convention according to a sense of propriety about the aims of fiction and poems.

Historical romance and the Gothic protagonist

Perhaps the most striking similarity and difference between the works of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer and their Gothic and romantic forebears was their interpretations of the protagonist. Gothic fiction specialized in presenting villainy as the essential component of the noble characters. Noble villainy was a plot device by which to put virgins and other pure hearts in jeopardy--and by which to terrorize readers. Characters like Manfred may have behaved irredeemably, but shadings of guilt colored their behavior.

In Otranto, Manfred was both villain and hero and possessed power and energy. He embodied archetypal evil, the noble character gone wrong under the power of a curse. In a sense, being the victim of a curse, he could not be responsible for his cruel behavior. Manfred was also a great device whereby Walpole could treat the most depraved subjects without actually having to apologize for the effort. Characters such as Manfred were evil for its own

sake--and their arbitrariness made their evil all the more frightening. In the end, whether by death, disappearance or some other means, evil forces were abolished and the pure, innocent, and good characters prevailed.

Scott did not totally ignore the precedent in Gothic fiction of the embodiment of ruthless evil. In Old Mortality, the moderate hero, Henry Morton, contends with opposing royalist and antiroyalist factions during a civil war. The heads of the opposing factions were the literary descendants of Manfred, but the main difference from Manfred to Burley and Claverhouse was that, rather than give an incredible or fantastic reason for Burley's and Claverhouse's fanaticism as Walpole did for Manfred, Scott wrote the Covenanter and Royalist into a world which his readers could recognize. Readers could be convinced, presumably, of Burley's commitment to a cause rather than be passively terrorized by the likes of Manfred. Manfred rebelled because he was cursed--that was the only rationale for his behavior. Through Burley, Scott fictionalized rebellion for the sake of a theory--not to uplift or provide pure thoughts as Walpole supposedly did in Otranto--but to show that, under oppressive circumstances, political action is possible.

Byron also showed that action is possible in The Corsair. Through the character of Conrad, the main pirate, Byron mingled heroic and villainous qualities. But Byron's

pirate does not promote rebellion for a strictly defined cause. Of course Conrad and his pirates embark to the land of the Pasha to keep the Turks from invading their own pirates' island. That is only a surface motive, though, because the very existence of a pirates' island subverts the idea of normal society and implements another in its place. The rebellion of the pirates is rebellion for its own sake--not through a curse but through a cursed existence.

No curse attends to Conrad's behavior. His motivation is unrevealed, but the narrator hints that disappointment in love has ruined the Corsair--or that living in an unjust society contributed to his intractable nature. Conrad, an outlaw, possesses nobility conferred by his commitment to an ideal rather than by accident of birth. The degree of guilt that Walpole's Manfred embodied for the sake of terror was multiplied in Byron's Corsair for the sake of mystery. The uncertainty of the past of Byron's protagonist provides an element of the form's self-knowledge that was missing from earlier Gothic romances. Byron left out the explanation for Conrad's power and control which an author like Walpole might have filled in. The pirates did not know what to make of their chief, and presumably neither did readers. Those weaned on Gothic fiction found their familiar form subverted by Byron's adaptation of the form.

Bulwer's readers were not weaned on Walpole's brand of Gothic romanticism but rather on Scott's.[11] Nevertheless

the character of Rienzi finds precedent in the Gothic writers' habit of imbuing noble characters with evil natures. Manfred was fictional, Burley was fictional in the context of reality, but Rienzi was an actual figure. As Bulwer's readers knew, the nineteenth century had not been kind to the reputation of the last tribune. He was accused of being an ambitious egoist more in line with Manfred than with a man who tried to restore Rome to the glory of its ancient time. Before Bulwer undertook an explanation of Rienzi, the last Roman tribune might have made a terrific Gothic villain. Bulwer transformed Rienzi from an evil solipsist into a combination of good and, not evil, but misguided intentions through an interpretation of his psychological life.

The historical romance of Rienzi can be seen as the end of the Gothic strain in fiction and as the continuation of Scott's interpretation of Gothic romantic conventions. Rienzi, as the nineteenth century saw him, had inherited the villainous yet noble qualities of the Gothic heroes tempered by the literary and political events of the years between 1674 and 1835. Whereas Walpole explained Manfred through a curse, Scott explained Burley by political ideology, and Byron did not explain Conrad to maintain mystery, Bulwer created Rienzi as a whole person with conflicting traits. The flatness of the Gothic protagonist was gradually rounded through the interpretations of the figure in Scott, Byron,

and Bulwer--culminating in the interpretation of Rienzi as a good, albeit misunderstood, man.

The historical romance writers modified the portrayals of history which they inherited. Each separated himself from the forms typified by Walpole's seminal novel. Though they did set themselves apart from their literary past, their works exist in relation to it and to each other. Walter Scott provides a central link between Gothic romance and the historical romance. Walpole produced the prototype Gothic novel and began of a chain of writing which treated history for the purpose of setting up a story. Scott, an antiquarian, wrote an introduction to Walpole's novel to place the Gothic in a context. Scott praised Walpole, surprisingly, for his evaluation of history and use of details. He was very interested in Walpole's medieval roots and wanted to take Walpole's historicism much more seriously than did the author of Otranto himself.[12]

Gothic Fiction and Emergent Nationalism

Aside from specifically responding to the Gothic strain of fiction, Scott, Byron, and Bulwer responded to another specific stimulus which the Gothic fiction could only indirectly address. David Morse discusses Gothic fiction as having an ideological frame:

> The connection between politics and terror is not accidental but fundamental: it stems from the fact that radical political thinking of the period saw democracy and reason, tyranny and irrational, as linked and antithetical terms. Behind its trappings and mysteries the Gothic novel presents a powerful critique of arbitrary power.[13]

The romance novelists inherited the ideological frame--the critique of arbitrary power--and remodeled that after their own circumstances. As agents of reception, they received the ideological frame according to the circumstances of their contemporary situation.

The circumstances of their present--Europeans' heightened awareness of and involvement in revolution and politics--separated them and their readers from their literary history. They turned the implicit critique of politics embedded in the terror of Gothic fiction into the forthright examination of the operations of political factions. The Gothic form was already capable of examining the arbitrariness of power, but unless readers themselves were in the throes of that arbitrariness, they might view the existence of capricious villainy as a plot device to provoke interest and complicate matters rather than as a condemnation of the power of a governing party.

Old Mortality, _The Corsair_, and _Rienzi_ critique arbitrary power in Napoleonic or Post-Napoleonic times.

Given the political conditions surrounding Bonaparte's ascent (and fall), power was more than a plot device. Political power formed a perceptual grid through which readers saw events and read literature because the ways in which power was managed affected nearly everyone. An awareness of political activity infiltrated experiences that may not have been previously viewed as structured around issues of power. In the historical romance the authors wrote their way through several layers of reception: Scott, Byron, and Bulwer reacted against the literary qualities and methods of Gothic fiction due to generational differences, and the conditions of production surrounding the nineteenth-century adaptation of eighteenth century forms. Scott, Byron, and Bulwer thought and wrote during times of political strife which influenced their reactions against earlier forms of fiction.

The terms "political" and "revolutionary" appear in later chapters in the service of describing "nationalism." As the foundations of a conceptual structure--that the novels and poem embody in both content and creation an awareness of the struggles of people and that operas based on them refer to that struggle--these three terms are closely connected to each other. I use "political" in reference to authors' knowledge, their characters' actions, and their readers' reactions to the works.

Walter Scott immersed himself in the oppositional struggles of his ancestors; his works pulsate with his knowledge of conflict. In Old Mortality the factional opposition of the Covenanters and the Royalists is political. Byron also immersed himself in oppositional struggles--not of his ancestors but those of his contemporaries. In The Corsair the society of pirates as opposed to organized society in general and the warring society of the Turks in particular is political. Bulwer also participated in the struggles of his countrymen. In Rienzi the opposition of barons and nobles to the ordinary plebeian Romans is political. Rienzi is also political because it attempts to revise its readers' historical awareness. The novel opposes Bulwer's view of history to that of his contemporaries. These works embodied an awareness of their readers' struggles or their familiarity with their readers' struggles.

If "political" refers to the knowledge of opposing factions or systems of belief, then "revolutionary" as a description refers to the actions or ideas of people aware that they are in a political situation. Occasionally "revolutionary" will refer to a person. In Old Mortality, "revolutionary" refers to the actions of Burley, Claverhouse, and Morton in the service of their beliefs about the political landscape of Scotland. The Corsair is revolutionary because the pirates act to secure their

stronghold and because Byron writes his own activism into his works. For Bulwer, the revolutionary quality of Rienzi is that Rienzi acted to reform Rome in the face of opposition. The Romans, through Rienzi, were able to overthrow the governing nobles.

The political knowledge and revolutionary activism of the fictional characters were put into the service of nationalism. Although nationalism can mean different things even to people under the same ideological banner, nationalism refers to the context in which political activism takes place. Nationalism does not figure into Old Mortality until one realizes that each faction operates on its belief of what is best for the true Scotland. For Royalists, nationalism is predicated on belief in the monarchy as it stands is best for the country. For Covenanters, nationalism is based on the idea that a restoration of the rightful wearer of the crown would restore Scotland to its glory. During the civil wars, the concepts of nationalism were antithetical. Nationalism has a different face in The Corsair. The social beliefs of the pirates are forms of nationalism; they are protective and defensive of their society and pursue a more private and esoteric nationalism than other revolutionaries. For Bulwer nationalism refers to a reverence for history and restoration of historical knowledge and ideals. Bulwer promotes reverence for history as timely knowledge through

Rienzi's goal of returning Rome to the glory of its ancient days.

The novels and poem I will examine in the following chapters textually embody ideas about the revolutionary times during which they were written. The operas by Bellini, Verdi, and Wagner inherited these literary embodiments of revolutionary times; they embody their own differences from operatic history as well as point back toward the differences of historical romance from the conventions of Gothic fiction.

Notes to Chapter II

1. For full length discussions of Gothic fiction, see Ian Duncan, Modern Romance and the Transformation of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, and Dickens (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992). See also Frederick S. Frank, The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel (New York: Garland, 1987).

2. See The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales, ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford UP, 1992). Baldick discusses the heritage of the term Gothic in its separate architectural and literary meanings. The definition of Gothic literature in Baldick's introduction focuses on the supernatural and several other characteristics. Baldick is expansive enough to identify works by anonymous authors of the eighteenth century all the way to William Faulkner, Jorge Luis Borges, and Joyce Carol Oates. The definition is precise enough to trace common traits to connect each of these works.

Baldick defines Gothic as a vantage point for history, that is, to contemporary readers, Gothic now refers to the early nineteenth century, the timespan of this reception study.

3. I do not mean to suggest that Scott, Byron, or Bulwer only responded to Gothic fiction, or that Bulwer and

Scott created realism. Under different reception circumstances than mine, Old Mortality could be seen as a descendant of Fielding's Tom Jones or some other work of which Scott was aware.

4. For a discussion of classification of literature according to similarities and differences, see Adena Rosmarin, The Power of Genre (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

5. Baldick cautions that Gothic is a strong enough strain of fiction that its conventions were always mutable.

6. One could make a great case that Wilkie Collins inherited the Gothic tradition--tempered by Victorian conventions--in literature after Scott.

7. The plot of The Castle of Otranto is relatively simple. Manfred, the tyrannical Italian Prince of Otranto, needs to produce an heir to the estate his grandfather usurped. He decides his son should marry Isabella to produce the necessary heir, but his son is crushed when a huge helmet falls upon him. Manfred then decides to take Isabella for himself. Theodor, a peasant and the true heir of Otranto, helps Isabella resist the tyrant. Manfred pursues her and mistakenly stabs his own daughter. Theodor is returned to his rightful title by the intervention of the gigantic ghost of his ancestor, Prince Alfonso the Good, whose helmet had crushed Manfred's son.

8. Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (1963; Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 19.

9. Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, ed. W.S. Lewis (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) Walpole's Preface to the First Edition, 3.

10. Lukacs, 31.

11. Baldick discusses Gothic as a mutable term. Bulwer wrote 60 years after Walpole, and by then Scott had displaced the Gothic strain with his historically oriented writing. Baldick, 7.

12. Walter Scott wrote and introduction to Otranto in 1821. He seems to have taken Walpole's historianship more seriously than Walpole himself:

> Mr. Walpole's purpose was both more difficult of attainment, and more important when attained. It was his object to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners during the feudal times, as might actually have existed, and to paint it chequered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstitious of the period received as a matter of credulity.

Walter Scott, "Introduction" to Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (New York: Collier Books, 1963).

13. David Morse, Romanticism: A Structural Analysis (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble Books, 1982), 14.

CHAPTER III

WALTER SCOTT'S OLD MORTALITY: LITERATURE OF REVOLUTION AND THE POLITICS OF ITALIAN OPERA

Walter Scott, praising Jane Austen's work and sense of proportion upon rereading Emma, wrote in his journal that he must leave the "Big Bow-wow strain" for himself.[1] Scott employed the scenality of his work, attention to geographic detail, expert use of dialect, and large-scale depictions of human activity to the service of what he called the big bow-wow. His "bow-wow" was certainly big enough to be heard and felt around the world: he was one of the most admired and imitated writers of the early nineteenth century, and his works now rank among the most frequently translated both into other languages and into other media.

Once translated into Italian and French, many of Scott's poems and novels provided the basis for over seventy nineteenth-century operas, notably by Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. The most famous, Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor, was based on The Bride of Lammermoor; others include Rossini's pasticcio Ivanhoe, Auber's La Muette di Portici, based on Peveril of the Peak (1822) and Bellini's I Puritani, from Old Mortality.[2] The degree to which operas adhere to the novels varies greatly. Discussions of Lucia

frequently cite the literary forerunner of opera's most famous mad scene as a single line of dialogue in dialect.[3] Discussions of I Puritani do not contain a single reference directly back to Scott, yet Scott remains credited as the source for the opera.

The Problem with Connecting Scott's Novel to Bellini's Opera

This chapter will establish a connection between Scott's Old Mortality and Bellini's I Puritani. The relationship between Old Mortality[4] (1816) and Bellini's I Puritani (1835), more assumed than proved, is clouded by plot and locale changes and by the vagaries of French and Italian translations. The critical consensus has been that I Puritani is only distantly related to Old Mortality. Leslie Orrey, Bellini's biographer, maintains that any connection between Old Mortality and I Puritani is "exceedingly tenuous."[5] Herbert Weinstock, writing about Bellini after the example of Orrey, also says the relationship is "tenuous," and that "Scott and Scotland simply were drifting through the intellectual atmosphere [of Italy]."[6] Mary Ambrose writes briefly of a "distant relationship" although she credits Scott with energizing the politics of the opera.[7] Strangely, the reputation of I Puritani as derived from Scott persists despite the lack of

evidence presented. Even Mitchell's The Walter Scott Operas offers nothing by way of genuine connection.[8]

Others see no link or only a vague one between Old Mortality and I Puritani because the opera does not follow the novel in the usual manner of plot and characterization. I see a connection between (a) the perspective in Old Mortality about revolution, (b) particular features of emergent nationalism in Italy, (c) Italian understanding of Old Mortality, and the genesis and production of I Puritani. By following the lines of reception leading from Old Mortality to I Puritani, we can refocus attention on the novel: the political point of view was translatable both to Italy and to opera. I Puritani manifests Italian nationalism on the operatic stage. Scott was important in Italy, and Old Mortality is more closely connected to Bellini's I Puritani than critics generally concede.

Bellini wrote to no one (or no letter survives) of an attachment to Scott's work although he wrote that he selected the title "because its famous because of the Puritans of [V]alter Scott [sic]."[9] The nagging question remains. If the connection between Scott's and Bellini's work cannot be explained through the normal discursive channels, why do scholars insist on juxtaposing Scott and Bellini only to dismiss their relationship? Where did our knowledge of Bellini's knowledge of Scott originate--was it surmised backward (i.e., Bellini's opera is based on a play

based on a translation of <u>Old Mortality</u>, therefore Bellini's opera is based on Scott)? Suddenly, it seems, in 1969, Leslie Orrey rediscovered the Scott heritage of the opera and we have been referring to it ever since without bothering to explain. Now we are obligated to repeat the Sisyphean task of pushing the novel up on to the opera stage only to watch it inevitably fall off. However, a study of Bellini's opera as a reading of Scott's novel renders more clear the political thrust of <u>Old Mortality</u>.

Of course one does not learn the political thrust of <u>Old Mortality</u> without first knowing the plot. <u>Old Mortality</u> describes the rivalries, disputes, battles, and personal relationships of Scottish Puritans and Royalists in the seventeenth century. The Archbishop of St. Andrews, the Scottish Primate, was murdered by Covenanting Whigs who opposed the Church/Government regulation of the pursuit of religious and political freedom. At the decisive Battle of Drumclog in 1679, the Covenanters, using surprise and their superior knowledge of the local terrain, defeated the Royal troops. This defeat encouraged the insurgents. However, the instant fever-pitched unity of the Covenanters gradually disintegrated under its own lack of solid structure and organization. Eventually, the Royalists defeated the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge and Killiecrankie. In ten years' time, the Puritans had been quelled, yet many of the

reforms they supported were implemented after the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Old Mortality and the Complexities of Political Activism

Graham McMaster suggests that "the peacefulness of English history [compared to uprisings on the continent] is an illusion; brought into close focus, it resolves into a neverending series of struggles .... [T]he period 1815 - 1832 must rank as a time characterized by an outstanding degree of conflict and divisiveness."[10] E.P. Thompson clarifies the divisiveness:

> [W]orking people were forced into political and social apartheid during the wars (which incidentally, they also had to fight). [T]his was not altogether new. What was new...was growing self-confidence and wider aspirations...with a rise in population, in which the sheer sense of numbers ... became more impressive from year to year (and as numbers grew, so deference to master, magistrate, or parson was likely to lessen): and with more intensive or more transparent forms of economic exploitation. More intensive in agriculture and in the old domestic industries; more transparent in the new factories and perhaps mining. In agriculture the years between 1760 and

> 1820 are the years of wholesale enclosure, in which, in village after village, common rights are lost, and the landless and pauperised labourer is left to support the tenant-farmer, the landowner, and the tithes of the Church.[11]

Laborers, as well as tenant farmers and landowners comprise the population depicted in Old Mortality. The divisiveness of which E.P. Thompson writes informs the events of Scott's novel.

Given Thompson's appraisal of English struggles, the Italian responses to Old Mortality were not unique: political readings of the novel did not originate in Italy. The novel has origins in political conflict not just in subject matter but also in its publication date. The conflicts in England and Scotland of 1816 correlate with the Scotland of 1689 in Old Mortality. Scott was writing in what T.C. Smout calls "The Age of Transformation," an age in which different social groups felt the impact of industrialism, which aggravated their differences.[12] Smout suggests that the reason for the Scottish public's addiction to historical fiction was that "it satisfied an emotional need in a time of social change."[13] The agricultural and industrial changes--combined with longstanding political divisions--imbued Old Mortality with currency for Scottish readers. Whereas contemporary English and Scottish citizens were dealing with differences between farmer and laborer,

Henry Morton and John Balfour of Burley, the extremist Puritan, were dealing with differences between Royalists and Covenanters. The unifying issue between the novel and contemporary England was the right of self-direction and self-sufficiency. Therefore, the Italian understanding of the novel in terms of domination and revolution was not strictly an alien ideological imposition on a politically naive novel.

Henry Morton, the central figure of Old Mortality, embodies a political heritage and personal inclinations which embroil him in the Lowland revolt against the Stuarts in the Scotland of 1679. Henry's father, Silas Morton, fought for the Covenanters (anti-Royalists in the Lowlands) then later fought for the restored monarchy. The monarchy exerted rigorous control over the churches to assert the primacy of the Church of England. Puritan dissenters were allowed by the monarchy to preach as long as they complied with certain regulations. Such permission, called indulgence, caused a great schism among Puritans. Morton's heritage, as carried on by his uncle at the family estate, Milnwood, establishes him as a follower of the indulged preachers. Morton's background emphasizes the tension between the Royalists and the two disparate branches of protestantism.

The tension inadvertently surfaced and forced Morton to make a political choice. Morton steered a course of

moderation between the extremes of the Covenanters and the Royalists by his adherence to the religion of his uncle. After attending a wappenschaw, a government-sponsored celebration mingling military games and rural sports, Morton becomes weary "of seeing nothing but violence and fury around me, - now assuming the mask of lawful authority, now taking that of religious zeal" (110). On his way back to the family estate, he walks with a stranger who made a spectacular show at the festival. He does not immediately realize that his companion is a rebel, one of the men responsible for the murder of the Archbishop. Morton obliges the stranger's request for a night's lodging because the stranger, John Balfour of Burley, had once saved his father's life. He discovers Burley's political activities when the rebel speaks in his sleep. Through this naive, generous act, Morton unwittingly aligns himself with the most famous, most zealous Covenanter of all.

Burley's zealotry is matched by that of the Royalist John Graham of Claverhouse. Morton recoils in horror at the intensity of these two men and the principles for which they stand. Despite their differences in loyalty, they both trade in deception, treachery, and murder in the name of personal and party honor. Because of his politically naive but humanely rational aid to Burley, Morton is subject to the censure of both Royalist and Protestant. To complicate matters, he loves a woman of Royalist sympathy, Edith

Bellenden. From these circumstances, Scott establishes the motivations for Morton's behavior. He is influenced by his heritage, a sense of duty, and his affections. Though extremism repels Morton, his moderate stance eventually strengthens rather than weakens his position among the fanatics of both sides. Moderation allows him the presence of mind to speak clearly to both Burley's admonishments and Claverhouse's threats.

Claverhouse and Burley each represents an authoritative voice of his faction, and each wields more power than Morton. Morton, however, has an equal on the Royalist side, Lord Evandale, who also professes a romantic attachment to Edith. Morton mistakenly believes Edith to be in love with Evandale, which furthers his resolve to dedicate himself to the Covenanters' cause. Evandale and Morton, realizing their shared sensibilities as well as their love for Edith, each intercede on the other's behalf in life-threatening circumstances. When Morton is taken prisoner for helping Burley, Evandale, who tries to negotiate between Covenanters and Royalists, argues on behalf of Morton as a personal favor. Likewise, Morton saves Evandale when he is in danger. Morton draws up a plan for moderate concessions which Evandale delivers to the commander of royal forces. It is rejected and then Morton faces condemnation at the hands of the Covenanters for having urged peaceful negotiations.

After parleying back and forth from skirmish to skirmish, all the while using his keen powers of observation to analyze the peculiarities of military conflict, Morton falls into the hands of the victorious Royalists one last time. He is spared on the condition that he leave the country until the King shall decide otherwise. Morton returns in 1688 as William and Mary ascend the throne. Their rule proves advantageous to both Royalist and Covenanter. Upon his return, Morton re-unites with Edith while the dying Lord Evandale wishes them happiness.

Thwarted intentions, thwarted love, personal enmities and loyalties are all part of activism and zealous bigotry depicted in Old Mortality. Scott's political arguments in Old Mortality surface in the combination of political activism and personal intrigues, some of which translate from the novel to the opera. One major political argument in the novel is that activism is not the sole domain of major historical figures: minor figures also create history. Another is that conflict on paper (as received through historians) is not as complex as its real life occurrence.[14] A third is that insurrection, whether its results are favorable or not, is often a justifiable way of being heard, and just as often is as misguided and dogmatic as the power system it intends to overthrow.

Old Mortality depicts revolution in the domain of the historically neglected. Alexander Welsh believes that it

"has become a working model for revolution," though he does not specify how or for whom.[15] In Old Mortality large-scale political conflicts allow passion and feeling to affect the judgment and action of his characters. Scott fictionalizes how ideas are disseminated. In a society rife with political unrest, citizens are often compelled by persuasive leaders and extenuating circumstances to take a firm stand on issues which might otherwise only occupy them as frustrations. Henry Morton, a moderate Puritan, serves as Scott's vehicle for delineating the impact of political activism on individuals.

Morton, who avoids extremes, has traditionally been discussed as one of Scott's moderate heroes.[16] Morton exemplifies the complex effects of revolutionary energy on individuals. Old Mortality is an account of the workings of social forces.[17] Scott summarizes Henry Morton's burgeoning political awareness in Chapter 27 as the result of unpredictable factors of chance:

> A mild, romantic, gentle-tempered youth, bred up in dependence, and stooping patiently to the control of a sordid and tyrannical relation, had suddenly, by the rod of oppression and the spur of injured feeling, been compelled to stand forth a leader of armed men, was earnestly engaged in affairs of a public nature, had friends to animate and enemies to contend with, and felt his

individual fate bound up in that of a national insurrection and revolution. (314)

Morton is subject to unpredictable force (the disruption as Burley enters his life, forever changing its direction), setbacks (his captivity, exile, and episodes where his rational appeals go unheeded), and misunderstandings (as when he overhears part of Edith's conversation with her servant and arrives at a mistaken conclusion about Lord Evandale). The rod of oppression and the spur of injured feeling are quite distinct motivators.[18]

Morton aligns himself with the Puritans' cause, and openly critiques their fanatical tactics. Puritan extremism appalls him as much as does Royalist extremism. The perspective in Old Mortality on revolutionary tactics and the people who practice them appears when Scott describes Morton's social life prior to the Puritan uprising: He "...had an opportunity of meeting with many guests whose conversation taught him that goodness and worth were not limited to those of any single form of religious observance" (186). Old Mortality presented Scottish insurgence and activity as a sketch for Italian political action and sentiment in both practice and in variety of motivation. Despite their ultimate defeat, the Puritans' insurrection gave them a voice that spoke to those who would not normally listen, and which ultimately resulted in governmental reforms. This was also true for the Italians, whose 1848

struggles provided no lasting relief from foreign domination, but which nevertheless brought reform and eventual change.

Political Activism and Political Point of View

Old Mortality chronicles the Scottish Civil Wars through a political argument. Three properties of Old Mortality support Scott's perspective on revolution. The first is that Scott does not take a dynastic, abstract view of revolution. Instead he chronicles the daily lives of the people whom historians had usually neglected. Major historical dynastic figures appear in Old Mortality, but rather than measure historical events by the actions of the major personages of the era, Scott focuses on the dynamic features of popular activism.[19]

The second feature of Scott's point of view is that the dynamic nature of revolution supports both basic and abstract forms of activism. Political activism in its crudest sense may be the result of what Neil Blane, the town piper, says of any group of men: "... when the malt begins to get aboon the meal, they'll begin to speak about government in kirk and state" (86). Scott depicts political activism at its most abstract form when, as Morton confronts John Balfour of Burley (the extremist Covenanter), he says that Burley pretends to "derive [his] rule of action from

... an inward light, rejecting the restraints of legal magistracy, of national law, and even common humanity ..." (106). Within the broad movement for independence Scott finds that wide-ranging support for the cause is generic. Individual support, such as Morton's, requires specific causes for emerging.

Scott tempers the virtues of both Puritans and Cavaliers to show that activism is multi-layered. The combination of virtues and weaknesses establishes the complexities of motivation and action.

> Such are the characters formed in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities, perverted by party spirit, and inflamed by habitual opposition are too often combined with vices and excesses which deprive them at once of their merit and lustre. (176)

In describing Claverhouse, Scott presents a portrait of high minded ideals corrupted by the ruthless imposition of a strong will and the effects of party spirit.

The third component of the point of view in Old Mortality about revolution is that men are activated both abstractly and specifically by the strength and charisma of those who assume leadership. These leaders are local citizens such as Burley, not major historical figures. Such people become spokesmen for the hopes of oppressed citizens. Though ultimately a cause of dissent as much as of unity,

Burley is the charismatic leader of the revolutionaries. Others saw in Burley's strength and presence, "[d]aring in design, precipitate and violent in execution, and going to the very extremity of the most rigid recusancy ... " (261), an abstract voice for their own hopes and inarticulate wishes and a means of political maneuvering. Burley, whose reputation preceded him, operated on a grand scale. He became a historically meaningful figure based on his actions, not by birth or accident.

Not all heroes operate on the grand scale, nor do they all assume Burley's proportion. Cuddie Headrigg, the son of a servant, finds in Morton a specific voice for his own hopes. He wants to serve the newly political Morton. Henry's address to Cuddie about freedom speaks of the social responsibilities of man and the hopes of the politically oppressed. Cuddie represents a particular kind of person (uneducated servant) for whom listening and obeying are primary modes of existence. Morton's words to Cuddie show how ideas are disseminated. Ideas are not atmospheric but are circulated through agents and receivers:

> 'The charter that I speak of,' said Morton, 'is common to the meanest Scotchman. It is the freedom from stripes and bondage which was claimed, as you may read in Scripture, by the Apostle Paul himself, and which every man who is

free-born is called upon to defend, for his own sake and that of his countrymen.' (204)

Upon hearing Morton's address, Cuddie's resolve to become his valet becomes firmer. For Morton, as for most people, reconciliation between personal and social claims is not easy, but in moderate fashion, his intent in the Puritan cause is to negotiate a rational means for Puritans and Cavaliers to co-exist.

We see in Morton that public discourse plays as much a part in stirring revolution as does private emotion. Daniel Whitmore writes about Scott's dialogue: "Characters talk incessantly, heedless of their auditors or of the implications of their speech. Words and gestures are charged with a political significance when a nation is convulsed by revolution."[20] Whitmore speaks of Scott's characters, but the observation is true for the contemporary audiences of Scott abroad.

Walter Scott and Italian Cultural Life

The political connection between Old Mortality and I Puritani becomes clearer when we examine Scott in Italy as well as the Italy in which Scott was accepted. One learns of his foreign reputation largely in reference to his popularity and influence on the political lives of Italians, or in biographies of prominent Italian political figures.

His early audiences revered his abilities as a story teller and chronicler of revolution and the social responsibilities of man. Adolfo Borgognoni, a literary and cultural critic and Scott admirer, wrote in 1884 that Italian readers during the years leading to the revolutions of 1848 recognized in Scott's work "the essence of social man."[21]

The particular context of Scott's acceptance in Italy tells us a great deal about what his works meant to Italian readers. This period, during which Scott was popular in Italy, is called the "Risorgimento," which David R. B. Kimbell defines as a movement for "renewal and revivification, a rising up again of the Italian people to nationhood."[22] The will toward an Italian national identity produced a perceptual grid through which audiences and readers saw literature and music. Even though citizens invariably had differing ideas of what constituted national identity because patriotism often depended on regional pride, the collective Italian frustrations lent a common support for the cause. Borgognoni's favorable appraisal of Scott, therefore, was social as well as aesthetic.

The earliest appraisals of Scott's influence in Italy come from political and literary figures, including Alessandro Manzoni, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Tommasso Grossi, who were Scott's contemporaries. Each readily acknowledged Scott's role in shaping his political thinking and literary efforts. Manzoni credited Scott as the model for <u>I promessi</u>

sposi (1827) which, according to Kimbell, was the greatest single literary contribution to the development of an Italian national language.[23] Manzoni labelled Scott as the Homer of historical fiction.[24] Archibald Colquhoun, Manzoni's biographer, emphasizes the pervasiveness of Scott's presence in Italy:

> The Waverley novels had aroused a wave of enthusiasm throughout Italy after the Napoleonic wars. They were widely read by all classes: the bookstalls were full of cheap translations of them, nearly all made by Manzoni's friends, including one by Tomasso Grossi.... Manzoni ... had been particularly impressed by Scott's picture in Ivanhoe of social upheaval during the Norman invasion, and ... found the book contained more real history than most historical works, in contrast to the contemporary historian's insistence on dynastic events.[25]

Scott's English fiction changed the scope of Italian fiction through its impact on Manzoni, Grossi, and Mazzini. Manzoni's verses and speeches, charged with political significance, became songs for people moving through the streets of Milan in 1848.[26]

Although Manzoni's is the most celebrated estimation of Scott's influence in Italian literature and politics, others used Scott as inspiration for their work and consequently

broadened the Italian readership's familiarity with Scott. Grossi credited Scott as an inspiration and his work as a model for his poem I Lombardi alla prima crociata (a subject later to be treated by Verdi). Grossi's novel Marco Visconti, written between 1831 and 1834, is, according to R.D.S. Jack, heavily indebted to Scott for its treatment of subject and descriptions of customs of the middle age.[27]

Giuseppe Mazzini's appreciation for Scott was neither as immediate as Manzoni's nor as faithful as Grossi's. An essayist, reviewer, and critic, Mazzini wrote about literature, philosophy, theater, and politics. His references to Scott appeared in essays about Byron and Carlyle. Mazzini became upset when Italians elevated Scott's poetry at the expense of Byron's. But when he speaks of the overwhelming advances of English literature over Italian, he is also speaking of Scott's novels:

> England ... is perhaps, of all countries, the one in which the greatest homage is paid to the actual and positive. Her institutions open a wide field in the exercise of intelligence, and all the elements of which her national prosperity is composed are free ground for the action of the intellect....Commerce, industry, and agriculture, the three bases upon which English greatness reposes, incline the mind to the study of the real....For all these reasons, the literature of

> England is--speaking generally--entirely positive in its character; historic and treating of facts...[28]

The historical novel's intermingling of plotting, feeling, and description with historical facts enabled Italian readers to see Scott's works nationalistically. Mazzini, famous for "his ill-fated attempt to overthrow existing governments by organizing popular insurrections," proclaimed "the inexorable necessity of the emergence of an Italian nation" in his theater and opera reviews.[29] The influence was no accident. Scott had always evinced a deep appreciation for things Italian.[30]

Walter Scott's novels enabled in part the politicization of Italian opera and the stirring up of nationalistic feeling, especially after 1827. Scott's widespread fame meant that translations did not always come directly from English editions of the novels. Foreign copies circulated widely, and French versions migrated to Italy.[31] Old Mortality, for example, arrived in Italy directly and indirectly. On its way to Italian opera stages, the novel was translated into French by Defauconprêt as Les Puritans d'Ecosse in Paris in 1817, which François Ancelôt and Xavier-Boniface Saintine used as the source for their play "Têtes Rondes et Cavaliers" in 1833.[32] According to Mitchell, Bellini and Count Carlo Pepoli, the Italian librettist in exile in France, knew the play was

based on this French translation of Old Mortality, and based I Puritani on it.[33]

This is the point at which critics acknowledge the great distance between the opera and its ultimate source. The connection between French and Italian politics lies in the struggles for freedom and nationality. Philip Gossett writes that "we should not undervalue the impact of French Revolutionary ideals on Italian patriots, even those with bitter memories of Napoleon's invasion. 'La Marseillaise' existed both as a specific reference to Revolutionary France and as a reminder of its ideals."[34] Pepoli lived in France, in exile because of his revolutionary activities in 1831. In this respect, France was both a place of refuge for persecuted Italian patriots and an idealistic reinforcement of Italian nationalistic and political hopes.

The number of translations attests to its appeal to Risorgimento Italians. Anna Benedetti has catalogued thirteen Italian translations of Old Mortality (as I Puritani di Scozia) which began with Gaetano Barbieri's 1822 translation in Milan. The novel's fame was widespread from Naples, Pisa, and Firenze, to Parma among other places; the novel made regular appearances in bookstalls until 1844.[35] Though Benedetti's list appears exhaustive, it cannot be conclusive because the lack of copyright laws resulted in the prevalence of inexpensive translations.

Robert Giddings suggests that nationalism contributed to "the century's fascination with Walter Scott."[36] Old Mortality, published in 1816, was translated into Italian in 1822, with a general peak of interest between 1827 and 1835, the year in which I Puritani appeared. Mary Ambrose writes that

> Scott was present ..., in the early years of Italian Romanticism, on the opera stage in Sicily where from about 1820 on, originating from the mainland, especially Naples, a new musical language and a new kind of libretto on themes like La Donna del Lago (Rossini 1819), or Elisabetta al Castello di Kenilworth (Donizetti 1829), or Elvira e Arturo, the title under which Bellini's Puritani, distantly related to Old Mortality, was given at Palermo in the 1835-36 season, came to supplant the classical or oriental-exotic libretti that had been acceptable to audiences in the pre-Scott generation.[37]

Scott's very Scottish subject matter had become a desirable means for Italian composers to speak in their own culturally specific language.

Before there ever was a Manzoni on whom Italians could focus their nationalistic hopes there were Italian translations of English romantic writers, which Kimbell calls "the most monumental achievements" of the era.[38]

After the example of popular writers like Ann Radcliffe, the Italians created out of their reading histories a form of novel, a literature which Priscilla Robertson says "was consciously adapted to their interests."[39] The Italian form of the novel rejected the gothic and the supernatural, traits that Manzoni and most other readers thought flew in the face of practicality and good sense.[40] Mazzini, rejecting what he saw as artifice, criticized indigenous Italian writing as ineffectual and superfluous.[41] As nationalism flourished and Scott's reputation grew, Italians were more interested in practical representations of history than in the fantastic. With one notable exception.

In Italy the grandest most accessible gesture charged with political meaning was opera. From the appeals of Mazzini for an even greater politicization of opera in the early nineteenth century to Kimbell's modern summation of Verdi's, Rossini's, and others' achievements in composing politically charged operas, we know that opera was not then what it is now.

Political Meanings in Bel Canto Opera

Our reluctance to ascribe political motivations to bel canto operas is due to the manner in which we have received them. Even though contemporaneous reviews and Bellini's letters may support the idea that Bellini is apolitical,

such letters and reviews were being written in a time when a political knowingness was already encoded into theater experiences. Rather than accuse Bellini of being politically naive, we ought to accuse ourselves. Our history of receiving Bellini's music does not really start until the advent of recording, and by this time our own priorities as listeners had taken precedence over our historical knowledge. The limitations of early recording, coupled with the geographic and cultural distance of the performers from Bellini's time, limited the ways in which singers could perform the material and that audiences could understand it. No wonder that we have lost a valuable way of seeing I Puritani. Opera no longer promotes nationalism the same way it did in 1835.

The promotion of nationalism (overtly or covertly) was one of the most important functions of nineteenth-century Italian opera, according to experts such as Gossett, Kimbell and Julian Budden. Edward J. Dent writes:

> The Italian public was ready to interpret every opera in a political sense .... We hardly realize, when we listen to Bellini now, that in his own day [his operas] were heralds of the Risorgimento. Norma's Druids stood for the Italians, and the hated Romans for the hated Austrians; the allegory was clear enough for the humblest workman in the gallery to understand. That is the reason

> why ... operas are so full of military marches and patriotic choruses; they were tunes that could be taken up by the common people as symbols of liberation.[42]

Bellini's bel canto operas are now resistant to serious political consideration, perhaps because Verdi, whose operas are excellent examples of nationalism at work on the opera stage, grew out of the bel canto tradition. Though bel canto opera is a style now recognized for beauty rather than political energies, many bel canto works contextualized political motivations in their plots, which could be read nationalistically.[43]

Derek Beales speaks of the same significance of opera and theater in public life as Dent, and finds that opera stagings were politically provocative:

> In this period the impression is enhanced by the significance of the opera and theater in public life. It was no doubt true in Italy, as in Spain, that the theater was the most hopeful medium for liberal propaganda where illiteracy was general. Censorship gave few opportunities for the production of subversive plays in Italy, but there were many demonstrations and riots provoked by the singing of patriotic arias.[44]

What constitutes a patriotic aria? Text, singer, or orchestration? In risorgimento Italy, a patriotic aria

could have been any musical piece that could be understood as patriotic: anything that expressed a character's longing or a challenge to authority. Even the spectacle of an Italian singer performing could itself be patriotic given the context.

While Italians were prepared to interpret operas politically, the Austrian government was equally prepared to regulate stage fare to prohibit such interpretation. Robert Justin Goldstein says

> ... [W]hile printed matter was read by individuals either by themselves or at most in small groups, the theater gathered together large groups of people, thus posing a perceived immediate potential threat to public order if seditious material were allowed on the stage .... [T]he impact of the spoken word was considered to be far more inflammatory than the impact of the same material in print .... [G]iven the high rate of illiteracy in nineteenth century Europe, the theater (and in Italy the opera especially) was considered more accessible to a lower class audience than was the printed word, and precisely these elements of the population were viewed as both the most threatening in general and most susceptible to seditious dramatics. [45]

The threat of governmental censorship provoked self-censorship. Schmidgall notes that Donizetti declined to set Bulwer-Lytton's Rienzi to the stage because of its politics, and Goldstein writes that Bellini dropped plans to base an opera on Hugo's Hernani because "'the subject would have to undergo some modification at the hands of the police.'"[46]

Dent's, Beales's, and Goldstein's estimations of Italian consumption of opera are telling. True devotion and fanaticism for a cause, which depend on a state of continuous mental excitement, thrive mainly in times of crisis or intensity as narrated in Old Mortality. Opera provides that needed intensity. According to popular histories of opera, the art form was widely attended.[47] Even if there were people who resisted the political pull which even the least politically motivated operas were capable of producing, there is no doubt that large segments of the audience read their operagoing experiences as opportunities to show solidarity.

Italian solidarity in the opera house was not contingent on fidelity to Scott. Many would say with some justice that Old Mortality loses something in its translation to I Puritani; however, Old Mortality also gains something in its translation to opera. My point is that opera-going Italians were not as concerned with fidelity to Scott's plotting as with representations of their hopes. What remains from Old Mortality to I Puritani is its

political point of view. I Puritani takes from Old Mortality depictions of struggle and calls for independence, and translates them from private reading experiences into public displays of both beautiful singing and nationalistic hopes.

Old Mortality is caught up in the social and political practices of early nineteenth-century Italy. One criterion by which Italians who were politically active understood Old Mortality was their desire for a unified Italy in the face of fragmentation and foreign control. The interplay between the social and political atmosphere of Italy and the role of opera and English literature in Italian life explains how Old Mortality was translated into I Puritani. Ideology transfers the novel to opera. Political maneuvers and their impact on individuals form the core conflicts of Old Mortality, so it is not difficult to imagine the opera eventually capitalizing on dialogue which dramatizes and narrative passages which editorialize the hopes of oppressed people. Morton's progression from by-stander to activist directly parallels the way in which an Italian of the nineteenth century might be persuaded into revolutionary activity.

To understand the political content of the opera, one must first know the plot. In the opening, the soldiers' chorus at a Puritan fortress in Plymouth promising eventual victory commingles with a chorus of lords and ladies

rejoicing at the forthcoming marriage of Elvira, a Puritan, who is to marry Arturo, a Royalist. After Elvira hears that Arturo has fled with another woman, she loses her reason, which only sudden joy or shock can restore (this won't be the last time; the mad scene is a well-known commodity of bel canto opera). The scene prompting Elvira's first descent into madness has political implications because the woman with whom Arturo flees is the widow of Charles I. At Arturo's urging, Queen Enrichetta uses Elvira's bridal veil as a disguise to get past anti-royalist guards. Riccardo, to whom Elvira had originally been betrothed until her uncle's very last minute change of mind, brings news that Parliament has issued a death sentence on Arturo and has ordered a search for him.

In the close of the second act, after Elvira's estimable mad scene, her uncle Giorgio persuades Riccardo to forego his desire for vengeance upon Arturo, which would result in Elvira's death by madness. Riccardo and Giorgio decide to pursue victory and liberty, laying aside all thoughts of personal vengeance. The subject matter of the duet and the fanfare suggests that audiences saw the pieces as symbols of the individual Italian states putting aside their vendettas toward one another and working toward a common goal.

In act three, Arturo, in flight from victorious Puritans, returns to see Elvira. Upon seeing him, Elvira

suddenly gains clarity of mind. Not surprisingly, he is promptly caught, whereupon Elvira's mind once more clouds over. A sudden fanfare, followed by a messenger, brings news that the Stuarts have been defeated and that all prisoners have been granted amnesty. This sudden joy restores Elvira's clarity of mind and she and Arturo are happily united.

At first glance, a plot like this would seem to bring a political interpretation to a screeching halt.[48] But a closer inspection reveals the political content and context of I Puritani. As Weinstock has already noted, Bellini, apparently quite self-absorbed, made only incidental reference to the political implications of his work. Despite the oblique references, the genesis of the opera is political. Count Carlo Pepoli, the librettist, was in political exile in France. A member of a prominent family of Bologna, he was notorious for having been involved in revolutionary activities (including an attempt at creating a new government) in 1831. Pepoli's collaboration with Bellini was widely known because it upset the expectation that Felice Romani, a frequent Bellini collaborator, would work with him on the opera. Pepoli and Bellini corresponded freely and frequently with each other regarding their goals in this effort. Pepoli was also a poet; this combined with his revolutionary activity made him something of a successor to Scott--as much as reputation allows. Pepoli activated

the principles of motivation and activism which Scott's Old Mortality confronted.

One half of the creative team for I Puritani was avowedly political. Bellini, though, is often dismissed as apolitical. Even though I Puritani was first performed in Paris, the Theater Italien, a theater different in timbre from other Paris venues, showcased the opera. Paris hosted an enclave of Italian composers, including Cherubini, Rossini, and Donizetti. The acclaim was so great at the opening that the four principal singers became known as the "Puritani Quartet."[49] As Italians singing in an expatriate arena, the acclaim they garnered was in some measure for the cause of nationalism. At its premiere in Palermo later in 1835, I Puritani again earned critical and popular success. But Bellini's political knowledge need not be deduced from this alone. In his letters he remarks, if cavalierly, on governmental intervention in the production of operas, and evinces a reluctance to advertently test the censors.

According to Gossett, Bellini's self-censorship extended to I Puritani, which was originally written for the Theater Italien of Paris.

> When Bellini prepared a version for Naples, he felt compelled to omit the duet that concludes the second act, with its [inciting] text:
>
> Suoni la tromba, e intrepido
> Io pugnero, da forte.

Bello é affrontar la morte

Gridando libertá.

[Let the trumpet sound, and intrepidly,/I will fight with courage./It is a fine thing to face death/Crying 'Liberty.'][50]

Some controversy surrounds the duet. In his introduction to the autograph score, Gossett maintains that Bellini decided the duet was too political to be sung in Naples. However, the principal dramatic points of the duet were included elsewhere in the opera, and Fiske suggests that material in performances could vary from night to night[51]--apparently, revision was the order of the day, making definitive editions a twentieth century illusion. It seems, at least by Giddings's account, that the duet was reinstated in time for, or before, the Palermo premiere.

The real test of Bellini's politicism lies in an area in which Verdi himself later excelled. Verdi perfected the art of politicizing the opera stage through manipulation of musical form. Bellini, being part of the dialogue beginning between activism and opera attendance, did the same with his last opera. I Puritani had political implications for its Italian audiences in both its subject matter and its format. It takes the political observations of Old Mortality, dialogue and drama, and displays them in a particularly Italian fashion--operatically.[52] Italians responded not only to the subject matter of I Puritani, but also to the

form of early Risorgimento opera. Bellini shaped the ideas of Pepoli's libretto to some of the most provocative operatic forms: stirring choruses, duets and fanfares. The conclusion to the second act gave musical voice and public demonstration of nationalistic impulses to this distant translation of Old Mortality. Robert Giddings writes of the opera's ability to stir audiences:

> The first performance of this opera, based ultimately on Scott's Old Mortality, had this effect. The anguish of the heroine reduced the whole audience to tears. The patriotic finale to the second act ... brought forth public manifestation of enthusiasm for the cause: 'the women all waived their handkerchiefs and the men tossed their hats in the air.'[53]

Bellini observed the spectacle of the audience's response, noting the waving and tossing of hats. For a composer whose reputation is decidedly apolitical, this is quite stirring stuff. Bellini's observation about the audience response has as much to do with the patriotic tone of the music as it does the patriotic spectacle of two Italian singers performing it.

I Puritani as a Reading of Old Mortality

Scott's novel is a private reading experience, and while Borgognoni, Manzoni, Mazzini, and Grossi felt the flush of ideological recognition in Scott's depiction of political activism, that experience becomes heightened in I Puritani because the opera dramatizes some of the political and social observations of the novel and adds the element of performance. As well as transforming the literary political insights of the novel into operatic insights, the physical act of performing the opera adds literally a new dimension to Old Mortality's political point of view.

Something of the outer shell of Scott's novel survives--the love triangle.[54] Morton's "spur of injured feeling" at his supposition of Edith's attachment to Lord Evandale parallels (though the allegiances are reversed) Riccardo's spur to political action by Elvira's abandonment of him. Roger Fiske writes that "we should not expect characterization to survive in an opera taken from a novel .... All we can hope for is the essence and atmosphere of the story ..."[55] Though we do not get the story of Old Mortality, we do get the political essence and atmosphere in the opera. The political content of the novel reaches a new pitch, so to speak, in the opera.

One of Old Mortality's arguments about politicization is that historical events are shaped by the people who fight wars, not by those who plan them, or by figureheads whose

existence codifies revolutionary activity. I Puritani is populated with ordinary people. This might not seem like a great detail except when one compares the opera to other bel canto works set in historical times. The characters of I Puritani are not great historical figures as in some other contemporary political operas. Rossini's Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra and Donizetti's three queens were focused on historical figures who codified revolutionary activity. The only historical figure in I Puritani is Queen Enrichetta, whose main purpose is to trigger Elvira's first mad scene. All other decisive events happen according to the actions of the local population. The other characters' behavior illustrates one of Scott's arguments about activism: people shape events from the bottom up.

We have already seen how Morton was spurred to activism in part by injured feeling. Bellini and Pepoli have instanced this same idea in a pivotal first act scene. Ideological differences separate Riccardo from Arturo, but personal thoughts of vengeance also fuel Riccardo's hatred for the Royalist. Not only does he have an innate dislike of Arturo, the animosity is encouraged by Elvira's grief at believing that Arturo has abandoned her for another. Riccardo says:

> Vendetta cadrá sul viv traditor.../Non casa, non spiagiatta raccolga i fuggenti!.../Le odiate lor teste non

possan posar./ Erranti, piangenti, in
orrida guerra...

[Vengeance will strike the betrayer./Let no house or shore receive the fleeing!/May they not find a place for their heads./Wandering, weeping in horrible war....].[56]

This operatic spin on the Henry and Edith situation concedes that activism is almost never purely military. Riccardo even presents the confusion of injured feeling more pointedly than Morton. Knowing better, he lets Elvira believe that Arturo's escape with a veiled woman was romantic rather than political. He then calls Arturo a betrayer, ostensibly because he caused Elvira's grief, but also to castigate Arturo for supporting the Royalists. Riccardo's sword is double-edged.

Riccardo's determination to bring his idea of justice to Arturo has another dimension which recalls Scott's argument in Old Mortality. Claverhouse, "whom one party honored and extolled as a hero, and another execrated as a bloodthirsty oppressor" (168), and Morton exchange words during Morton's captivity professing a reserved respect for each other. In I Puritani, Riccardo bids his rival to prepare for death, yet he also respects Arturo as an equal. This scene operatically contextualizes Scott's acknowledgement of the legitimacy and variety of political motivations and persuasions.

The politicism of Bellini is as complex as the description in Scott of Morton's political awakening. I Puritani's heritage from Old Mortality is not as direct as Lucia's is from The Bride of Lammermoor, but there are many facets to its relationship once one finds how to connect them. Old Mortality explores the complexities of activism; I Puritani dramatizes the motivations of its characters. Old Mortality editorializes the workings of rebels by endowing them with paradoxical impulses; I Puritani dramatizes the paradoxical impulses behind its characters' activism. Old Mortality helped crystallize Scott's reputation in Italy as an example for patriotic writers--its readers were motivated by Scott's narrative skill; I Puritani extended that reputation into the opera house and added the performance component and group dynamic--its audiences were motivated by drama and musical skill.

When critics write that I Puritani is based on Old Mortality, they acknowledge the opera's debt to Scott but leave gaps in the relationship which suggest the difficulty of establishing a connection. Bellini's opera is not based on Scott's novel in the traditional sense of adhering to plot and scenery, but Bellini and his librettist have transferred substantial elements of Old Mortality and Scott's popularity on the continent (albeit through a French translation) to their opera. I Puritani is a political reading of its source, which had parallel political meanings

to its Italian readers. I Puritani retains fidelity to Scott in its depictions of political dissent and its magnification through music of the sentiments which the novel presented. Scott's examination of the effects of insurrection on individual lives, and Old Mortality's audience reception--great popularity in a time of social strife--were translatable to Italy and opera. Italian readers understood the novel and opera in terms of their political frustrations. I Puritani, the hybrid of English literature and Italian cultural life, expresses nationalistic hopes both in its exploitation of a distinctly Italian form with four famous Italian principal singers, and in its extraction of political essence from Old Mortality.

Notes to Chapter III

1. W.E.K. Anderson, ed. The Journal of Walter Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 114.

2. Jerome Mitchell, The Walter Scott Operas (University of Alabama Press, 1977).

3. See Schmidgall, Literature as Opera (New York: Oxford UP, 1977), Mitchell, Scott Operas, and Susan McClary, Feminine Endings (University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

4. All quotations from Old Mortality are from the Penguin edition edited by Angus Calder (New York, 1972).

5. Leslie Orrey, Bellini (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1969), 119.

6. Herbert Weinstock, Vincenzo Bellini (New York: Knopf, 1971), 502.

7. Mary Ambrose, "Scott, Sicily and Michele Amari" in Scott and His Influence (Aberdeen, 1983), 485.

8. The thrust of Mitchell's discussion is that Old Mortality contains many scenes that are opera-ready even though the opera ostensibly based on it does not use those scenes.

9. Quoted in Weinstock, 179.

10. Graham McMaster, Scott and Scotland (Cambridge UP, 1981), 78. For a discussion of Scott's non-fiction

political writings, see Peter Garside, "Scott as Political Journalist," The Review of English Studies ns37:503-17 Nov '86.

11. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage, 1966), 198.

12. T.C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People (New York: Scribner's, 1969).

13. Smout, 498.

14. See Hayden White, Metahistory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975) and The Content of the Form (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) for discussions of how the forms of historical narrative use the modes of fictional prose and how the received form of historical discourse dictates the kinds of information such accounts contain.

15. Alexander Welsh, introduction, Old Mortality (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), vii.

16. Lukács, 32.

17. Henry Morton becomes caught up in ideas of nationalism through what Carl von Clausewitz calls friction. Clausewitz's On War, in process of revision until his death in 1831, is considered a classic study of the machinations of war. Scott, though contemporary with Clausewitz, did not mention Clausewitz in his journals or correspondence; despite their similar observations about war, their ideas apparently never cross-pollinated. Karl Kroeber, in British Romantic Art, has studied Old Mortality in terms of social

forces through Clausewitz's idea of friction, though he centers his discussion on the battle scenes and how they instant Clausewitz's terminology.

> Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper. The military machine--the army and everything related to it--is basically very simple and therefore seems easy to manage. But we should bear in mind that none of its components is of one piece: each part is composed of individuals, everyone of whom retains his potential of friction. (107-108)

But Clausewitz's friction also applies to the political awakening and activism of Henry Morton.

> the inescapable inertia in all human enterprises, ... -- all the characteristics of life that no organization, no foresight, however meticulous, can fully anticipate. (108)

Varying forces conspire to bring Morton to revolutionary action. Morton's process of involvement is diffuse because it begins with Morton's practically innocent overnight accommodation of a radical who once saved his father's life.

Scott, though he might never have known of Clausewitz's term, fictionalized the effects of friction in groups as he describes a meeting of Puritans as "a doubtful and disunited body":

> This broken and dusky light showed many a countenance elated with spiritual pride, or rendered dark by fierce enthusiasm; and some whose anxious, wandering, and uncertain looks, showed they felt themselves rashly embarked in a cause which they had neither courage nor conduct to bring to good issue, yet knew not how to abandon, for very shame. (268)

He posits no unified, structurally sound method of either starting or quelling a revolution because just as friction may unite people, it also may prevent a prolonged unified movement.

18. Disillusionment contributes to the process of Morton's activism. As Burley leaves the overnight hospitality of his host, Morton looks after him and says

> Farewell, stern enthusiast ... in some moods of my mind, how dangerous would be the society of such a companion! If I am unmoved by his zeal for abstract doctrines of faith ... can I be a man, and a Scotchman, and look with indifference on that persecution which has made wise men mad? (109)

His personal disappointment with Edith in conjunction with the rhetorical force of Burley, and the vague realization of all the injustices to which his kind are subjected, compel Morton to action. James Kerr maintains that Scott stitches

together "disparate levels of human life...to show how Morton's affections are bounded by his social experience...and how Morton's subjective life affects his decision to participate in an ongoing struggle." James Kerr, Fiction Against History: Scott as Storyteller (New York: Cambridge UP, 1989), 40.

19. Georg Lukacs writes about Scott's way with the Scottish general population of his works:

> The being of an age can only appear as a broad and many-sided picture if the everyday life of the people ... [is] portrayed. The important leading figure, who embodies an historical moment, necessarily does so at a certain level of abstraction. Scott, by first showing the complex and involved character of popular life itself, creates the being which the leading figure then has to generalize .... (39)

Scott emphasizes the cost of political activism for individuals against abstract principles which affect large groups. Morton realizes the ephemeral nature of political will when it is based on an abstract ideal of what is right.

20. Daniel Whitmore, "Bibliolatry and the Rule of the Word: A Study of Scott's Old Mortality," Philological Quarterly, Spring (1986), 256.

21. Ambrose, 488.

22. David R. B. Kimbell, Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism (New York: Cambridge UP, 1981), 3.

23. Kimbell, 15.

24. Pasquale Villari, Studies Historical and Critical (1907; New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), 25.

25. Archibald Colquhoun, Manzoni and His Times (New York: Dutton, 1954), 186-7.

26. Kimbell, 15.

27. See R.D.S. Jack "Scott in Italy" in Scott Bicentenary Essays, ed. Alan Bell (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973). Jack maintains that there were no translations of Ivanhoe or The Antiquary before Grossi used them as models for Marco Visconti. Grossi was capable of reading them either in English or in translation. By the time Grossi was composing his novel, though, Scott was a well-known commodity, and his works, especially major ones like Ivanhoe were widely circulating.

28. Giuseppe Mazzini, Life and Writings (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1891), 15.

29. Kimbell, 6.

30. Jack maintains that the influence was reversed as Scott's reputation exerted itself on Italian readers:

> Scott benefits from past European writers like Cervantes or Ariosto, then works their example into the creation of his own literary world. His

world in its turn serves as an example for later Spanish and Italian authors. (295)

31. According to Augustin Thierry, writing in the 1830s, Scott's French popularity had to do with his view of history. Translations there too were frequent and easy to obtain. Between 1816, when Scott's career in France began with the translation of Guy Mannering, and 1820, French translations of Old Mortality and Waverley had print runs of about a thousand or more copies. See Martyn Lyons, "The Audience for Romanticism: Walter Scott in France, 1815-1851," European History Quarterly 14 (1984), 26.

Thierry, in pursuit of a way to write history as a demonstration of life rather than an account, considered Scott a revelation:

> My great admiration for that splendid writer rose to a still higher pitch when I compared his knowledge of olden times with the dry, colorless learning of the best modern historians.

Quoted and translated in Villari, 27.

32. Mitchell, 60.

33. Mitchell, 60.

34. Philip Gossett, "Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in Risorgimento Opera," Cambridge Opera Journal, 2, 1, 41-64.

35. Anna Benedetti, La traduzioni italiene da Walter Scott e i loro anglicismi (Florence 1974), 38.

36. Robert Giddings, "Scott and Opera" in Sir Walter Scott: The Long Forgotten Melody, ed. Alan Bold (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1983), 197.

37. Ambrose, 485.

38. Kimbell, 11.

39. Priscilla Robertson, The Revolutions of 1848 (Harper, 1960), 323.

40. See Kimbell, 11. This is especially pertinent when one considers that many of the gothic novels so popular in England were set in distant lands at remote times, medieval Italy, for example.

41. Mazzini, 42.

42. Edward J. Dent, Opera (Baltimore: Penguin, 1953), 173.

43. For a detailed discussion of the aesthetic influences on Bellini see Simon Maguire, Bellini and the Aesthetics of Italian Opera in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Garland, 1989).

44. Derek Beales, The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy (New York: Longman, 1981), 46.

45. Robert Justin Goldstein, "Political Censorship of the Opera in Europe, 1815-1914," Opera Journal 21:3 (1988), 15-16.

46. Schmidgall, 394 and Goldstein, 22.

47. For example, see Robert Donington, The Rise of

Opera (London, 1981) and Donald Jay Grout, A Short History of Opera (New York, 1947. 3d ed., 1988).

48. Most opera plots, when summarized for the sake of clarity, condense physical action and psychological motivation into a fast-paced, often facile, amalgamation of events. I take for granted that plots which seem ludicrous or hurried in print achieve dramatic and emotional credibility with the rhetorical aid of music.

49. The quartet consisted of Giulia Grisi (sop.), Giovanni Battisti Rubini (ten.), Antonio Tamburini (bar.), and Luigi Lablache (bass.).

50. Gossett, 151.

51. Fiske, 90.

52. Given the spectacular abilities of German and French composers, this may seem an inordinately prejudiced claim. However, I am using as the benchmark Robert Donington's assertion in Opera and it Symbols (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) that Peri's Dafne (1597/98) was the first opera (27).

53. Giddings, 202.

54. Mitchell in Scott, Chaucer, & Medieval Romance (University Press of Kentucky, 1987) suggests Old Mortality owes much to "The Knight's Tale."

55. Roger Fiske, Scotland and Music (Cambridge UP, 1983), 110-1.

56. Vincenzo Bellini, I Puritani, cond. Tullio Serafin, Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano, EMI, AVB-34065, 1953. Translator uncredited.

CHAPTER IV

FROM METER TO MUSIC: BYRON'S THE CORSAIR IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ITALY OF VERDI

In early nineteenth century Europe, when poets and poems were capable of fanning revolutionary fervor in their readers, no other poet was as incendiary on the continent as Byron, and no other poem caught on with the public as did The Corsair. Although many writers inspired revolutionary feeling, Byron's effect on Italians was unparalleled. The Italian reception of The Corsair (1814), as seen in Verdi's Il Corsaro (1848), shows how political meanings in the poem were transformed as the poem travelled to Italy. Verdi, skilled at provoking patriotic outbursts in his audience, coopted both Byron's poem and political reputation by translating The Corsair to the operatic stage. The Corsair displays Byron's political energies and the interplay of idealism and activism. Il Corsaro displays Verdi's political energies--but without the strength of Byron's argument in the poem.

The Corsair, an argument in verse about political activism, presented Verdi with a vehicle for revolutionary expression. Il Corsaro offered the possibility of strongly uniting the politics of Verdi with those of Byron--it does

so, but not as smoothly or fully as it might have. The creation of Corsaro, however, does reflect back on Byron's political reputation. Byron's political proclivities have often been used as a way to read his work, both as a political statement,[1] and as a commentary on the Byronic hero.[2]

The Corsair, Il Corsaro, and the Context of Failure

The lines of reception between the poem and the opera are only apparently clear; scholars have not been generous in assessing the relationship between the poem and the opera. Verdi scholars, the prime movers of Corsair/Corsaro scholarship, have emphasized the low standing of Il Corsaro in Verdi's canon. As a result, they have read Byron's poem in the context of failure. Byron scholars, in turn, have usually referred to the opera in generic terms to indicate the scope of Byron's reputation.

The current state of scholarship can be represented by Julian Budden and David R.B. Kimbell, two Verdi scholars with extensive knowledge of Il Corsaro. Budden maintains that "the basic reason why 'The Corsair' hardly makes for musical drama is that it is a narrative,"[3] indicating the unsuitability of The Corsair as operatic material because of a supposed lack of dialogue, characterization, and action. Kimbell says that

> Despite the love which Byron's heroic devotion to national freedom inspired, despite the macabre allure which some of his characters were bound to have for a restless dramatic imagination, it is no wonder that Verdi turned his back so soon, and moved on to better things.[4]

The failure of Il Corsaro is "no wonder" for Kimbell because The Corsair was not an astute choice for Verdi--its politics were too subdued. Other studies judge the opera to be "the worst ... ever written by Verdi,"[5] or a "hapless series of scenes."[6] The consensus is that Verdi, passing through a Byronic phase, was looking for a new type of character to fulfill his ideas of what opera could be.

However, Verdi scholars do remark favorably upon the composer's and librettist's habit of staying close to the literary source; indeed the composer adhered to The Corsair, but only for plot rather than point of view. The literary source compresses many of Byron's political observations, which were not at all subdued, into verse form. By looking at Byron's impetus for writing The Corsair, and by showing the manner in which the poet writes himself into the poem, we can see what Verdi achieved in keeping close to the literary source. We can also see what he lost by abandoning Byron's argument. The history of Byron's poem in Italy suggests why Verdi adhered closely to his source and what the consequences were.

This chapter will examine the history of The Corsair in Italy and the consequences of Verdi's adaptation of it. Verdi's divergence from Byron's argument in the poem is the most curious fact about his interpretation of it. The failure of Corsaro to capitalize on the popularity of The Corsair is a central problem which this chapter addresses. To see how closely Verdi kept to his source with regard to plot is, paradoxically, to see how he neglected Byron's argument. Budden and Kimbell are correct--Il Corsaro was a failure with a short run and no shelf life, though if we look at the poem as source material and the Italian context for its translation, we also see how the opera succeeds as a reading of the poem. First I will discuss the poet's reputation in Italy as a product of political context. Then I will examine Verdi's status in Italy in comparison to Byron's. I will then address the political context of the poem in England, and then the political argument of The Corsair. From there I will turn to the structure and content of the opera as a reading of The Corsair.

Byron and Italian Cultural Life

The Corsair, in stirring revolutionary fervor, did not act alone, for it was accompanied by the poet himself. To understand Byron's extreme force as a poet and personality in Italy, it is useful to draw parallels between him and

Walter Scott, a much-admired albeit lesser force; these parallels ultimately show Byron's importance on the Continent. Byron's career in Italy has several parallels with Scott's. Byron enjoyed tremendous popularity in Italy, and his political ideas continued to excite Italians long after his death in Greece. Kimbell states unequivocally that "In no other country was Byron more extravagantly admired than in Italy."[7] Seen from Kimbell's point of view, Giuseppe Mazzini's worry that Italian readers had elevated Scott's poetry at the expense of Byron's seems unwarranted.[8]

Scott's notoriety in Italy resulted primarily from his writings, which favored revolutionary activity. Byron's notoriety in Italy began with translations of those writings which also explored the conditions of political activity. Scott had claimed the influence of Italian writers on his own works, and Byron, too, was familiar with Italian literature. Scott traveled to Italy as a tourist and wrote much of his visit, and Byron not only traveled to Italy as a tourist, but became a resident. Scott in turn influenced Italian writers by the scope and vision of his poems and especially his novels. Byron, through his writings, influenced Italian writers--and the political lives of Italians--more strongly than Scott.

But one major distinction separates Byron's reputation in Italy from Scott's: Scott merely wrote about activism;

Byron actively engaged himself in politics. The translations of The Corsair into Italian and into opera occur in a more readily traceable fashion than the exchange between Old Mortality and I Puritani. One might venture that Scott's influence in Italy was due to the fashionable quality of his writings, whereas Byron's influence was due to the potential political applications in his writings.[9] Old Mortality was translated into Italian, became a French play, and endured changes of locale and characterization before finally appearing as I Puritani. When compared to The Corsair, which was quickly translated into Italian and then into opera, we see how much clearer the lines of reception are in Byron's case. The Corsair travelled the express route from meter to music. The poem was translated several times and the libretto by Francesco Maria Piave was fashioned directly from a translation of the poem. In this case prodigious correspondence between Verdi and his librettist shows the trail from the poem to the opera.

One cannot assume that Byron's poems enjoyed a high reputation in Italy in their native language. One can safely assume that Piave worked from an Italian translation of the poem to create Il Corsaro. According to David Lawton, "The Italian translations of Byron's poems were done in the 1820s and were immensely popular."[10] During this time Byron was living in Italy as an expatriate and was writing mostly personal observations and journal entries.

Through his affair with Teresa Giuccioli, wife of a count and part of the Gamba family famous for its activism, Byron found a measure of personal and political satisfaction. As his reputation grew as a poet, so did his reputation as a revolutionary: Teresa's brother and father initiated Byron into some of the secret societies then forming. He became a sort of gun-runner for the Carbonera.[11] The poem's reputation ascended before Verdi considered it for an opera. Lawton dates Verdi's earliest known interest: "Byron's poem The Corsair (1814) figured in Verdi's plans as early as 1843 when he proposed it as a subject for Venice."[12] The poem's arrival in Italy predates Verdi's operatic interest in it.[13]

In "Byron and Italy," Giorgio Melchiori discusses the impact of Byron on Italians:

> In Italy, then as now, literary movements, as well as philosophical and ethical issues, are never separated from political ones; such a [Byronic] hero would appeal to the most independent spirits, those who pursued the ideal of a unified country, free from the oppression of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its quislings, from the Bourbons, the Pope, and the Church.[14]

According to Melchiori, the appeal of Byron flourished because Italians who were liberal could identify with Byron's ideology. His Italian readers did not stop at

appreciating the literary qualities of Byron's poems. His poems became immensely popular not only because of an attractive mystery surrounding the Byronic hero, but also presumably because Conrad, Manfred, and Foscari invited their audiences to sacrifice life itself in the name of freedom and the fight against the oppressor.[15] His works spoke to them in a manner which was closely attuned to the situation in which the Italians found themselves under Austrian control. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Austrian presence on the peninsula was the major factor of political life, and this, coupled with the inefficient agriculture of Italy, resulted in general unrest.

Melchiori explores the heightened unrest and some Italian ways of coping with Austrian oppression, among which was a fascination with Byron:

> Mention of a movement for the liberation of Italy was taboo [for Italy's patriots]. But Byron's death in Greece served an extremely useful purpose for Italian Patriots, who could express their own feelings by referring to his fate.[16]

Though Byron died at Missolonghi twenty-four years before the production of Il Corsaro, his influence persisted through political reception of his work and his accomplishments as an activist.

As the Italians became familiar with Byron's ideology, their interest in him seems to have been due to the strength of his alliance to their cause:

> By 1826, then, the association of Byron with the fight for freedom was well established, and Byron was regarded, in the words of the Abbe de Breme, as a new Tyrtaeus.[17]

By aligning Byron with the Spartan who wrote spirited martial and patriotic songs in the 7th century B.C., de Breme and Melchiori, separated by a century, jointly testify to the durability of the Italian attachment to Byron's political agenda.

Italian struggles for independence were ongoing throughout the twenties through the forties. Peter Jones suggests that this revolutionary impetus had both idealistic and pragmatic origins. The idealistic aspect of the Italian struggle was for independence from Austrian rule at any cost, and a call for a more liberal and democratic form of government. These idealistic hopes were more prevalent among the urban intellectuals than among other classes, who were more concerned with satisfying their day to day needs than in a total reform of the government. The wish to wrest control of Italy from Austria was idealistic in that such a transition could not be immediate, and the desired social changes could not be implemented immediately.

The pragmatic component of the Italian reform movements was a concern for day-to-day living. Jones maintains that the

> vulnerability of Italy's agriculture to foreign competition, its organizational backwardness, together with the heavy dependence of the population on agricultural occupations meant that natural disasters such as famine were particularly damaging to the peninsula.[18]

Thus for the great majority of Italians, concern for food and other economic grievances prevailed over more broadly based political demands such as the establishment of a national state. Their acceptance of Byron and The Corsair for political reasons shows the socially formative function of literature.

As Byron's character (rather than just his creation of a type of hero) became the subject of Italian admiration, his reputation spread according to the popularity of the medium which adapted his works:

> Within this frame of reference special attention should be given to the librettos of operas, in the first half of the nineteenth century, which appear to be based on Byron's works, testifying to the popularity of the poet outside the narrow circle of the leterrati. It should be underlined that, because of its immense appeal to a large section

> of the population, opera had become a vehicle for liberal expression.[19]

Melchiori acknowledges that those who adapted Byron's works to the operatic stage had more in mind than the strictly musical component of the operatic experience. In Verdi's case, this is especially true.

Verdi went through his own Byronic phase. By the time Verdi was thinking of using Byron as a source, Byron was already the object of personal and political admiration in Italy. The author Alessandro Manzoni and cultural critic Giuseppe Mazzini each praised Byron for his contribution to Italian society. Verdi may have been using Byron as new source material--if so, the source was revolutionary in content. The other obvious example of Verdi's attachment to Byron was the opera, I Due Foscari (1844), based on Byron's play "The Two Foscari" (1821). The opera was a success, especially compared to Il Corsaro, although it receives its share of abuse. As to its composition, Verdi wrote that he liked the subject,[20] perhaps because it featured dramatizations of Byron's humanitarian beliefs (a devoted mother is victimized by the cruelty of government which eventually ruins the lives of the three principals).

I Due Foscari presents a salient moment in Verdi's canon, according to Kimbell, who maintains that it shows Verdi's first extended use of themes to identify characters. Critically, these themes are seen as providing a musical

analogy to Byron's characterization. Each principal has a theme, and because Verdi was so thoroughly involved in the genesis of Foscari, the opera may have spoken more directly to the audience's Byronic impulses. Foscari is linked to Byron through musical themes which recur strongly. Though Verdi's work changed drastically after Foscari, the first Byron opera helped shape his reputation as a nationalist.

Isaiah Berlin explains Verdi's status as a national catalyst for revolutionary political thought:

> [H]is name became the very symbol of the Risorgimento, [and] 'Viva Verdi' ... was the most famous revolutionary and patriotic cry in Italy .... He responded deeply and personally to every twist and turn in the Italian struggle for national freedom. The Hebrews of Nabucco were Italians in captivity. Va pensiero was the national prayer for resurrection. The performance of Battaglia di Legnano evoked scenes of indescribable popular excitement in the revolutionary Rome of 1849.[21]

Gerhart von Westerman explains the symbolism in the composer's name:

> The words 'Viva Verdi' which appeared everywhere were generally assumed to replace the forbidden 'Vive L'Italia,' and later, when Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia, had been offered the throne in

Italy, people saw a symbol in Verdi's name:

Vittorio Emmanuele Re d'Italia.[22]

Just as Melchiori suggests that Byron's name and fate stood for what the Italians could not explicitly say, Verdi's assumed a similar dimension. "Viva Verdi" took on meanings more varied than praise for a skilled composer or appreciation for his operatic portrayals of struggle against oppression. But the political situation of The Corsair did not begin with Byron's reputation in Italy or Verdi. It began at home, in England.

The Corsair and Ambiguous Political Action

The political life of The Corsair began auspiciously. On February 1st 1814, its day of publication, it sold an astonishing 10,000 copies, attesting to the English reading public's admiration for Byron. "They tell me it has great success; - it was written con amore, and much from experience," he wrote a little over two weeks later in his journal of February 18th.[23] According to the calculations of William St. Clair, this was undoubtedly the best-selling of Byron's poems, having sold over 25,000 copies with an estimated readership of 250,000.[24] Byron composed this poem during his so-called "Years of Fame" (1811-1816), when he was gaining world-wide recognition.

Byron placed The Corsair between two openly political statements: the dedication to Thomas Moore and the poem "Lines to a Lady Weeping," which criticized the Regent's defection from the Whigs. In a letter to Moore, Byron writes

> The lines 'to a Lady weeping' must go with the Corsair - I care nothing for the consequences at this point - my politics are to me now like a young mistress to an old man-the worse they grow the fonder I become of them.[25]

The poem had been published anonymously in the Morning Chronicle, March 7, 1812. Byron's authorship was revealed when he added it to The Corsair. On February 6, 1814, he was roundly attacked in the Tory press.

The lady weeping whose plight Byron versifies was the young daughter of the Prince Regent. The setting is the Prince's banquet held at Carleton in 1812. At the banquet, the Prince chastised his former Whig supporters in a speech which so astonished his daughter, Princess Charlotte, that she burst into tears at the Regent's display of new allegiances. Byron wrote about losing his anonymity:

> I find all the newspapers in hysterics, and town in an uproar, on the avowal and republication of two stanzas on Princess Charlotte's weeping at Regency's speech to Lauderdale in 1812. They are

> daily at it still; - some of the abuse good, all
> of it hearty.[26]

At first glance, it seems Byron relished his anonymity, but he always made sure that readers could surmise his authorship.

The letter to Moore has political tones because Byron praises him as the firmest of Irish patriots. Being a musician as well as a poet, Moore was the national lyrist of Ireland; he was also famous for a collection of satires directed against the Regent called "The Twopenny Post Bag." By dedicating the poem to Moore, Byron presented a double-barreled critique of the Regent and his politics through one of the most effective agents of the day--the printed word.

Of course the publication of The Corsair brought its political meanings to a head, though they did not begin at publication. The Corsair is a product of Byron's observations and experiences about the role of awareness and activism in public life. The political meanings of The Corsair operate on at least two levels, the first of which has to do with context. First, there is the condition of the poem's creation in 1814--written at high speed, as Peter Gunn suggests, to relieve Byron's love-obsessed mind. For Malcolm Kelsall and Jerome McGann, Byron's obsession was rather more political than purely erotic. Kelsall says that The Corsair "by implication ... links Turkish tyranny in Greece with British rule in Ireland."[27] McGann sets

Byron's complex personal relationships in apposition to social and political aims: "the famous tales [of his years of fame] constitute a series of displaced meditations on the political and ideological problems which Europe, because of its history, was currently having to face."[28]

The first level of political meaning arises from Byron's perception of the possibilities of political action set against the realities of British life; the result is ambivalence. The possibilities of political activism are contrasted in The Corsair. The first level of meaning I will address is the poem's context as a product of Byron's political ambivalence.

Biographers and critics are compelled to address Byron's activist proclivities because they inform so much of his work. His early activism informs the events of The Corsair. The biographical context of which I write is concerned with how the poem presents ideological conflict. Byron's personal political ambivalence produces the politically ambivalent tone of the poem--which strengthens rather than weakens the series of observations in it. In a sense, as McGann notes, "Byron writes himself into all his poetry."[29] Walter Scott wrote about his meeting with Byron in a letter to Thomas Moore:

> Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of

> which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions.[30]

Watkins amplifies Scott's position in his discussion of Byron's politics:

> The social interest of the tales is obscured not only by their subject matter, but more importantly by Byron's thinking during these years, which is often very inconsistent, confused, and hidden behind a Byronic exterior of combined nonchalance and whimsicality that deflects serious inquiry.[31]

Observations of this sort tend to undermine the seriousness of Byron's interests. Whether Byron was serious, the fact remains that his views attracted much attention.

Most accounts of Byron portray a passionate man. Ambivalence may not seem a passionate response to events, but Byron's ambivalence finds its sources in passion--his disappointments with England and later with the continent. Significantly, Byron's ambivalence surfaces as a product of his passionate responses. When it was prudent to believe in England as a model, he believed beyond prudence. When he believed in Napoleon's goals, he believed as a fanatic does. Underlying his passionate, pendulum-like responses, though, was his ability to question his own positions. Watkins writes:

> Byron was never certain that his own analysis was sound, and when on occasion he felt that it was,

> he was unsure that he could conduct his life in accordance with it, and indeed he often contradicted his own statements about politics and society, expressing at different times disdain for all political activity, cynicism about the possibility of social progress, and a strong desire to escape entirely the pressures of his immediate situation.[32]

One gets the sense of a restless, dramatic man continually in the process of what Stephen Greenblatt calls self-fashioning.[33] Byron cultivated a reputation for style and character by continually shifting his allegiances and interests.

After publication in 1809 of the satire English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, Byron left England for a trip to the peninsula and the Levant. Ostensibly, Byron's excursion reads as an antidote to the troubling policies of his country. Perhaps hoping to find spiritual refreshment, Byron was confronted by many of the same debasements he presumably left behind. The theater of European conflict to him seemed vile. But just as vile was the world he saw in the Levant, especially Greece, where Byron encountered what McGann calls a "nest of vipers"--both the oppressed Greeks and the conquering Turks. To a temperament as volatile (or perhaps an ego as big) as Byron's, witnessing the participation of the Greeks in their own enslavement must

have seemed a personal affront for all the hopes in which he invested his travels.

Between his return to England in 1811 from travels abroad and his final departure in 1816, his political ambivalence freely surfaced. If, as I suggest, political situations arise from a conflict between ideological forces, Byron's political situation, which is a context for The Corsair, manifests itself in several ways, each of which infiltrates the poem. One of the major political figures of Byron's time was, of course, Napoleon, who became First Consul when Byron was seventeen. For much of his youth and all of his young adulthood, Byron was captivated by the incendiary Napoleon, whose aim was to transform the structure of Europe. Thus Byron was ambivalent about England's antagonistic relationship to France. Ambivalence produced the conflict which characterized his young adulthood--the ideals of nationalism as against an appreciation of Napoleon as the embodiment of a revolutionary ideal. According to McGann, Byron saw England as an oppressor of the Irish and Scottish struggles for recognition and liberty. Byron regarded English politics as hypocritical because the government gave the appearance of supporting movements for freedom and liberty.

After his return from his trip abroad, he contemplated a political career devoted to effect change in the English system. At this point he was personally disappointed and

financially unstable--ripe to become an errant political force. During Byron's Years of Fame he moved in the most fashionable circles of Regency society, becoming a household name for his first speech in the House of Lords, which opposed the Frame Breaking Bill, a government proposal which called for the death penalty for frame-breaking. Framework knitters created mainly hosiery, but also gloves, braces, blouses, and cravats. Known for the intricacy and craftsmanship of their work, frame-knitters were outraged by the introduction of mechanical frames which produced cheap articles and threatened to put them out of business. The cheap goods resembled the real article to the inexpert eye. The weavers employed Luddite tactics, namely the destruction of machinery, to register their protests of cheap mass-produced items.[34]

In a letter to Lord Holland, leader of the moderate Whigs, Byron speaks against the Frame Breaking Bill in support of the workers:

> The maintenance and well doing of the industrious poor is an object of greater consequence to the community than the enrichment of a few monopolies by any improvements in the implements of trade, which deprive the workman of his bread, and renders the labourer 'unworthy of hire'....My own motive for opposing the bill is founded on its palpable injustices, and its certain inefficacy.

> I have seen the state of these miserable men, and
> it is a disgrace to a civilised country.[35]

Though it met with strong criticism and was perhaps compromised by its Byronic artifice, the speech was delivered powerfully.

Byron further proved his engagement with the general population. Byron once argued in a Parliamentary speech that hunger was not just a fact of human existence, but a form of control exerted by those with money and resources enough to provide for themselves over those who did not give their consent to be so impoverished. The speech, as usual, caused some commotion, but apparently did not satisfy Byron's wish to be an agent of change or achieve his goals.

Byron abandoned his intentions of fulfilling his position as Lord after presenting three speeches in four months. Apparently, he doubted his effectiveness at his chosen vocation. His rhetoric was strong, and if he was not the Oscar Wilde of the Romantic Age, neither was he a groundless dilettante. By pleading leniency on the Frame Breaking Bill, Byron evinced both concern for those he considered oppressed and proof of his engagement with the world in which he lived.

This engagement was further proved with the publication of Cantos I-II of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" in 1812, which also enhanced his reputation. Childe Harold was a wildly popular poem, centered on the negative and critical:

a young disaffected traveler experiences and describes his travels through the Italian peninsula and Greece. He witnesses suffering which political and social systems bring to individual lives and his observations were set against the changing face of Europe for Byron's readers. McGann accounts for the popularity of the book: Its author "had found a means to focus and isolate, in a tangible way, the complex and obscure patterns of events which were affecting so many individual lives and social structures at the time."[36]

Byron Writes Himself into The Corsair

Byron wrote these complex patterns, and therefore himself, into his poems, which surfaced in The Corsair as ambivalence. A second political meaning in The Corsair operates on the level of content and subject matter and the events the poet selects to fill the narrative. The subject of the poem has much to do with the conscious political activity of Byron revealed in the political events which are crowded into the poem. Conflicts in the poem are numerous and the relationships between characters have political implications: between Conrad and his pirates; Conrad and the Turks; Gulnare and Conrad; and Gulnare and the Pasha Seyd, among others. Such juxtapositions are legion and raise more questions than they answer. The subject of The

Corsair is the manner in which politics informs social life and action.

The poem encapsulates the ambivalence about personal freedom Byron displays in his actions and journals. The ambivalence underlying the poem encodes the ideological problems which Byron faced. How does one conduct one's life in accordance with sound political principles? This is a puzzling question given that Byron leapt into his duties as a Lord in the House only to retreat in frustration. Also, how does one support political activism when the possibility of social progress is repeatedly thwarted? Byron's subsequent life can be seen as an attempt at solving these ideological problems. Part of the solution was to disappear from England, attempt to make a change in Europe--where he finally died promoting the Greek revolution against the Turks. In the poem, Byron fictionalizes similar attempts at solving political problems.

Canto I opens as the pirates on their island extol in song their view of life and its noble climax in a defiant death: "Come when it will--we snatch the life of life--/When lost - what recks it but disease and strife?" Facing the sea, they behold their boundless empire and describe their nameless chief, whom "all obey." A ship sails in sight of the revellers; with it comes the promise of more formal festivities. As the ship arrives, a crowd gathers to see who is safe on board after the arduous journey. The

pirates see Conrad, the hitherto nameless chief, and dare not approach without first knowing his mood.

Conrad disembarks and a messenger arrives to read a note from a Greek spy which "proclaims ... spoil or peril nigh." Without hesitation, Conrad decides to leave with the corsairs for a new adventure. The narrator questions Conrad's hold over the other pirates; Conrad personifies mystery and possesses a deep and abiding loneliness: "His features' deepened lines and varying hue/at times attracted, yet perplexed the view." It is hinted that Conrad is evil and ruthless, that he "hated men too much to feel remorse." But then, paradoxically, if love is at all possible, it is what he feels for Medora. Before bidding her farewell, he develops strange forebodings about the next adventure in Greece: "Nor I know why this next appears the last." At Medora's tower, he overhears her singing sadly. He declares his love, takes off for Greece, and leaves Medora despondent. He realizes as he boards the ship, "never loved he half as much as now."

Canto I speaks of the freedom of the pirates through the rhetoric of revolution. The pirates, in their comparative security, jack themselves up--provoking a furor, unaware yet of the dangers of their activism. Their song leaves no room for defeat. Working under ideal conditions, that is, without facing immediate danger, performing tasks which prepare them for a journey, the corsairs sing of the

noble climax of a defiant death. They have set themselves against the imagined opposition of society which they view as oppressive. At this point, their very defiance is suspicious, perhaps grounded in Byron's political cynicism. As oppressive and restrictive as society may be, the corsairs never clearly explain their rebellion. What precisely are they defying?

The hold of Conrad over the pirates seems circumstantial. He is the Napoleon of the poem,[37] although his motives and methods are questionable. If the corsairs are not defying a legitimate immediate threat to their society, they are defying a set of rules and social order that Conrad's demeanor presumes to defy. The poem's language carefully describes Conrad's physical bearing as if it explained his ideological motivation: "In Conrad's form seems little to admire,/Though his dark eyebrow shades a glance of fire" (195-6). His men are appalled at his visage: "There was a laughing Devil in his sneer" (224). A man who carries the Devil's sneer and whose glance shows fire already has plenty by which to inspire vagabond revolutionaries. The toll of activism on personal lives is an unspoken condition of revolutionary action. The pirates sacrifice their individuality (through a commitment to personal freedom) to Conrad through a vague sense of the greater good they will accomplish.

The first scene of Canto II with the Muslems at Coron parallels the opening scene with the corsairs. The night Conrad departs the corsairs' isle, the Pasha Seyd makes a feast. The Muslems are celebrating in advance their victory over the Greeks. The scene centers around food and its place in a society in which the servers are slaves and the consumers are despotic rulers, and substantiates Byron's speech to Parliament. Byron associates eating well with political authority, stressing the banqueting, the sumptuous fare, the salt and the dainties. In the course of their dancing and feasting, which is both political and religious, the Turks see a mysterious stranger arrive in their midst. "A captive dervise, from the Pirate's nest/Escaped is here - himself would tell the rest" (II, 49-50). Prostrating himself in front of the Pasha through verbal blandishments, the dervise reveals himself dramatically with a burst of light and heroic movements in warrior garb. His corsairs infiltrate the palace of feasting. The Pasha escapes to a fortress, whereupon the corsairs torch the palace.

Recognizing that women are in danger, the pirates save them from the flames. Conrad rescues the harem queen Gulnare, who happens to be the Pasha's favorite. The Pasha declares he will avenge the corsairs by capturing Conrad, whose men have departed. The Turks imprison the leader of the corsairs. Contemplating a solitary death in prison, Conrad's forebodings as he left Medora were well-founded.

Conrad loses his presence of mind and, unable to sleep, cannot even declare his thoughts. Wondering how Medora will greet the corsairs' tidings of his imprisonment, he gradually becomes sleepy.

Gulnare sneaks from the Pasha's fortress, arriving to marvel at the pirate's sleeping form: "What sudden spell hath made this man so dear?/True - 'tis to him my life, and more, I owe,/And me and mine he spared from worse than woe:/'Tis late to think - but soft, his slumber breaks - /How heavily he sighs! - he starts - awakes!" (II, 424-428). When he wakens, she vows he will not die at the hands of the Turks. Conrad warns her: "Tempt not thyself with peril--me with hope" (II, 470), then confesses his love for Medora. Gulnare describes her disdain for the Pasha and her admiration of and gratitude to the corsair. She departs leaving him bewildered, and he finds no refreshment in sleep.

Other ambiguities surface in Canto II. By paralleling the opening scenes of the first two cantos, Byron equates the tyranny of the Pasha with the hold of Conrad over the corsairs. Their main difference lies in the way the celebrations occur for each group of revolutionaries. For the corsairs, celebration occurs as a song about their lives and about an intensely romantic leader. For the Turks, the making of a religious feast brings them together to celebrate in advance their victory over the Greeks.

proleptic celebration is a time-honored tradition among people striving for something--any election year proves that. It is also a means by which people prepare themselves psychologically for the task ahead whether they are the conquerors or the vanquished. A celebration in advance, as the Turks learn, also leaves a group vulnerable to infiltration. In both the Turks' and pirates' cases, fear and subjugation keep the revolutionaries in order, and in neither case is the preparation entirely successful. The rhetoric of revolution, the cry to victory on both sides of the battle, is not sufficient to overcome the technical difficulties of action.

The single-minded songs of the corsairs belie a deficiency in their view of life as revolutionaries. Facing the sea, they behold their boundless empire. Their empire is only boundless because they view it in terms of the sea--were they to look toward the land, they would see obstructions. They face away from boundaries on land--and it is on land they will be bounded. Their point of view away from the land heightens their sense of power. Of course, the sea is a boundless empire for them; it is action on land which gives them trouble.

Their trouble on land, the failed coup, shows that for the corsairs rash actions cannot be retracted. They set the ships on fire prematurely, leaving Conrad to pay the personal price for their plenary action. His behavior while

imprisoned directly contradicts the opening song of the pirates. Conrad does not want to snatch the life of life; instead, "There is a war, a chaos of the mind" (II, 328). The ambiguity here is that, under ideal conditions, the psychological force of bravado propels the corsairs, but the actual circumstances of action cripple them. They talk of conducting their lives in accordance with sound principles, but they cannot implement these principles of activism--they flee. The ideals they express while making the ship ready transmogrify into self-preservation and rationalization during the situation that calls for implementation of the ideals. What gives Conrad his power over the corsairs? The question is never fully answered in the poem. He personifies mystery--a perfect example of the Byronic Hero. Is it enough that he appears infallible and aloof to secure the loyalty of others--especially disaffected others such as those who would be pirates?

An account of Conrad's fitful sleep opens Canto III. Visions of Greece torment him--then he wishes for freedom, imagining the corsairs' isle. Fortified by his visions, and a possible psychic link to Medora who remains despondent, Conrad thinks only of rescue and revenge. Meanwhile, Gulnare has suggested to the Pasha that Conrad be ransomed for his treasures, a plea which Seyd in his mistrust construes as a sign of Gulnare's infidelity. He threatens her.

With nothing much else to do, Conrad reverts to doubt and dread in his prison cell. As a storm arises, a destitute Conrad prays. Gulnare arrives and tells of her love for him and of a perfect chance for him to kill the Pasha with a knife she has secured. At his refusal, she decides to kill the Pasha Seyd herself. Seeing Gulnare return covered with blood "banishes all beauty from her cheek." Gulnare's vassals unchain Conrad and take him to the ship she has secured. In disbelief, Conrad reviews the events culminating in the murder of the Pasha and his freedom. Gulnare pleads with him not to censure her. Gulnare's ship meets up with that of the corsairs--the sight of which renews Conrad. Through his refreshed eyes, Gulnare once again seems queenly: "Yet even Medora might forgive the kiss" he bestowed upon Gulnare. Arriving at the corsairs' isle, Conrad hurriedly seeks Medora, whom he finds dead in her tower holding cold flowers. Conrad's heart shatters and he disappears.

In Canto III, Conrad is both a failed revolutionary and an effective example. For while the trauma-induced visions he sees in prison seem to refute the ideals he and the pirates uphold on their own territory, his actions during the confrontation with the Pasha and the Turks inspire Gulnare to act on behalf of her own freedom. Conrad and Gulnare present solutions to the problem which Byron poses through activism. Conrad conducts his life according to

political principles, but later he disappears; apparently the principles were not sound enough--Conrad has gained nothing in this adventure. Gulnare, on the other hand, learns to conduct herself in accordance with the example of Conrad's behavior toward her in the harem. Gulnare has gained her freedom through Conrad's example of liberation, not destruction. The complex interaction of idealism and activism finds its nexus in Gulnare, who risks much more than Conrad, and certainly more than the corsairs, to gain her own freedom. Conrad's rescue of her and his example have awakened her desire to be free from the Pasha at whatever cost.

There are neither large scale revolutionary victors nor losers in The Corsair. The victor, Gulnare, has paid a great price for her freedom--oblivion--it seems. The loser, Medora, has paid the ultimate price - her life - and was not even a revolutionary. As the poem ends, neither faction has been destroyed; and though they are disabled--the corsairs through the disappearance of Conrad and the Turks through the death of Seyd--they are free to regroup as their situations and dispositions require.

Conrad presents a most obvious example of political ambivalence. At face value, he seems to possess the charismatic qualities necessary for a man to lead a band of revolutionaries, a Byronic hero. As the chief pirate, Conrad holds mysterious sway over his people and for them is

the embodiment of revolutionary activism. As one who snatches "the life of life," Conrad underscores the importance of strong leadership during times of crisis. Conrad prefigures John Balfour of Burley in Old Mortality by two years, and, as representatives of a type, both exemplify strength through commitment to activism. Despite that Conrad and Burley spearheaded revolutionary or violent movements which ultimately ended in defeat, they were effective in their milieu. Consider Napoleon, a real man of undisputed charisma, who also weathered a humiliating defeat. Conrad is in a sense a fictional interpretation of Bonaparte.

Conrad's defeat at the hands of the Turks is not enough to brand him a failure as a revolutionary figure. After Conrad decides to head off the Pasha at Coron, the narrator puzzles over Conrad's ability to rouse such numbers of men and, significantly, arrives at no clear conclusion. His apparent strength, for the moment, is enough. Byron embeds a satiric element into the account of Conrad. The question of Conrad's hold is not answered explicitly in the poem; however, in Canto III, for all his charisma and determination the pirates describe in their opening song, Conrad becomes a hero fallen quickly into disrepute. As an embodiment of political activism, Conrad falls far short: he is captured, his men leave him, and he cannot accept a

woman's rescue, nor face death as resolutely as described in the pirates' song.

Conrad's ambivalence toward the ideal should not negate his effectiveness as a figurehead for personal liberation to a band of pirates. Byron himself experienced ambivalence, and this did not in the least hinder his effectiveness as a figurehead. He even spliced his observations about ambivalence into his work. Failure, in a sense, is beside the point; in between the beginnings of activism and ultimate failure lies the history of how people are compelled to act in times of crisis.

People are compelled to act at such times by persuasive leaders or symbols, as Burley, Byron, and Napoleon prove. Another of the ambiguities of Byron's political narrative is that symbols or leaders do not always have their intended effect. A case in point is the second element of the ambivalence embedded in Conrad's character. As rescuer of those he deems oppressed, the harem women, he holds a superior position grounded in the idea of women as the weaker sex. They seem to have no real place in the activities of pirates except as rescue opportunities. But the situation reverses when Conrad loses his poise in prison. As the chief "whom all obey," Conrad tries to prove his power over the pirates (who fumble in their sneak attack), over the Turks (whose Pasha escapes, and who imprison him), and over the women. Conrad is unable to

accept responsibility for how his behavior has inspired Gulnare. The Corsair has failed as an example to everyone except the harem queen. Gulnare acts to secure her own freedom through the example of Conrad.

Conrad's leadership proves an effective example to Gulnare, but his behavior makes much the same point as Burley's in Scott's Old Mortality. Conrad, learning of the oppression of Greeks by Turkish conquerors, advances to subdue them. It is tough to fight oppression with kindness, but it is also tough to fight oppression without instituting another form in its place. Hence Conrad oppresses of his fellow pirates (which recalls Burley's oppression of his fellow Covenanters) who dare not approach him without first knowing his mood. Sometimes a movement to overthrow oppression, or gain freedom from an imagined oppression, becomes as oppressive as the system it intends to overthrow.

Very likely more people have read The Corsair than have seen Il Corsaro. Despite what Kelsall calls the nullity of Byron's political achievement, Byron's poetry and reputation were still active parts of Italian cultural life twenty-four years after his death. Byronismo was a mainstay of Italian cultural life from the 1830s through the 1860s. If failure eradicated effort and obliterated meaning, there would be no history of a great part of human struggle and endeavor. Anyway, Il Corsaro was a failure, though it still gained political power by combining equal parts Byronismo,

The Corsair, and Verdi. As an operatic monument, Il Corsaro shrinks against La Traviata and Il Trovatore. But as part of the Italian mainstream of political thought, it equals other Verdi creations through its appropriation of Byron.

Circumstances Surrounding Il Corsaro

Though neither I due Foscari nor Il Corsaro was a success, the circumstances of their creation is telling, both in terms of Byronismo and of Byron himself. Audience expectation for I Due Foscari was so high due to the advance word that the opera did not meet the unrealistic expectations--though by the standards of other composers, twelve curtain calls for the author indicate that Verdi scored impressively. It is possible that by the time Corsaro was presented, Italian audiences were already so infused with appreciation for Byron that one more opera made little difference either way to the cause. Verdi and Byron were so well-known as lightning rods for political fervor that perhaps a new stage combination, though capable of firing up those who attended, was not an essential experience for operagoers. Just as those who were not directly exposed to The Corsair could respond to Byron's messages as they were popularly known, those who were not exposed to the stage spectacle could also respond to the amalgamation of Byron and Verdi. By 1848, Verdi had already

accomplished so much to promote liberal causes that, even though Corsaro was not a hit, Verdi's good name from previous achievements could carry the day. Besides, the failure of Il Corsaro probably has more to do with Verdi's refusal to attend the premiere than with any deficiency in the opera itself.

Between the beginnings of Byron's reputation on the continent and the Revolutions of 1848, Verdi's Il Corsaro shows how Byron and politics compelled the composer to action. Verdi's adaptation of Byron, via his librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, runs closely alongside The Corsair. Given that Byron and his poem were very popular in Italy (in the end, more popular there than in his own country), that The Corsair examines activism, that Verdi and his politics too were very popular in Italy, and that Verdi went through a Byronic phase, I now turn to Il Corsaro as a revolutionary reading of The Corsair. Il Corsaro joins Byron's ambiguities to Verdi's political certainties. The result is an opera which draws on the operatic components of the poem and rejects the obvious ambiguities of the poem in favor of a streamlined reading of revolutionary activity.

Il Corsaro as a Reading of The Corsair

The poem itself seems operatic in structure--three cantos of fast-paced ottava rima. Much of it has been streamlined to fit the specifications of a libretto. However, the libretto of the opera has much the same structure as the poem. Act I parallels Canto I. The pirates open the scene with a song glamorizing the dangerous life they lead. A major difference, though, is that Corrado (Conrad's operatic counterpart) is present during the opening scene. The mystery he achieved in the poem was in part due to his absence and the pirates' and narrator's description of him. In the opera, Corrado sings of his own mystery, hinting that it is because of love gone wrong.

Corrado's messenger arrives with the news of dangerous Turkish political activity; as in the poem, Corrado decides that he and the corsairs must at once depart to thwart the Turks. He seeks out Medora, overhears her romanza, joins her in a love duet, and then bids her farewell. Though Act I closely follows Canto I, a significant difference occurs. Though Verdi and Piave streamlined the action, the main difference between the poem and the opera is the manner in which Corrado's mystery is presented. Conrad's mysterious demeanor arises from both the narrator and the corsairs, and, as the narrative unfolds, the verses indicate an ironic distance between the ideal which Conrad personifies and his behavior. Piave and Verdi do not have as direct an option

to portray Corrado's ambiguity. Ambiguity in Corrado's character must be portrayed in the music, and that is something Verdi has not done. Italian audiences could swallow ambiguity. After all, they embraced Byron's published works, redolent with ambivalence. But on the opera stage, it is nearly impossible to portray ambiguity such as Conrad's.

Act II parallels Canto II. Just as in the poem, the second part opens with the Turks and a feast. However, Gulnare sings of the impending feast with dread at the prospect of seeing the Pasha. She already despises him without the example of Corrado. After her aria, the feast is not as lushly described in Piave's verses as it is in Byron's. In fact the feast is not much more than a stage direction. In its place, however, Verdi and Piave have placed a direct commentary on oppression in place of the description of food. The Turks celebrate in advance their victory over the Greeks--but they do so with a hymn to Allah which aligns political and economic power with consumption of food. Their merriment is interrupted by the arrival of a dervish--Corrado in disguise. The galleys go up in flames, Corrado and his men are revealed, harem women are rescued and Corrado is imprisoned. Unlike his poetic counterpart, Corrado faces death squarely. The ambiguity which characterized Conrad's imprisonment in the poem is nowhere to be found in the opera.

Act III reflects Canto III--toward the end with the clarity of a carnival mirror. Gulnare pleads for Corrado's safety, and receives threats from the Pasha in return. Stealthily she visits Corrado in prison and offers him a dagger to kill the Pasha and escape the death which awaits him in the morning. Like his poetic counterpart, Corrado refuses the offer and Gulnare feels compelled to take matters into her own hands. The opera changes the poem in that Medora survives to greet the corsair upon his return from captivity. She survives for a longer period in the opera than the poem because she is needed in a trio toward the end. The result, however is the same because she dies, Corrado disappears, and Gulnare is consigned once more to oblivion.

Piave and Verdi have adapted Byron's poem in terms of revolution, but because Il Corsaro is a warped reading of The Corsair, none of the ambivalence of Byron's poem surfaces. The opera has streamlined the poem in more ways than one. Where Corsair has a surfeit of detail, Corsaro has limited its scope to those scenes in the poem focused on action. Where Corsair endows Conrad with the necessary accoutrements of a hero (and then simultaneously shows the underside of idealistic action), Corsaro deals only with Corrado's heroism and courage in facing danger and rescuing Gulnare. The demands of opera for effective

characterization, a character less wavering than the poetic Conrad, necessitated a transformation of Conrad's character.

Verdi's Byronism reached full fruit with the production of Corsaro, which, originally planned for London, actually premiered in Trieste. The fruit may have gone sour because, in comparison even to Foscari, Corsaro was a flop. It was not helped by Verdi's abandonment of it after his earnest correspondence regarding his love for it. But while Foscari is linked to Byron through musical language, Corsaro has no such pedigree. Corsaro is linked to the composer and the poet in a less careful manner--but, in a sense, it is more revolutionary than Foscari because it attempts to solve the problems of ambiguity which Byron embeds in the poem. Corsaro replaces Byron's ambiguities about activism with a brashness of musical language not found in Foscari.

Verdi's reception of Byron has been roundly dismissed, though if we view Byron as a figurehead, we see that Verdi has tapped into a vital source of inspiration which outlasted his appropriation of Byron's works. Though The Corsair was immensely popular, Verdi's translation suffered from poor reception which Budden and Kimbell attribute to Verdi's disregard of the project. His disregard, I think, was prompted by the scurrilous dealings which the composer was forced to undertake to get the opera produced rather than an innate judgment against Byron or the opera. By its

premiere, Verdi cared little how the opera was performed; audiences cared little that it was performed.

Verdi abandoned Byron in the sense that he would never again draw on the poet as a direct source for inspiration. Verdi did not abandon Byronismo if we realize the impact of Byron's death in Greece; by the time Corsaro was composed, Byron had been dead twenty four years, and he and the composer were already linked in the public eye as proponents of nationalism. Verdi had already proven himself as his works carried a nationalistic message to their audiences. In the nineteenth century, contemporaries of Verdi knew of no more beautiful merging of opera with the causes of Italians than Verdi. Mazzini knew of no more beautiful alliance of poetry with the cause of people than Byron.

The commingling of Byron and Verdi presents a telling moment of Italian cultural life. The reception of The Corsair in terms of opera ultimately resulted in resounding failure, but the carry-over from the composer's political liaison with the reputation of Byron upholds the strength of Byron's presence in Italy. Despite its failure, the opera adopts an ambiguous point of view from the poem, transforming it into some salient observations about power and control.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. See Daniel P. Watkins, Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987). Most studies of Byron, even if the focus is not political, include references to the poet's political leanings. One could glean this from almost any source, but see, among others Philip W. Martin, Byron: A Poet Before His Public (New York: Cambridge UP, 1982); and Michael Foot, The Politics of Paradise: A Vindication of Byron (London: Collins, 1988); and Peter J. Manning, Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts (New York: Oxford UP, 1990).

2. See Angus Calder, Byron (Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1987). See also Peter Larson Thorslev, The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962).

3. Budden, 367.

4. Kimbell, 515.

5. See Cecil Hopkins, A Bibliography of the Works of Giuseppe Verdi 1813-1901 (New York: Brooks Brothers Limited, 1978).

6. See Charles Osborne, The Complete Operas of Verdi (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

7. David R.B. Kimbell, Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism (Cambridge UP, 1981), 485.

8. See Chapter Three, note 28.

9. Kimbell quotes Swinburne as deriding Byron's poems--which Swinburne thought actually improved with translation (Kimbell, 485).

10. David Lawton, "'The Corsair' Reaches Port," Opera News (June 1982): 18.

11. For a more detailed account of Byron's political activity in Italy, see Allan Massie, Byron's Travels (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988).

12. Lawton, 16.

13. Kimbell says Maffei "presumably stimulated" Verdi. Kimbell, 488.

14. Melchiori, 112.

15. In "Impact on Italian Opera," Giacomo Antonino suggests that Byron's influence extends to the characterization of the operatic hero. Presumably, after Byron's emergence on the Italian scene, heroes in operas were transformed into Byronic heroes, that is, detached people who are hard to manage (The Byron Journal, I. 1973).

16. Melchiori, 114.

17. Melchiori, 116.

18. Peter Jones, The 1848 Revolutions (Essex England: Longman, 1981), 55.

19. Melchiori, 115.

20. Kimbell, 139.

21. Berlin, 290.

22. Gerhart von Westerman, Opera Guide (New York: Dutton, 1965), 294.

23. Lord Byron, Selected Prose, ed. Peter Gunn (New York: Penguin, 1972), 182.

24. William St. Clair, "The Impact of Byron's Writings," Byron: Augustan and Romantic, ed. Andrew Rutherford (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 7.

25. Quoted in Leslie A. Marchand, ed. Wedlock's the devil: Byron's Letters and Journals, vol. 4 1814-1815. (Cambridge Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1975), 37.

26. Quoted in Gunn, 182.

27. Malcolm Kelsall, Byron's Politics (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 15.

28. Jerome McGann, "Introduction," Byron (Oxford UP, 1986), xix.

29. McGann, xi.

30. Quoted in P.H. Scott, "Byron and Scott," Byron and Scotland: Radical or Dandy, ed. Angus Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1989), 54.

31. Watkins, 16.

32. Watkins, 28-29.

33. Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self Fashioning

from More to Shakespeare (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

34. For a detailed discussion of framework-knitters, see E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage, 1966).

35. Quoted in Gunn, 105. In a related vein, Vivian de Sola Pinto writes in Byron and Liberty (The Folcraft Press, 1969):

> The so-called industrial revolution or process by which the old feudal agricultural England was being replaced by the England of large scale industry had created for the first time an immense English proletariat, a population of wage earners with no property who were therefore outside the pale of the English conception of liberty. (13)

Such a condition was enough to outrage Byron's sensibilities and spur him to action in the House of Lords.

36. McGann, xvi-xvii. Byron was well aware of the effect of his writings on the English reading public, and he relished the game of many readers to find Byron in the characters in his work. This was an especially popular past time with Childe Harold. In the same letter to Thomas Moore which precedes The Corsair, Byron writes of the audience perception of his relation to Childe Harold:

> Be it so - if I have deviated into the gloomy vanity of 'drawing from self,' the pictures are

probably like, since they are unfavourable; and if not, those who know me are undeceived, and those who do not, I have little interest in undeceiving....I must admit Childe Harold to be a very repulsive personage; and as to his identity, those who like it must give him whatever 'alias' they please.

37. According to McGann, "The figure of Conrad focuses the rebellious careers of a whole series of similar historical characters referred to in the poem's notes" (endnote, 445).

CHAPTER V

BULWER AND GERMANY: WAGNER, RIENZI, AND THE IDEA OF REFORM

In the spring of 1848, like most other Europeans, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Richard Wagner had revolution on their minds. In England in February, Bulwer had published a second preface to a new edition of Rienzi, the Last of the Roman Tribunes (1835)[1] in which he remarked on renewed Italian interest in this story of one of Italy's most famous sons.[2] The novel is dedicated to another of its famous sons, patriotic novelist Alessandro Manzoni. During April and May in Germany, meanwhile, Wagner conducted the Royal Orchestra at Dresden, had already authored several revolutionary tracts, and was to address an audience convinced that the populace should be armed. His subject was the relationship between the republic and the monarchy. Because of his politics, Wagner had to cancel an upcoming performance of his opera Rienzi (1842), based on Bulwer's novel, in order not to incite a public demonstration.

The chronological proximity of Wagner's Rienzi to Bulwer's Rienzi belies the changes to which the novel was subjected on its way to the opera stage. Just as Bulwer encoded his political beliefs about the England of 1835 into

the received history of the Roman Tribune, Wagner engaged the Roman Tribune on terms specific to the Germany of 1837-1842. Bulwer deviated from his source material to conform the tale of Rienzi to his ideas about history and fiction. Wagner deviated from Bulwer's account to fit his musical ideas and his theory of history.

To late twentieth century audiences, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Richard Wagner may seem a strange intellectual pairing. Their reputations could not be more dissimilar. Indeed, the few scholarly studies of the relationship between Bulwer's and Wagner's versions of Rienzi reflect the comparatively low standing of the opera and the novel; Richard A. Zipser and John Deathridge have produced the only full length studies of the relationship between these versions of Rienzi.[3] Their works are foundational to mine. Zipser focuses on Bulwer's use of history and Wagner's utter condensation of the novel into an account of the dominant personality of Rienzi. Deathridge approaches Rienzi as an example of Wagner's compositional method.

Whereas Wagner is regarded by admirers and disparagers alike as one of the great geniuses of the nineteenth century, Bulwer-Lytton is hardly regarded at all. Yet Bulwer's treatment of the life of the fourteenth century Roman was hugely successful and encouraged Wagner to compose his first operatic success.[4] Rienzi is, apart from Die Feen, the least studied of Wagner's operas--perhaps because

it does not evince the same useful links to Wagner's autobiography as the others do. Neither has it the same connection between theory and practice as his other operas beginning with Der fliegende Hollander. But we can explain Wagner's connection to Bulwer by focussing on the links in the opera to Wagner's early ideology.

Wagner adapted Bulwer's clear political purpose in Rienzi. The novel would appeal to any revolutionary, of course, but Bulwer has embedded in his account of Rienzi a point of view which would appeal specifically to a German sensibility such as Wagner's. To show this, I will discuss Bulwer's reputation and activities in England, his relationship to Germany and reception by German readers, and Wagner's encounter with Bulwer's novel. Then I will turn to the structure and content of the opera as a reading of Rienzi.

Bulwer, Wagner, and the Limitations of History

Bulwer-Lytton and Wagner had complementary, if not completely compatible, views about the presentation of history. Bulwer believed that history was more truthfully relayed through the novelist's art than through the historian's narrative.[5] Wagner displayed a similar, though more extreme, point of view. According to Robert W. Gutman, "In his essay 'Religion and Art,' Wagner had warned against

the lies of reality taught by historians; he, the poet-priest, alone revealed ideal truth."[6] The poet-priest aimed to remedy the inaccuracies of traditional history and musical history. While Bulwer questioned the veracity of written history, Wagner targeted history as a concept and as it appeared on the opera stage. He sought the higher truth of the soul and therefore never hesitated to rewrite history or his sources to fit his needs.

Bulwer's and Wagner's mistrust of history first manifested itself in remarkably similar ways. Bulwer believed that historical narratives impeded a reader's true understanding of history. By neglecting the history of the human heart, traditional historical narratives were dry and lifeless. Bulwer's contemporaries could not learn about history or gain any new knowledge of themselves from traditional history because historical accounts did not seem connected to contemporary life. Bulwer saw history as arid prose. Traditional narratives gave nineteenth-century readers a sense of historical people and events as remote from their concerns.

Similarly, Wagner's mistrust of historians and written history carried over to German opera. Whereas Bulwer did not trust historians to tell the complete multilayered truth, Wagner thought that historians taught the monolithic lies of history. Historical narrative created a sense of the past that was too dependent upon interpretation for its

effects. While Bulwer thought readers were misled about the nature of the past by faulty historical accounts, Wagner maintained that historical narratives diverted German people from recognition of the true glories of their culture. Wagner "renounced ... the historical, with its dependence on interpretation, and embraced the mythical, whose source is his favorite theme, the noble intuition of the Folk."[7] History, when it neglected myth and intuition, was unsuited to drama. Bulwer sought what he called the truth of the heart, and Wagner sought what he might call the truth of the soul.[8]

Bulwer's manner of modifying the presentation of history shared outward features with Wagner's. Bulwer was an idealist prone to investigating mythology and the occult as a means to understand the present, but he was also a scholar of actual history. In his fiction he viewed interpretation as a necessity, as the quality lacking in previous inquiry. Bulwer interpreted factual material with scholarship tempered by intuition. Wagner--also a student of myth who freely adapted ideas from many sources--sought to rectify the mistakes of history through promotion of a Germanic cultural ideal. He funneled myths from many sources into his operas. He would probably not view his efforts to assimilate history into music as interpretation. Rather than negotiate idealism with the realities of everyday life as Bulwer did, Wagner attempted to harness the

mythic, to actually embody his mythic and idealistic visions in his work.

Although Bulwer revered the idea of interpretation as a way to make the past accessible to his readers and Wagner disdained the act of interpretation as one of the lies of history, their goals were quite similar. Bulwer aimed to educate his audience in the manners, hopes, and strengths of ancient people. He attempted to show that historical figures dealt with social problems similar to those facing his contemporaries. Wagner tried to wean Germans away from French culture and the fussy over-intellectualized manner of German opera which he thought distorted German cultural life. Wagner eventually reformed his audience's ideas about what German opera could accomplish. Bulwer and Wagner shared outward similarities which break down when compared point by point but their ultimate goals were to reform their audiences for the better.

In their respective versions of the story of Rienzi, Bulwer and Wagner put into practice their theoretical goals --the reform of their audiences through the reform of history. Bulwer amplified the psychological motives for Rienzi's actions rather than emphasizing the tribune's ambition. His approach to Rienzi exemplified his maxim that history could be more truthfully relayed through the novelist's art than the historian's. For example, Bulwer opposed the primacy of the outward history of man he

perceived in Edward Gibbon's work to the inward history of man he produced in Rienzi.[9] Rienzi's inward history was not documented and had to be accounted for in the intuitive way of the novelist.

Wagner's reform of history was not as clearly accomplished in his version of the Tribune's career as Bulwer's since, as we shall see, he borrowed liberally from the very sources he opposed. Wagner was also at a different point in his career at the time he composed Rienzi than Bulwer was when he wrote the novel. Bulwer, compared to Wagner, had no contrarieties to resolve in producing his theory and acting on it. However, even if Wagner's Rienzi does not perfectly exemplify his theories about German cultural life and history, his version contains the idealistic seeds of the renewal of German cultural life. If history could be more fully relayed through the "poet-priest" than the historian, then Wagner invoked the mythic grand visions which would realize the inner and outer history of man through music.

Given that Bulwer was dissatisfied with traditional history and used the received narratives of the life of Rienzi to negotiate his dissatisfaction; and that Wagner was dissatisfied with traditional and music history and used Bulwer's account of the Tribune as the start of his theoretical exploration of music and history, Rienzi had great currency as an idea for the reforms which Bulwer and

Wagner advocated. Each of them took an ideological risk in his adoption of Rienzi. Bulwer challenged the received perceptions of Rienzi and tested his contemporaneous theory about the writing of fiction and history in his novel. He revised history in terms of how people cause events rather than just how they are affected by them. Wagner was rejecting the traditional forms of Germanic opera in favor of a hybrid of French Grand opera and Romantic sensibility.[10] Wagner explored issues that would find fuller fruit in his later operas and later theoretical writings. In Rienzi he set up the beginnings of a pro-Teutonic agenda using fiction, music, and cross-cultural reference points.

Although Bulwer and Wagner were thinking of revolution simultaneously, their theoretical writings about the subject were not produced at the same time. This means that Bulwer's Rienzi, written contemporaneously with his theoretical ideas about history, clearly manifests those ideas. By 1835, Bulwer was a skilled historical theorist and one of the foremost practitioners of his genre of fiction. Wagner wrote his treatises about history some ten years after composing Rienzi. Especially when one considers that soon after Rienzi Wagner began to organize his musical priorities, one would do well when discussing Rienzi to keep in mind Wagner's extreme mistrust of traditional history. Even if it means looking backwards, one can see that Rienzi

exemplifies Wagner's early dissatisfaction with traditional modes of historical/operatic storytelling.

Bulwer's Horizon of Expectation

Bulwer's aim to get to the truth of the human heart through the medium of historical fiction becomes clearer when we examine his horizon of expectations. Bulwer's use of history in fiction was informed by his interest in Germany, his reaction to Walter Scott as a forebear, and his belief that historians did not do justice to history in general and Rienzi in particular. An earlier version of Rienzi, Mary Mitford's five act tragedy, arrived in 1828, seven years before Bulwer's account. Bulwer expresses respect for Mitford's accomplishments

> I cannot conclude without rendering the tribute of my praise and homage to the versatile and gifted Author of the beautiful Tragedy of Rienzi. Considering that our hero be the same--considering that we had the same materials from which to choose our rival stories--I trust I shall be found to have little, if at all, trespassed upon ground previously occupied. (Preface of 1835)

Nevertheless, Mitford's version of Rienzi did not affect Bulwer's horizon as much as his interest in Germany. Mitford's play was also available in Germany but achieved

nowhere near the estimation or fame of Bulwer's novel. Wagner too has insisted that Mitford had no bearing on his composition.

In Germany, as in Italy, English novelists were quite popular with readers. Bulwer was immensely popular in Germany during the 1830s. The author's radical politics, while not as persuasive as Byron's, still won him admirers in an unstable Germany. His popularity was widespread throughout the rest of Europe--Rienzi received several German and Italian translations. The most well-known German translation of Rienzi was G. N. Bärmann's. Richard A. Zipser writes of the intellectual currency of Rienzi in Germany:

> The ... most famous of these German versions [of Rienzi] is Richard Wagner's grand opera .... [C]ertain characters, episodes, and motifs in Bulwer's novel, without any foundation in history, were borrowed and sometimes transformed by his German imitators.[11]

That Bulwer's version of Rienzi's life caught Wagner's attention was not remarkable because according to Zipser, there were no other versions in Germany until after Bulwer's. Wagner's interest is remarkable for the speed with which he picked up the translation, and logical if one looks at the poetic, or novelistic, license which Bulwer had taken with the story.

The license which Bulwer took with the story has a great deal to do with his dissatisfaction with historical narratives; his dissatisfaction is directly related to his interest in Germany and things German. Zipser describes Bulwer's extensive German reading, and a cross-reference shows that Bulwer and Wagner had read many of the same authors. In his hunger for German thought, Bulwer read Heinrich Heine (whose works Wagner read at Leipzig), Ludwig Tieck (whose works Wagner read at the encouragement of his uncle), Johann Gottfried von Herder, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Bulwer's range of reading encompassed history, philosophy, music, science, and even occult mysticism.[12] Since ideas were circulated in books, it is important given the pro-German context of both the literary and operatic Rienzi to know that Bulwer and Wagner had read the same material.

Bulwer established a reciprocal relationship between himself and Germany because of his curiosity for its ideas. An appreciation for things German formed as strong a part of Bulwer's horizon of expectation as his historical interests. Bulwer eagerly received German thought after learning the language for reading knowledge at Cambridge. His knowledge of German thinkers influenced the way he conceptualized history. As he endowed his works with pro-Teutonic references, he in turn assured his popularity and influence in Germany.[13]

Bulwer was well-received because he was familiar with Goethe, Schiller, Ludwig Tieck and others and his German readers could well note the influence on his writings. His infusion of Germanic references into his work would ensure a certain kind of popularity, but he was also well received because his works spoke not only in the language of German cultural knowledge but also in the language of revolution. Germany, like the Rome of Rienzi, was fractious with the animosities between republicans and monarchists. The Tribune symbolized the unifying desires of the Germans. Germany after the July Revolutions in Paris collectively showed a fascination with liberalism and idealism which carried over into their literature.

Bulwer composed Rienzi with an eye toward Germany. In letters, Bulwer reveals a relatively low opinion of the English reading public. He certainly seemed to appreciate their devotion to him, and he worked in their interest during his years in Parliament. He also looked out for their intellectual welfare by attempting to challenge their thinking about historical knowledge. His high opinion of German writers dated back at least as far as his student days. Bulwer praised German audiences at the expense of his native readers. "In the preliminary scheme for the fragmentary 'History of the British Public,' Bulwer complained that English people were less inclined than the Germans to metaphysical problems."[14]

Bulwer referred to Johann Gottfried von Herder as the voice and character of the German race--praised for his monumental conception of history.[15] Though Bulwer and Wagner never had the chance to discuss their common interests either personally or through correspondence,[16] their ideas circulated quite freely on paper, in novels, essays, reviews of their works, and by reputation. For Bulwer to have conceived of a voice of a German race indicates in some measure that he was born to interest Wagner. As a transmitter of German thought in England, Bulwer was bound to register in Wagner's ideological imagination.

Despite Bulwer's opinion of English readers and his propensity to idealize foreign characteristics and ideas, Rienzi, upon publication, garnered favorable reviews. Bulwer was as likely to receive extravagant praise as disparaging censure for Rienzi, which was reviewed in Parterre, the Athenaeum, the Examiner, and the Literary Gazette; the general response was pleasure at Bulwer's artful genius.[17] For his devotion to scholarship, proved in detailed notes, he was at times castigated for bending the truth or using the truth subserviently to his idea of what should have been. Thackeray called Bulwer's prose "still born," and almost before the extensive work on Rienzi was conceptualized, Leigh Hunt criticized Bulwer's sense of history as an alteration of rather than an addition to

historical truth.[18] Because of its simultaneous artful distortion of truth and reliance upon historical sources, Bulwer's Rienzi has both literary and scholarly aspirations.

Bulwer was responding in his fiction to the example of his literary and scholarly forebears. Scott was criticized for shaping events and collapsing details in his fiction for the purpose of drama. Bulwer attempted to set himself apart from this criticism, but he did not get off Scott-free. His management of details has come under criticism.[19] Curtis Dahl maintains that Bulwer modified history to conform Roman ideas to the England of his time, and Andrew Brown holds that Bulwer "strategically suppressed or misrepresented almost all information contained in [his] sources which reflects unfavorably on the Tribune's character."[20] However, in Bulwer's time, Rienzi was seldom portrayed in anything but unfavorable terms, so Bulwer's account was revolutionary. Bulwer's crimes against veracity, while noteworthy, are not so great.[21]

Bulwer's fiction departed from the lessons of Scott. Whereas Scott created moderate fictional characters who bore the effects of major historical figures, Bulwer created fiction to account for the compelling circumstances of major historical figures. Scott wrote explanatory notes describing dialects, activities, and etymologies, whereas Bulwer's copious notes to Rienzi show that he negotiated his source material with his contemporary political and

theoretical interests. Bulwer was what we would call a reception theorist. Bulwer explains his scholarship in the preface to the 1848 edition of Rienzi:

> .... [I]ts interest is rather drawn from a faithful narration of the historical facts, than from the inventions of fancy. ...The events of his work are thus already shaped to his hand-the characters already created-what remains for him is the inner, not the outer, history of man- the chronicle of the human heart....

Bulwer, a thorough and conscientious historian, repaired the lacunae of historians before him with fictional devices.

In chapter II, "An Historical Survey - Not to be passed over, except by those who dislike to Understand what they Read," Bulwer accredits Edward Gibbon with the first of numerous historical details which verify his story. He undertook the life of Cola di Rienzo (popularly known as Rienzi) to rectify the mistakes he saw in Gibbon.[22] Gibbon's account includes "as much detail as if Rienzi had returned from the grave to assist his narration. These obvious inventions have been adopted ... with more good faith than the laws of evidence would warrant."[23] Bulwer laments the habit of historians even as he salutes them by the veracity of his notes. Rienzi "embraces the variety of characters necessary to a true delineation of events."[24]

Bulwer was also conversant with contemporary historical accounts, proved by the note to chapter four which corrects the received opinion of the beginnings of the friendship of Rienzi and Petrarch. Bulwer managed details very carefully. In an appendix about the life and character of Rienzi, Bulwer had created in effect the lengthiest scholarly note of the novel--which in turn was itself heavily notated. Obviously Bulwer went to great lengths to gauge the psychological motives behind historical events. Bulwer explicates the political and moral thesis of <u>Rienzi</u> in the appendix of 1842:

> I have said that the moral of the Tribune's life, and of his fiction, is not the stale and unprofitable moral that warns the ambition of the individual.- More vast, more solemn, and more useful, it addresses itself to nations .... a People must not trust to individuals but themselves - that there is no sudden leap from servitude to liberty ... that their own passions are the real despots they should subdue, their own reason the regeneration of abuses ....[25]

Though the English were not dealing with strife in the same way as Germans and Italians, the message of <u>Rienzi</u> provoked critical discussions about Bulwer's management of details and once again provided political minded readers with reformation as a platform.[26]

Bulwer's Liberal Politics

Bulwer projected his political activities and interests onto Rienzi. His intellectual occupations of the period, including the composition of _Rienzi_, were aesthetically fruitful for they fictionalized abstract principles of the nature of spirituality and social justice. Although he had a personal stake in his work to maintain his standard of living and to illustrate social injustices, he is not present in his novels or essays in the way that Byron is present in _The Corsair_. Perhaps the reason is that Bulwer trafficked in fictionalized history while Byron historicized fiction--the implication being that Byron was unconstrained by formal scholarship in his presentation of the past. Critics do not read _Rienzi_ as a disguised account of Bulwer's life; that is, whereas critics read Byron's works as placemarkers in his personal life, such an approach to Bulwer-Lytton's writing during this period would make little sense and yield no great insights. Through his fiction he was able, like Scott and Byron, to suggest both the necessity and futility of social and political engagement.

The success of _Rienzi_ owes much to Bulwer's ability to create "the kind of hero that the paying public of the 1830s wanted to read about."[27] Thackeray and Hunt made quite clear that Bulwer was not universally admired, although he did have a huge audience. A hero for the 1830s would have to have been consistently heroic--above rebuke and

criticism. Aside from Bulwer's acumen at gauging his literary audience's taste, the timing for a novel about revolution was almost too perfect. The English were by and large in favor of the Reform Bill which Bulwer supported in Parliament. By the time of the publication of Rienzi, the Reform Bill had been in force for three years, although the English would struggle with reform several more times to finally obtain democratic representation of citizens. In a sense, the English were set for revolution. One hates to equate the events of England with those of Germany or Italy because revolutionary fervor about a Reform Bill is not the same thing as revolutionary fervor for release from foreign domination. The fervor in England was for the gradual process of franchisement instead of unabashed insurrection.

The Novel Manifests Bulwer's Horizon of Expectation

Bulwer's horizon of expectation is quite evident in Rienzi. Rienzi conforms to Bulwer's ideas about history, political reform, and Germany. As historical fiction, Rienzi is so specific to Bulwer that it is useful to imagine for a second how Scott might have dealt with the material. Had Scott attempted Rienzi, he might have focused on a moderate character, prefaced the appearance of the Tribune with speculation and talk of reputation, and finally produced Rienzi in Book V chapter 10. Adrian, as a

moderating force between familial devotion and civic duty, might have been Scott's entry into Rome of the 14th century. Rather than show Rienzi's character, Scott might have focused on the effect of Rienzi on Romans.[28]

Bulwer did show Rienzi's effect on Romans, but he delved into the Tribune's intellectual and emotional interests. Rienzi promotes historical knowledge as a way to deal with the present and the future, promotes a pro-Germanic point of view, and conforms to Bulwer's idea that history must be interpreted in order to gain meaning for his audience. His major characters in the novel are heroic or noble. Aside from the Tribune, whose fierce looks could make a soul "shrivel,"[29] the novel showcases his gentle sister Irene, Rienzi's ambitious wife Nina, the unscrupulous and heroic Walter de Montreal, and the smith Cecco del Vecchio.

Rienzi, a youth in the throes of his scholarship, has a great respect for ancient history. Rienzi's love of ancient history reflects Bulwer's interest in antiquarian pursuits. Bulwer encodes his own preoccupation into the character of Rienzi as a shorthand way of commenting on the importance of history. Rienzi's love of history, in view of his later behavior, supports the idea that the past is to be studied, emulated, modified and restored. Rienzi's goal, as he contemplates the days of ancient Rome, was to restore his contemporary Rome to glory.

His respect for ancient Rome coupled with the murder of his younger brother by Roman patricians transforms Rienzi into a revolutionary patriot. According to Zipser, the murder of Rienzi's younger brother does not occupy much space in historical accounts of the Tribune and therefore exemplifies Bulwer's use of a strong motive early on for the later activities of the Tribune against the nobles.

As he matures, Rienzi becomes the physical embodiment of the nobility of his soul. With a message that promises prosperity where there was once only terror and subservience to the patricians, Rienzi gains the attention of the Roman people with his stance against the oppressive nobles. Bulwer's implication is that Rienzi learned oratory through his familiarity with classics. His stature is a direct result of historical knowledge. His familiarity and skill with language presage a physical transformation. Adrian di Castello, a friend of Rienzi's youth and a member of the patrician family of Colonna, witnessed Rienzi's transformation from a youth withdrawn from the world into a patriotic activist.

Rienzi and Adrian again meet after Adrian saved Irene from abduction by a group of nobles; Rienzi has forsaken any title of power except Tribune. This is a decisive event in the politics of reform. By refusing a title Rienzi gains yet one more level of trust from the Romans who view his stance as proof of the reform he advocates. Adrian

expresses doubt that Rienzi will be able to satisfy the Romans with his orations because his audience cannot sustain an interest in oratory reasoning. The primacy of the word, the power of reason over force, is a very British concept, although Bulwer's application of it to Rienzi's era is not out of place. Rienzi iterates to Adrian the goals of his tribuneship, and Bulwer accounts for the Tribune's strength:

> Revenge and patriotism united in one man of genius and ambition - such are the Archimedian levers that find in FANATICISM the spot <u>out</u> of the world by which to move the world. The prudent may direct a state; but it is the enthusiast who regenerates it - or ruins.[30]

Adrian remains skeptical but duly astonished at the strength and charisma of Rienzi.

Bulwer remarks on Rienzi's strength and persuasiveness as the Tribune presents a speech which simultaneously pulls the crowd into allegiance with Rienzi's cause and shows the dangers inherent in stirring a large body of people:

> So great was the popular fervor, and so much had it been refined and deepened in its tone by the addresses of Rienzi, that even the most indifferent had caught the contagion; and no man liked to be seen shrinking from the rest; so that the most neutral, knowing themselves the most

> marked, were the most entrapped into allegiance to the Buono Stato.[31]

The danger is that people will not necessarily react according to their individual wishes. Rather they will be swept away by a perception of what is proper behavior by the dynamics of a group. Their power is with Rienzi at first, but it is later unleashed against him.

Rienzi guides Rome for seven months as its Tribune. Cecco del Vecchio, whom Bulwer spotlights at key times in the narrative for his reactions, stands for the average citizen whose quality of life Rienzi wants to improve. He also represents the changeable nature of Romans and fulfills Adrian's prophecy of their low toleration for reason. Cecco del Vecchio embodies the reason that historical knowledge is important, not only for those who govern but also for those who consent to be governed. Without the knowledge of the tradition which Rienzi upholds, Cecco and the other Romans were victimized by their own ignorance. They do not understand the horizon of expectation out of which the Tribune operates.

Bulwer portrays Rienzi as a great man with faults. Rienzi and Nina display themselves ostentatiously and throw banquets to appease the Romans, who become ungrateful; their lack of historical knowledge gives them no perspective on the goals of the Tribune. No longer at the mercy of greedy nobles, the general population resents the display of wealth

and power by the Tribune and Nina. Almost immediately upon his ascent to the post of Tribune, Rienzi becomes the target of disgruntled nobles stripped of power. Walter de Montreal, traveling mercenary and philosophical counterpoint to Rienzi, sees in the Tribune an obstacle to his own success. He advances the cause against Rienzi.

Bulwer habitually critiqued the French and Italian national characters by means of idealizing the Teutonic qualities of the Romans in Rienzi. Bulwer reworked Rienzi, Adrian and Walter de Montreal, changing their ancient characters to accommodate his Teutonic interests. Preparing the reader for the oppression of the Romans, Bulwer describes the influx of Germans.

> But besides the lesser and ignobler robbers, there had risen in Italy a far more formidable description of freebooters. A German, who assumed the lofty title of the Duke Werner ... besieged cities and invaded states, without any object less than that of pillage. His example was soon imitated ....[32]

Germans arrive in the ancient Rome as invaders, but before a generation passes, their qualities become idealized in the main characters.

For example, Adrian appears after Irene describes him to her companion, who remarks that the young noble is as

"bold as a Northman." As a matter of fact, the young noble is very like a Northman:

> The Colonna were stanch supporters of the imperial party, and Adrian di Castello had received and obeyed an invitation to the emperor's court. Under that monarch he had initiated himself in arms, and among the knights of Germany, he had learned to temper the natural Italian shrewdness with the chivalry of northern valor.[33]

Not only is the Germanic character desirable in and of itself, it leavens the baseness of the Italian character. The mature Rienzi is described "Leaning his cheeck on his hand, his brow somewhat knit .... Thick and auburn hair, the color of which, not common to the Romans, was ascribed to his descent from the Teuton emporer."[34] Even Walter de Montreal, though French, is described in terms that suggest a Germanic bent, focusing on his light brow and fair hair.

Montreal aids the House of Colonna with the plot to ouster Rienzi. Rienzi authors a citation with the temporary approval of the church which declares all Romans free. An orphaned youth, Angelo Villani, aligns himself with Rienzi by winning the graces of Nina. An attempt is made on Rienzi's life, and the popular cry becomes "Death to the Conspirators!" Rienzi flushes out the would-be assassins, the nobles, over whom he holds authority due to the respect he has earned from foreign states. Rienzi pardons the

conspirators but strips them of their power. Cecco del Vecchio says that "He has but increased the smoke and the flame which he was not able to extinguish."[35] The barons who plotted against the tribune were more disgraced by the pardon than by the failure of their attempt. Empowered by their grievance, the barons connive with the church to trump up charges against Rienzi. Rienzi's power threatens the church which engages the hostility of papal legate. The Tribune is stripped of his power and excommunicated, proclaimed a rebel and a heretic.

Exiled for seven years and imprisoned for a good part of that time, Rienzi changes physically and emotionally. At this point Bulwer proves wrong charges that he whitewashed the Tribune as Rienzi fattens, drinks too much and pities himself. Part of Rienzi's greatness arises from his own origins, his knowledge of where he came from and that he is vulnerable. His self-pity moves him into further ruminations, and he becomes mystical and remote. During Rienzi's absence, the ruling barons propose a tax, and the popular cry is for the return of Rienzi. Cecco is the most vocal foe of the tax. The former Tribune returns after a trial of his faith so that he may re-enter the church. Upon passing his examination, Rienzi becomes the Senator of Rome, still with the power to captivate his listeners.

Montreal becomes frustrated at the return of his nemesis, but predicts that, through the fickleness of the

Roman people, Rienzi again must fall. He organizes his mercenaries to bring that about, which is easy enough because Rienzi has lost his former allies and friends. Rienzi must convince the Romans of the importance of paying for their own defence and proposes a tax. They will not sit still for this; Montreal's mercenaries attack the capitol, beseeching Romans not to let Rienzi speak lest his oration charm them into complacency. The palace is burned, Nina perishes in flames, and Cecco del Vecchio and Angelo Villani (revealed to be the son of the recently executed Montreal) stab Rienzi to death.

Bulwer advances several ideas in Rienzi: that people's own passions are the despots they should subdue, that there is no sudden leap from servitude to liberty, that a knowledge of history as human truth is essential for coping with the present and providing for the future, and that fiction can remedy the lacunae of historical accounts. His second preface vindicates the points he argues in Rienzi. Bulwer sounds especially proud that Italian readers coopted his idea of fiction as a tool to spread a message. With Bulwer's moral in Rienzi in mind, we set the stage for Wagner's first large scale success.

Wagner's Horizon of Expectation

Wagner's horizon of expectation which brought forth the opera Rienzi operates on several levels simultaneously. Whereas Bulwer's was fairly straightforward, Wagner's horizon is as complex and contradictory as his later writings. For example, Wagner's horizon included a disdain for contemporary German music but it also included the strong belief that German music, carefully reconstructed, could rise above its fallow period and eventually eclipse other nationalistic forms as well. Like Bulwer's Rienzi, Wagner aimed to restore glory to a lapsed ideal. He was willing, in striving for his own brand of perfection, to experiment with the products of the French and Italian schools of music. His horizon also included a dissatisfaction with history, his preoccupation with his own biography, especially the question surrounding his ambiguous Jewish or Christian heritage, and his attraction to his sisters.[36] Each of these bears strikingly on his account of Rienzi.

Some of the most important issues to inform Wagner's use of Bulwer's novel include his disdain for history, his reactions against his operatic forebears, and his propensity for trafficking in liberal politics.[37] Wagner's conceptualization of the limits of history is complex because he was not, like Bulwer, interested in modifying written history. Rather, his interest was to supplant prior

accounts of history with the higher truth of his musical drama. Bryan Magee summarizes Wagner's theory by defining opera as the most successful combination of all the arts. Opera took its subject matter from myth

> which illuminates human experience to the depths and in universal terms. 'The unique thing about myth is that it is true for all time; and its content, no matter how terse or compact, is inexhaustible for every age.'[38]

To understand Wagner's horizon of expectation and his views about higher truth, it is useful to know of the frustrations he experienced.

At the time of the composition of Rienzi in 1840, Wagner had made a name for himself in Germany as a debtor, a reactionary, and an ambitious and impractical man. At this point, Bulwer was more widely known in Germany than Wagner. Wagner's sense of entitlement surfaced early and resulted in debt. In 1827, Wagner begged funds on a walking tour from Dresden to Prague; In 1829, he went into debt to prove his dramatic genius through music (earlier attempts at literary fame failed); By 1831, he drank heavily and gained a taste for gambling money he did not have; In 1834 he traveled extensively with his friend Theodor Apel while Apel paid the bills.

Along with the accumulation of debt, Wagner earned a reputation as a reactionary. Unwilling to attend school, he

did, however, enroll in Leipzig University to study music (Gutman writes that the only qualification for admission was to pay tuition.[39] One wonders how Wagner managed that). Young Wagner did not make many friends, or at least he alienated as many as he attracted. His habit was to talk at people rather than talk to them, and he did not suffer opposition gladly. As opposed to Bulwer's self-discipline, Wagner's self-indulgence might have seemed to be a ticket to oblivion, especially since he often turned on those who helped him the most--people who gave him money. Along with his indulgence, though, he possessed great self-determination. By all accounts, Richard Wagner was sure of his own genius; to those things which interested him he applied himself more than diligently.[40]

His diligence found an outlet as he conceived music as a nationalistic force. In his quest to improve the structure, content, and effect of German music, Wagner studied musical languages from across the borders. An essay on Bellini, published in 1837, elevates the "stable" forms of Italian opera in which passions might be communicated unequivocally by a single, clear bel canto line, over the intellectualized German style with its "obsessive disorder of forms, periods and modulations."[41] During his Paris years he produced a number of essays which reflect his development as a composer. Thomas Mann deemed Wagner a

"psychologist," where G.B. Shaw noted his "far reaching ideas of social conflict."

Neither view is exclusive, nor do Wagner's achievements fit neatly into stages which would make it necessary to choose between Wagner as psychologist or socialist. One could make the blanket statement that Rienzi is "early." In chronological terms, of course, it is. It is also ideologically early, but it rubs against other ideas which Wagner was incubating. His internal dialogue often spilled over onto paper, and he was capable of keeping several balls in the air simultaneously--the glory and the limitations of Italian and French opera idioms, the uninspired dullness of German opera, its fall, and its innate magnitude and superiority. More importantly, Wagner kept several ideas in the air over long periods of time. That is why his theories of the 1850s might hold interest for those studying Rienzi.[42]

In the unstable Germany of the 1830s, many were inflamed with ideas of patriotism and eager to serve their country. Gutman describes the conditions of Wagner's youth:

> Saxony and Poland, even though no longer united by a common obedience, were yet linked by emotional ties. As Russia re-established control over the rebellious land, Polish troops and exiles streamed into Saxon cities. In Germany, the insurgent cause elicited sympathetic response.[43]

Wagner was eager to be involved, but in a much different way than the conscriptees. He became a student to study music and to feel part of the cause for freedom. In the summer of 1830, the July revolutions in Paris and Brussels had repercussions in Saxony.[44] Auber's La Muette di Portici[45] was playing in the streets of Brussels; indeed, its scenes of violent uprising even inspired the people of Brussels to their revolution. According to Gutman, Wagner composed an overture in honor of the liberal coregent Prince Friedrich of Saxony. Wagner's response to the July Revolutions, as to every other stimulus, was to compose.

Wagner is an anomaly as a political force. His beginnings of political life were inauspicious. John Deathridge suggests

> Wagner's political opinions of the post-revolution years of 1831-7 have often been described as liberal, but they often go much further than this, especially in their glorification of the irrational as a political and artistic principle.[46]

His advocation of irrationality is important as an organizational principle to reconcile Wagner's contradictions--his strong critical faculties evidenced in his writing are challenged by the emotional content of his music.[47] His artistic theories provide insight to his productions, but according to Barry Millington, they are

often dismissed as the rantings of a megalomaniac.[48] His theories and ideas are inconsistent, but if one accepts irrationality as a political and artistic principle, one gets the impression of the flashes of connectedness which may have inspired Wagner to his ultimate "rantings."

Wagner left Saxony in 1833 for the Kingdom of Bavaria in order to avoid conscription. Germany, like Italy, was a fertile place for revolutionaries during Wagner's youth, and like them, he found politics a fascinating arena. His avoidance of conscription, though, tells of his way of dealing with activism; he was as political as any of those who served in the military. His strong sense of his own genius would not allow him the danger of actually engaging in combat.

Instead, Wagner turned to the battlefield of ideas. In the late 1830s, Rienzi, in the form of Bulwer's novel, became a front-line soldier in the battlefield of Wagner's imagination. In later years, he told Bulwer's son of the primacy of the novel in his operatic conception:

> In later years, during a conversation with Bulwer's son in Vienna, Wagner described his opera as a 'direct outcome' of the novel and, judging by his numerous references to the work, he seems to have no direct knowledge of any other source except a translation of the book by Bärmann.[49]

While it is clear that Bulwer's account of the Tribune enthralled Wagner, it is never exactly clear when Wagner had first heard of Bulwer. Delving into Wagner's dates, even firm ones, and relying on Mein Leben (posthumously published in 1898) for information forces the critic to enter the composer's history always in medias res.

The Opera Manifests Wagner's Horizon of Expectation

Wagner's interpretation of Bulwer's novel was his first large-scale success.[50] John Deathridge chronicled Wagner's conception of Rienzi in terms of the draft of the opera. He was concerned with the mechanisms of Wagner's creative process; while he did not delve into Wagner's reading of the novel outside of the musical realm, he does acknowledge the political underpinnings of the creation of Rienzi:

> Wagner's working methods in Rienzi become, so to speak, a mirror-image of the work's origins in the nationalistic fervour and idealism which began to emerge in the fragmented and predominantly petite-bourgeoisie society of early nineteenth century Germany - an idealism nourished by, but by no means identical with, liberal, so-called Utopian philosophies current in the intellectual circles of more advanced societies such as France and England.[51]

Deathridge has little to say of the novel as a basis for the opera.

Deathridge provides an account of the genesis of Wagner's reading.[52] Wagner was at a low point in his fortunes when he began to read Rienzi at Blasewitz near Dresden in 1837 during an attempt to reconcile with his wife Minna. The novel so inspired him that he hoped to set the opera capital of Paris musically aflame with his Rienzi; it drew out his experimental proclivities. Perhaps he thought it would be a doorway to a new musical language which could address limitations of history and promote German cultural solidity. His ideological experiments were carried out in a traditional form; Rienzi has the most conventional form of any of his operas. Wagner was even willing to learn French so the tribune might be heard in the native language. At this time, to prove his facility in setting French and as a trial piece for public consumption, he wrote an additional aria with the bass Luigi Lablache (of Puritani fame) in mind to be interpolated into Bellini's Norma. Lablache declined it but Wagner composed the music anyway.

Paris appealed to Wagner as the place where his genius would find its full flower--or rather where audiences would see his genius in full flower. Paris was important to Wagner because it was center stage of the operatic world; French Grand Opera was fashionable everywhere and influential as well.[53] For Wagner to have infiltrated

Paris with a grand opera which negotiated his concerns with tradition would have been a stunning achievement. Despite being remarkably well-connected, and having some money from brothers-in-law at his request, Wagner was not allowed to compose for Paris. Naturally, Wagner was embittered even as he wrote the opera. Gutman calls the last act of the opera Wagner's curse upon the French capital. "At the time of the Franco-Prussian War, he maintained that they must pass away, for in them was spawned the un-German rabble!"[54] Infused into his composition was the energy that Parisian rejection supplied. It is probably only coincidence that the French counterpoint to Rienzi in the novel, Walter de Montreal, does not set foot in Wagner's Rome.

Of course, the pro-Teutonic commentary finds its way into the opera. While the ideas of northern chivalry are to be heard in the music and seen in production, they also surface in Act II. Wagner's <u>Rienzi</u> is, for its five acts, an extremely pared down telling of Bulwer's novel. Wagner has collapsed the separate careers of Rienzi as tribune and senator into one. He has also dispensed with Nina, wife of the tribune. He may have jettisoned Nina for a couple of reasons--perhaps a subconscious motivation due to his problems with Minna or he may have thought the hero must stand alone. The major soprano role has gone to Irene, whose relatively meager role in the novel is inflated in the opera. Otherwise, in his only libretto based completely on

a source outside of himself, Wagner remained faithful to the thrust of Bulwer's political argument about reform and political knowledge. Acts I and II detail Rienzi's rise to power.

An Orsini, rival family of the Colonna, attempts to abduct Irene outside of Rienzi's house on a street in Rome. Adriano Colonna arrives, intercedes on Irene's behalf, and fights with the rival faction. The fighting nobles insult the Papal Legate who tries to halt their fighting. Rienzi appeals for law and order to restore greatness to Rome. Witnesses to Rienzi's speech are overcome with enthusiasm. The nobles vow to continue their fight the next day outside the walls of the city. The citizens of Rome encourage Rienzi in condemnation of the nobles and pledge their support. He plans to lock the nobles beyond the city walls as they conduct their fight and deny them reentry unless they plead obedience to Rome. The Rienzi of this scene is lifted wholesale from Bulwer's novel.

Returning home, Rienzi comforts Irene and thanks Adriano for rescuing her. Adriano tells Rienzi he is torn between familial loyalty and desire to support Rienzi. Rienzi tells Adriano of the death of his own younger brother at the hands of the nobles and encourages him to be a Roman above all else. Rienzi departs, leaving Adriano and Irene to realize they are in love.

At daybreak, Rienzi encourages Romans to be patriotic to Rome through valorous behavior. Cecco del Vecchio wants Rienzi to be crowned king for his goodness to the Romans, but Rienzi is only willing to accept the title of tribune. The citizens repeat an oath of loyalty; while this happens, the nobles, locked outside of the city, eventually make their own pledges to Rome, then secretly began to plot against Rienzi.

In Act II, Rienzi sees that new freedom in Rome has driven away trouble and strife, and he reminds the fallen nobles of their promises to keep Roman laws. After he departs, the Colonna and Orsini families resent their loss of power. Adriano overhears a seditious discussion among the nobles, and then his father tells him Rienzi is to be slain. Adriano resolves to save Rienzi because he loves Irene.

At a festival dignitaries of other states are treated to Roman hospitality. Before the entertainment begins, Adriano warns Rienzi of the nobles' plot to kill him. At this point, the Christian and German components of Wagner's account surface. As Rienzi receives the foreign ambassadors, with increasing enthusiasm, he introduces his German guests:

> Und weiter noch treibt Gott mich an!-
> Im Namen dieses Volks von Rom
> Und kraft der mir verliehnen Macht

Lad'ich die Fursten Deutschlands vor,
Bevor ein Kaiser noch gewahlt,
Sein Recht den Romern darzutun,
Mit dem er Konig Roms sich nennt.
Auch Rom erwahle ihn sofort,
Denn Rom sei frei und bluhe lang! (Act II, sc. 3)

[And further still God leads me on!-/in the name of this Roman people/and by the power vested in me/I summon the German princes,/before an emporer is elected, to set forth the Roman's law/by which it names the King of Rome./Let Rome too choose him forthwith,/For Rome shall flourish long and free!]

Wagner's interest in Christian ideas, especially at the expense of Semitism reflects his ambivalence about his confused heritage. The ideal of Teutonic knighthood becomes a Christian image. The alignment of God and German culture shows Wagner's affirmation of the Christian as opposed to the Jewish possibility of his origins.

After the introduction of the German emissaries, an Orsini attempts to kill Rienzi with a dagger. Rienzi's chain-mail tunic saves him from the blade, and he chastises the nobles for their disregard of the welfare of Rome. Accepting the will of the people, Rienzi sentences the nobles to death. Adriano pleads with Rienzi to spare their lives, instead making them take renewed vows of allegiance to Rome in public. The nobles then swear allegiance, but

easily disregard the oaths. The people of Rome exclaim in favor of Rienzi for his beneficence.

Rienzi's change of fortune commences in Act III. Romans become outraged by the nobles who have collected an army and are preparing a march on Rome. Rienzi calls for the people to arm themselves against the invading nobles. Adriano prays for a reconciliation, feeling hopelessly caught between Rienzi and Irene. After Rienzi returns to make another patriotic appeal to his people, Adriano implores Rienzi to prevent more bloodshed. Rienzi refuses and the nobles are vanquished. Colonna and Orsini nobles receive death for their treachery, which turns Adriano against Rienzi. Other Romans are concerned about the effect of the carnage on women who will never see their husbands or sons again. Rienzi dismisses Adriano as a mad man.

Act IV begins in front of the Lateran Church. Adriano, grieving over the death of his father, warns the citizens of Rome against Rienzi. The German emporer had by this time enjoyed sovereignty over Rome, and the remaining nobles convinced the emperor and the Pope at Avignon that Rienzi was a rebel and a heretic. The citizens are agitated, and as Rienzi appears, the Papal Legate pronounces a ban on Rienzi. The Tribune is of course amazed by the behavior of the Romans; Adriano tries to persuade Irene to leave with him, reminding her that all who associate with the Tribune

are likewise excommunicated. She refuses and a dejected Adriano departs.

In Act V, Rienzi is alone praying, after which Irene enters and embraces him. He praises her and heaven for their faith in him then encourages Irene to flee with Adriano since he is cursed. Irene will not leave. Rienzi finds strength in her resolve, and decides to address the Romans one last time in the hope of halting their madness through reasoning. Adriano appears, but she refuses again to leave with him. As Romans storm the capitol, Rienzi tries to speak--others drown him out to negate any positive effects his powerful speech may have. The people stone Rienzi and Irene, as they appear from the capitol. The capitol burns, Adriano tries to rescue them from the flames and all three perish.

The Teutonic asides may have fueled Wagner's interest in the characterizations, and certainly if words can inspire music, the chivalric and bold passages about northmen may have lingered in Wagner's imagination long enough to transform them into orchestral passages. The opera follows the clear political moral of Rienzi closely. The difference is that whereas no one would mistake Bulwer for Rienzi, audiences were encouraged by Wagner's reputation to take him as the Tribune:

> Wagner would marshal all the resources of orchestra, chorus, ballet and scenery pompously,

> bombastically to apotheosize Rienzi, the deliverer of Romans from their corrupt patriciate, the noble, lonely, doomed tribune - to apotheosize himself, that is to say, embodied in Rienzi - himself gloriously at war in the cause of his art in a hostile corrupt world.[55]

The moral is to rely on individual vision (not on parliamentary process or a reform bill a la Bulwer, but a la Wagner as poet-priest) for social progress. Rienzi is a victim to the fickle intolerance of the Romans.

Wagner's adaptation of Bulwer's novel poses questions which may be answered by viewing Rienzi in light of Wagner's horizon of expectation. In the Wagner mythos, Gutman suggests, young Wagner's sexual instincts had been aroused very early by his sisters.[56] He transformed this feeling artistically into his most famous operas, but it appears early in Rienzi as Irene pledges devotion to her brother at the risk of losing her lover and her life. His transformation of the love story shows the lengths to which he transferred his personal and personal issues from himself to the musical score and libretto. After the premiere of Rienzi, Wagner made the trip to Dresden to visit the grave of his beloved sister Rosalie.

Bulwer's novel provided a framework for Wagner to expiate his thoughts about Rosalie as Irene and Rienzi sing of their devotion to each other. This duet, one of the

conventional components of Rienzi, connects it to the very traditions which Wagner eventually overthrew. Irene and Rienzi's duet straddles the issues of Wagner's affection for Rosalie, his regard for the musical past as it appeared in traditional opera, and his longing for a new form of operatic expression.

Wagner's attachment to Bulwer's story of the last tribune shows him to have identified with the struggle of the victimized Rienzi--both for personal and political reasons. That the opera cannot accommodate Bulwer's praise of German qualities directly did not deter Wagner from adapting the novel for its criticism of mob action, for its anti-royalist position, and for its popularity as a symbol of the liberating impulse running through Europe. Wagner read Bulwer in terms of his own situation--the Rosalie question, and the indictment of Paris--and the situation of his contemporaries. The operatic Rienzi brings to a head several issues central to reception studies. Wagner's Rienzi maintains connections to the situatedness of its creator and audiences because it embodies a voice of revolution: the author's burgeoning revolutionary ideas about music and nationality and the audiences' need for a revolutionary voice as they struggle with monarchism and republicanism.

Bulwer's novel was already a case history of reception aesthetics as he modified the life of Rienzi to the dictates

of his social and political interests. He produced Rienzi in answer to the historical malaise of his readership. Similarly, Wagner interpreted Rienzi as an answer to the musical and political chaos of his day. Bulwer and Wagner used the Tribune to reform the taste and awareness of their audiences--Bulwer so his readers would understand their own lives as being connected to, influenced by, and modifiable through historical knowledge; Wagner so his listeners would understand the glory of their culture (and its purveyor) as a link to an ideal past.

Notes to Chapter V

1. All quotations from the novel and the prefaces to the 1835 and 1848 editions are from _Rienzi: the Last of the Roman Tribunes_ (Chicago and New York: Belford, Clarke and Company, n.d.).

2. Bulwer-Lytton writes in the second preface to _Rienzi_:

> That Rienzi should have attracted peculiar attention in Italy is of course to be attributed to the choice of subject rather than to the skill of the author .... Nor, if I may trust to the assurances that have reached me from many now engaged in the aim of political regeneration, has the effect of that revival of the honors due to a national hero, leading to the ennobling study of great examples, been wholly without its influence upon the rising generation of Italian youth .... (10)

Bulwer is of course too modest. That his account should be so widely read while at least fifteen other versions of Rienzi's life were circulating certainly reflects on the skill of the author.

3. Richard A. Zipser, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Germany (Berne: Herbert Lang/Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1974); John Deathridge, Wagner's Rienzi (Oxford UP, 1977).

4. The connection between them is not entirely surprising, for in purely coincidental terms, they share some remarkable similarities. Bulwer was a prolific novelist who interpreted history in his fiction for a vast readership. Bulwer wrote over sixty separate major works eventually collected into thirty seven volumes. Wagner was a prolific composer during the same period who interpreted history (albeit in a more esoteric vein than Bulwer's) for an eventually vast audience. Among Bulwer's works are theoretical writings which show him to have been an idealist with mythic visions. Among Wagner's operas and writings are theoretical essays and music with mythic visions.

The paths toward their successes differ greatly. Bulwer's path to success, more traditional than Wagner's, was helped by circumstances of birth. The son of a general, he had many advantages to a public and literary career. He received his B.A. in 1825 and his M.A. in 1833 at Cambridge, was elected to Parliament in 1831, made a Baronet in 1838, and raised to peerage in 1866. Like Byron and unlike Scott, Bulwer had an active political career. The drawing room of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and his wife Rosina hosted such dignitaries as Disraeli. He associated with Radicals such as Lord Durham, and worked vigorously in the year of his

election to Parliament on behalf of the Reform Bill to remove inequities in the representation of citizens. From early in his career, he received recognition. In an essay in London Magazine published in 1828, the reviewer of Bulwer's Pelham (1828) remarks on Bulwer's strong "command over the more powerful passions and the softer feelings." Bulwer met with swift success, aided by his self-discipline for earning money and social favor.

For Wagner, social favor was a long time coming; his success was hindered by the circumstances of his birth -- confused parentage, dubious legitimacy -- were among the obstacles to his public and music career. Contrasting with Bulwer's self-discipline was Wagner's self-indulgence and sense of entitlement. He sensed his own genius early, but had no reviews to show for it. He likewise sensed his own greatness, but had no pedigree to prove it.

5. Preface to the edition of 1848. See also Zipser: "History reveals men's deeds, men's outward characters but not themselves." 155.

6. Robert W. Gutman, Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music (New York: Time Incorporated, 1968), xiv.

7. Gutman, 135.

8. For a discussion of Wagner's ideas of higher truth and his interest in the mythological, see Thomas Mann, "Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner," Essays of

Three Decades, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Knopf, 1976).

9. For a discussion of Bulwer's differences with Gibbon see Andrew Brown, "Metaphysics and Melodrama: Bulwer's Rienzi," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 36 (1981), 261-276.

10. See Deathridge for a full discussion.

11. Zipser, 153.

12. Zipser, 17.

13. Bulwer's relationship to Germany compares closely to Scott's reciprocal relationship with Italy.

14. Zipser, 18.

15. Zipser, 15.

16. In 1839, Wagner attempted to meet Bulwer in London in order to discuss the operatic adaptation. Unfortunately, Bulwer was out of town. At a curious time in European history, when political stability seemed impossible, these two unlikely minds intersected -- for Bulwer, at the height of his fame; for Wagner, at the beginning of his.

17. Its popularity was relatively short-lived in England -- at least according to a not-so-friendly Thackeray, who in 1838 called Rienzi "forgotten." Fraser's Magazine, Vol. XVII. No. XCVII (Jan. 1838), 80.

18. Leigh Hunt, "Eugene Aram - Mr Bulwer's New Novel" (1832) in Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism, Lawrence Huston

Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens, eds. (Columbia UP, 1965), 395.

19. See Curtis Dahl, "History on the Hustings: Bulwer-Lytton's Historical Novels of Politics," in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinman, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958).

20. Brown, 262.

21. In the preface to the 1835 edition, Bulwer qualifies the goal of historical fiction to reveal the truth of the human heart:

> I have still, however, adhered, with greater fidelity than is customary in Romance, to all the leading events of the Public life of the Roman Tribune; and the reader will perhaps find in these pages a more full and detailed account of the rise and fall of Rienzi, than in any other English work of which I am aware.

Bulwer claimed that historical writing obscured the human heart and substituted actions for motivations. Thus his literary fidelity to history used not merely facts but also psychology.

22. Edward Gibbon, The History and Decline of the Roman Empire, 12 vols. (London, 1790).

23. Appendix I. "Some Remarks on the Life and Character of Rienzi," 467.

24. Preface to 1835, 6.

25. Appendix I, 470-71.

26. Bulwer's marriage collapsed, apparently due to Rosina's instability, and Bulwer began to re-enter the literary world after declaring his retirement in 1841. The revolutionary events of 1848-1849 throughout Europe produced a change in Bulwer's Radicalism that had associated him with the Whigs in the 1830s. He returned to Parliament in 1852 as a Conservative. But his fictions reveal the same idealist as ever.

27. Brown, 263.

28. Rienzi had such intellectual currency that Byron paid homage to him in the fourth canto of _Childe Harold's Pilgrimage_. This reference also appears on the title page of Bulwer's novel.

29. Andrew Brown notes the Gothic strain in Bulwer's descriptions of Rienzi.

30. _Rienzi_, I. viii. 77.

31. _Rienzi_, II. viii. 158.

32. _Rienzi_, I.ii, 34.

33. _Rienzi_, I.IV, 46.

34. _Rienzi_, I.v, 57.

35. _Rienzi_, V.ii. 250.

36. One might feel cavalier making such a major statement about the horizon of expectations operating on a major intellectual figure, but the support for Wagner's

attachment (if not attraction) to his sister is nearly overwhelming. See Gutman and Deathridge, especially.

37. See L.J. Rather, Reading Wagner: A Study in the History of Ideas (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1990).

38. Bryan Magee, Aspects of Wagner (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), 5.

39. Gutman, 29.

40. Magee and Jacobs separately indicate that Wagner, at least as evidenced through his writing, hardly questioned his own genius. See also Richard Wagner, My Life, transl. uncredited, (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., n.d.).

41. Barry Millington, "Richard Wagner," in The Wagner Companion, Richard Mander and Joe Mitchelson, eds. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1978), 3.

42. Musically, Wagner may have believed Italians to be base in accordance with Bulwer's characterization--but he was won to the beauties of Italian melody through Wilhelmine Schroder-Devrient's singing of the trouser role of Romeo in Bellini's I Capuletti e i Montecchi. The seriousness of German music efforts, the Chivalry of the North, could elevate the dramatic purity of Italian melody to something better. In any case, Schroder-Devrient performed the role of Adriano in the premiere of Rienzi.

43. Gutman, 30.

44. Gutman, 29.

45. Ostensibly based on Scott's Peveril of the Peak. See Jerome Mitchell, The Walter Scott Operas (University of Alabama Press, 1977).

46. Deathridge, 27.

47. Gutman writes that Wagner engaged the emotional rather than critical faculties. "In Siegfried the Wood Bird sings, 'Only those who yearn can grasp my meaning!' Arraying instinct against reason, Wagner demanded a faith permitting disciples to view the world through spectacles hazy with Wagnerian steam" (xiii).

48. Millington, 7.

49. Deathridge, 23. The translation referred to was published in 1836.

50. Theodor Adorno discusses the nature of Wagner's conception of a hero in In Search of Wagner, transl. Rodney Livingstone (NLB, 1981).

51. Deathridge, 12.

52. See Deathridge, 37-38.

53. For a discussion of how Wagner attempted to remake grand opera, see Paul Bekker, Richard Wagner: His Life in His Work, transl. M.M. Bozman (1931; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970).

54. Gutman, 97.

55. Robert L. Jacobs, Wagner (London: Dent, 1965).

56. Gutman, 101.

CHAPTER VI

LOOKING AHEAD: LITERATURE, OPERA AND RECEPTION THEORY

This chapter will briefly summarize previous chapters with an eye toward the potential future applications of reception theory. Then I will examine the usefulness of reception theory for the study of English literature. As an opera-literate scholar looking back from _Corsaro_ and its audiences to its literary source, and from _The Corsair_ and its readers back to its literary history, I see literary history as a series of events. To conceptualize _Mortality_, _Corsair_, and _Rienzi_ as answers to earlier literary and social questions might seem to complete their existence--might close the book on their relationship to the world.

Once the paradigm is placed in context, the relationship of literature to its times is opened for examination. Revolutionary spirit, the core concept behind the horizon of expectation I have imagined, is elusive--unless put into the service of a specific interpretation. The divisions between English readers during and after the Revolutions on the brink of the industrialization of their country, the divisions between Italians under now-authoritarian/now lenient oppression by Austrian forces, and the divisions between German royalists and antiroyalists

supply the basis for revolutionary thought and feeling. The revolutionary impulses of people in the throes of oppression color the kind of readers they are.

The nineteenth century Italian and German resistance to oppression reveals in twentieth century terms a question and answer paradigm: The nineteenth century responses to Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi answered questions the work posed in the revolutionary context of Italy and Germany. Nineteenth century readers did not just read The Corsair; they were also involved in politics and went to the opera. As such, the history of readers I have undertaken crosses generations and continents. Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi answered the formal and moral problems left behind by earlier writers and novels and in turn left behind problems which opera composers attempted to answer in their compositions.

The claim that Walpole's and Radcliffe's novels left behind formal and moral problems might seem a bizarre affront to escapist modes of fiction. Escapist, however, does not necessarily mean innocent. Gothic romances were implicated in their time as much as the historical romances that descended from them were of theirs. In the question and answer paradigm, that a work leaves behind formal and moral problems is not a condemnation of their content or creation. Rather the paradigm is a means to implicate them in a process--to increase the chances for us 200 years later

of understanding the possible earlier meanings of literature in contemporary terms.

The idea that Scott's, Byron's, and Bulwer's fictions answered the formal and moral problems left behind by Gothic writers might also seem to be a bizarre affront to the seriousness of their task to present history to the mainstream of readers. The gravity of Mortality and Rienzi and the themes of The Corsair, however, do not negate their connection to earlier fiction. Historical and political gravity were the historicists' answers to Gothic fiction. But as I have shown in Chapters III, IV, and V, their serious purpose was also structured to fit into the expectations of readers who were used to Gothic effects. Historical gravity was also an authorial nod in the direction of the tradition of historical writing that was not fictional. Edward Gibbon in The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-88), and Edmund Burke in Reflections on the French Revolution (1790), formed a part of the literary history of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer as surely as Walpole and Radcliffe.

One isolates historical romances and I Puritani, Il Corsaro, and Rienzi not to see a product, but to see the trajectory as a process of travelling ideas. The horizon--the Revolutions and the political energies of Europeans and the interplay between literature, opera, and politics--did not operate only to influence these writers and their works.

The horizon is visible through a contemporary questioning of these creations.

Despite the certainty with which reception theory can pinpoint literary moments in relation to each other, though, reception theory is not structured to see finality in literary and cultural processes. Genre and period are mutable in terms of reception theory, which recognizes beginnings and endings in literary history as boundaries in order to make relationships recognizable.

The boundaries are fluid: Reception theory has enabled me to discuss the relationships between I Puritani, Il Corsaro, and Rienzi and their literary sources more closely than other studies have done. The value of this theory for English studies is that English literary history, seen through a reception perspective, is broad enough to include opera, and certainly other disciplines outside literature, within its scope. The intellectual gain is not that literary history has usurped music history, but that reception theory can conceptualize a history wherein literary and musical events are both simultaneously seen as connected cultural and political events. The point of view bodes well for future literary studies which include opera.

The revolutionary horizon of expectation, seen in relation to the question and answer paradigm, may be able to redirect our attention to hidden literary events which have been lurking in the gigantic shadows of opera. Other works

by the composers I have studied might benefit from reception theory. Verdi, drawing on what we would call world literature, produced with his librettist a supply of operas that have filled volumes of scholarship about his political energy and ideas. Even though the political radiance of his work is universally acknowledged, Verdi's literary sources are not as well-studied in terms of political energy as his operas. Reception theory could refocus attention onto the sources to reveal the ways in which they were read. Even Bellini, whose operas are masterpieces of melancholy lyricism, could benefit from further study of the revolutionary impulses in his operas, though he drew on English literature only once. La Straniera (1829), based on a French novel, might be a good candidate for a reception study. For Wagner, however, the connection to English literature begins and ends with Rienzi. Other of his operas are products of the alchemy of his broad knowledge of culture and myth. Lesser known operas with obscure literary sources await the twentieth century horizons which could reactivate them and reassert the importance of literary history.

The revolutionary horizon is not the only one available to us. We could question the orientalism of Belasco's Butterfly and Puccini's interpretation, the mythology of Strauss's Elektra (1904) or Cherubini's Medea (1797); We could examine the failure of some composers to complete

operas planned around English literature--such as Verdi's King Lear or Gaetano Donizetti's Rienzi. We could ask the extent to which Donizetti was oriented toward English literature and history. His so-called "three queens trilogy" of opera stretches back from the sixteenth century history of England to the nineteenth century Italy of their creation to the twentieth century renewed interest in his work through the efforts of Beverly Sills. A reception study of the sources and the uses to which they were put could frame these works and people into a question and answer relationship that examines the importance of Donizetti's sources.

It is clear from the preceding chapters and the Donizetti conjecture that reception theory crosses many boundaries. Reception theory positions otherwise disparate works in geographic, temporal, and intellectual relationship to reveal the cultural connections between literature and other media. When literature crosses these boundaries, its power to speak to readers in other horizons, its implication in other question and answer paradigms is necessarily heightened. The malleability of literature shows its strength.

This benefits readers and creates a greater climate for the interpretation of effects and the eventful nature of literature. Readers interested in opera who engage reception aesthetics in the study of source literature no

longer have to be content that a novel or poem was a distant source for an opera, or that an opera based on English literature was a failure, or that both the opera and its sources have fallen into obscurity. An opera-literate reader will always have the pleasures of great achievements like Othello and Otello, The Bride of Lammermoor and Lucia di Lammermoor, Oscar Wilde's Salome (1893) and Richard Strauss's Salome (1904) and for the visually literate, the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley; the reception-literate reader will also have an adaptable paradigm by which to understand how these and other literary achievements illustrate the role of English literature in cultural history.

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Vita

Timothy Gray was born November 18, 1961 in Beloit, Wisconsin.

He attended F.J. Turner High School and graduated in 1980. In August of 1980, Mr. Gray entered the University of Wisconsin Center System, receiving an Associate Degree in 1982. He transferred to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and received his B.A. in English in 1985.

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REVOLUTION AND ROMANCE: POLITICS, OPERA AND NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORICAL FICTION

Although a connection exists between a novel of Walter Scott and an opera based on that novel, the particulars of that connection remain nebulous despite literary, aesthetic, or musical attempts to define it. Reception theory addresses the failure of several disciplines to identify and resolve a problem. None of the traditional disciplines relates literature to the forces that translate it into opera. Revolution and Romance identifies European cultural and political unrest as forces that shaped and influenced the German and Italian receptions of English historical fictions. The combination of literary, operatic, and political history demonstrates that European political life provoked the translation of English historical romance to the opera stage.

The discussion of Scott's Old Mortality and Bellini's I Puritani focuses on the explicit politics of Scott's account of ten years of political revolt in seventeenth century Scotland and its translation into Bellini's bel canto expression of political maneuvers and ensuing madness. The discussion about Byron's The Corsair and Verdi's Il Corsaro

treats the poet's revolutionary activism, the composer's unflinching nationalism and the manner in which the political hopes of the Italians of the 1840s informed Verdi's use, and audience's understanding of, Byron. The discussion about Bulwer's Rienzi and Wagner's Rienzi focuses on Wagner's musical and political ideals in Germany. Bulwer's acceptance in Germany was a matter of his treatment of German authors in his own works. By extracting details from English historical fiction as the basis for operas in a politically charged climate, Bellini, Verdi, and Wagner created political interpretations of the novels.

English literature, as operatic source material, had social and political consequences in Italy and Germany. The similarity between the political situation of nineteenth century Europeans and the subject matter of the works of Scott, Byron, and Bulwer led Europeans to identify with Old Mortality, The Corsair, and Rienzi, and to transfer their identification to the operatic stage. This transfer shows that I Puritani, Il Corsaro, and Rienzi are hybrids of English literature and European cultural life and politics.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature.

April 12, 1993
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