

ELEMENTS OF THE BYRONIC HERO IN
CAPTAIN AUIAB

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ELEMENTS OF THE BYRONIC HERO IN
CAPTAIN AHAE

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Denton, Texas

May, 1969

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thirty-nine years after English readers were introduced to the Byronic Hero prototype in the first two cantos of Lord Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage in March of 1812, Herman Melville published Moby-Dick in America. Although Melville's monomaniac Captain Ahab is separated from Byron's Giaour, Conrad, and Lara by a continent as well as by the chronology of two generations, the heroically defiant whaling captain from Nantucket is peculiarly akin to Byron's solitary, dark-visaged heroes. The striking resemblances of Ahab and the protagonists of Byron's Oriental tales, however, have been largely ignored heretofore, despite the fact that several parallel studies of Melville and Byron have been made. Peter L. Thorslev, Jr.'s fleeting remark in the introduction to his The Byronic Hero that "the most terrible figure in our classical American literature, Captain Ahab, has much of the Byronic Hero's aspect, of his dark soul" practically stands alone.¹

Among the initial problems to be considered at the onset of a study of Ahab as a Byronic Hero is that of the extent

¹Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 3.

to which Byron was known in America before and during Melville's career as a writer. Shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, Byron's importance in American literature was explored by William Ellery Leonard. In Byron and Byronism in America, published in 1905, Leonard drew several conclusions firmly establishing the fact that Byron was well known by American writers as well as by the American reading public during Melville's lifetime. Although Byron was a popular poetic model and an important force in the development of American taste and culture until the Civil War, Leonard points out that the rise of Byronism in America was synchronal with the War of 1812 and its attendant upsurge of national feeling. Byron's personal and literary appeal, usually in a bourgeois fashion, centered in the Byronic prose, in the Byronic Spenserian stanza, in Byron's use of the ottava rima, and in the Byronic lyric.² By 1820, American literati were acutely conscious of Byron: poets were affecting Byron's stanza forms, his misanthropy, and his skepticism; ministers exhorted against Byron's poems; teachers and parents shielded children from exposure to these poems; some booksellers regarded them as "infidel publications" and refused to sell them.³ Nonetheless, Portfolio contained the entire text of The Giaour in its December, 1813 and

²William Ellery Leonard, Byron and Byronism in America (Boston, 1905), p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 20.

January, 1814 issues, as well as a review of The Corsair, in its July, 1814 edition naming Byron England's "most fashionable writer."⁴ Literary points of view regarding Byron before his death varied from shocked disapproval to enthusiastic endorsement. The extent of his popularity is attested by Leonard's assertion that Byron's name appears more frequently than that of any other English poet in American newspapers and magazines during this period. In a journal entry dated December 6, 1813, Byron wrote of his delight at the success of his poems in America:

Dallas's nephew (son to the American Attorney-general) is arrived in this country, and tells Dallas that my rhymes are very popular in the United States. These are the first tidings that have ever sounded like fame to my ears--to be redde on the banks of the Ohio! The greatest pleasure I ever derived, of this kind, was from an extract, in Cooke, the actor's life, from his journal, stating that in the reading-room at Albany, near Washington, he perused English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. To be popular in a rising and far country, has a kind of posthumous feel, very different from the ephemeral eclat and fete-ing, buzzing and party-ing compliments of the well-dressed multitude.⁵

Although Byron's influence upon America's greater poets was slight, Leonard states, there were a number of Byronic disciples among the minor writers, such as Fitz-Green Halleck, whose Fanny (1819) was inspired by Don Juan and Beppo, and Joseph Rodman Drake (1798-1820), whose work reflects both

⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵ George Gordon Byron, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, edited by Thomas Moore (London, 1875), p. 349.

Childe Harold and The Corsair.⁶ William Cullen Bryant's "The Ages," a historical poem reviewing man's progress in thirty-five Spenserian stanzas, suggests the first two cantos of Childe Harold in its subject matter and thought, as well as in the roll of its verses.⁷ Other poets reflecting Byron at this period in American literature are Richard Henry Dana, Sr., John G. C. Brainard, John Neal, James Gates Percival, and William Gilmore Simms.⁸

Between 1830 and 1860, Byronism is traceable in only a few American writers. Samuel Grisold Goodrich, for example, wrote Byronic tales of gore and gloom made palpable to American readers through touches of piety, resignation, and mother-love. Nathaniel Parker Willis's Melanie is closely patterned after Byron's Oriental tales; George Lunt imitates Don Juan in his Julia, as does George Henry Calvert in The Cabiroq. Byron's The Giaour and The Siege of Corinth are the obvious models for "Amram's Wooing" in Bayard Taylor's Poems of the Orient (1854).⁹ By the time Melville published Moby-Dick in 1851, Browning and Tennyson were being lionized in America, but Leonard partisanly notes that they never achieved the popularity which had been accorded Byron.¹⁰

⁶Ibid., pp. 39-41.

⁷Ibid., p. 43.

⁸Ibid., pp. 45-53.

⁹Ibid., pp. 55-61.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 66.

Although Leonard places Byron decisively near the vortex of nineteenth-century America's literary milieu, his research, completed during the first decade of the twentieth century, fails to reveal that Herman Melville was influenced by, or even acquainted with, Lord Byron's works. This omission would be remarkable in the face of the overt Byronisms in Moby-Dick alone were it not paralleled by a general scholarly neglect of Byron's influence upon Melville. In "The Mast-Head," Chapter XXV of Moby-Dick, for example, Melville's narrator warns Nantucket ship-owners of "enlisting in your vigilant fisheries any lad with lean brow and hollow eye; given to unseasonable meditations; and who offers to ship with the Phaedon instead of the Bowditch in his head." More specifically, he admonishes against taking on "absent-minded young philosophers," "young Platonists," or a "Childe Harold" who may frequently be found upon the mast-head of some unfortunate ship, moodily declaiming: "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll! Ten thousand blubber-hunters sweep over thee in vain."¹¹ In this parody of two lines from the fourth Canto of Childe Harold, Melville substitutes the words "blubber-hunters" for "fleets."¹² Equally specific familiarity

¹¹Herman Melville, Moby-Dick or The Whale (New York, 1964), p. 213. Future references to this work are contained in the text immediately following the quoted material.

¹²Paul Elmer Moore, editor, The Complete Poetical Works of Byron (Cambridge, 1933), p. 81. Note 1: References to specific poems, cantos, and lines are contained in the text immediately following the quoted material. Poem titles are

with the Byronic Hero is implied in Chapter XL of Moby-Dick, "The Line," which foreshadows Ahab's ultimate destruction in his quest for Moby Dick. In describing the vital, yet often disastrous, role of "the magical, sometimes horrible whale-line," Melville's persona warns that "only by a certain self-adjusting buoyancy and simultaneousness of volition and action, can you escape being made a Mazeppa of, and run away with where the all-seeing sun himself could never pierce you out" (p. 372). The similarity between Byron's Mazeppa, consigned by his enemies to die astride the plunging, wild horse to which he was tied, and Ahab, caught by his flying harpoon line and finally lashed to the white whale, is too startling to be attributed to an irrelevant, chance allusion by Melville.

An extensive investigation of Melville's reading by Merton J. Sealts closes the gap between conjecture and certainty regarding Melville's cognizance of Byron's poems. In a series of six articles published by the Harvard Library Bulletin in 1948, 1949, and 1950 in which he lists and briefly comments on the books Melville owned and borrowed, Sealts reveals the discovery of a sixteen-volume set of Byron's Life and Works containing various marginalia and markings by

abbreviated as follows: Ch-Childe Harold, G-The Giaour, BA-The Bride of Abydos, C-The Corsair, L-Lara, P-Parisina, M-Mazeppa, Mf-Manfred. Note 2: Subsequent short footnote references to this work will be indicated by Byron's name, followed by page numbers.

Melville.¹³ The significance of this body of material to a study of the Byronic Hero and Ahab is underscored by Sealts' use of a statement from F. O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance: ". . . the books that really spoke to Melville became an immediate part of him to a degree hardly matched by any other of our great writers in their maturity."¹⁴

The Byronic influence upon Melville's work from 1846 to 1862 is the subject of Edward Fiess's "Melville As a Reader and Student of Byron."¹⁵ This article apparently stems from Fiess's unpublished dissertation, "Byron and Byronism in the Mind and Art of Herman Melville," completed at Yale University in 1951. Leonard's dates for the waning of Byron's American popularity, it might be noted in a cursory comparison of findings, are the years 1846 to 1862,¹⁶ the same years of Melville's annotated study of Byron. According to Fiess, Melville's pencilled signature is found in Volume I of the Life and in Volumes I and V of the Works. In these books, Melville has underlined words and phrases, marked off lines

¹³Merton J. Sealts, Jr., "Melville's Reading: A Check-List of Books Owned and Borrowed," Harvard Library Bulletin, II (1948), 141-163, 378-392; III (1949), 119-130, 268-277, 407-421; IV (1950), 98-109.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 141. See F. O. Matthiessen, The American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York, 1941), p. 122.

¹⁵Edward Fiess, "Melville as a Reader and Student of Byron," American Literature, XXIV (June 17, 1952), 186.

¹⁶Leonard, pp. 34-35.

and sentences by vertical scoring, supplemented his underlining with marginal checks, and written comments pertaining to specifically indicated passages in the upper and lower margins.¹⁷ In the Life, Melville's marks indicate agreement with Byron's expressed disdain for authors seeking prepublication praise and with Byron's refusal to alter his works under political and religious pressure. Melville also notes Byron's loneliness and seems to comment on source-hunters in a pencilled note opposite a quotation from Sir Walter Scott.¹⁸ Melville marked the Works more heavily than he did the Life, with marginal observations covering a variety of topics. Fiess suggests that one class of Melville's markings indicates that he was interested in the complexities of verse writing. For instance, in the first Canto of Childe Harold, he underlined the obscure and archaic terms, and, in the margins, he alphabetized the rhyme schemes of two Spenserian stanzas. His markings of this type are most suggestive at the beginning of The Siege of Corinth, with many lines and footnotes triply scored.¹⁹ Melville also noted Byron's observations in Don Juan on war's cruelty, horror, and irony. It is interesting to note that Ahab and Childe Harold share an ambivalent attitude toward violent conflict. Ahab marshals his forces to do battle against his foe, disregarding the

¹⁷Fiess, p. 188.

¹⁸Fiess, p. 189.

¹⁹Fiess, p. 190.

inevitability of death and destruction to his men and to himself, and yet, shortly before his greatest engagement, he says, "But war is pain, and hate is woe" (p. 64). Harold praises "Battle's magnificently stern array!" (CH, III, xxviii, 248) and then sternly indicts warfare's senseless carnage as he indicates that rider, horse, friend, and foe are all "in one red burial blent!" (CH, III, xxviii, 252).²⁰ Other of Melville's notes and symbols indicate that he was impressed by many of Byron's attitudes, including the English poet's attacks on society's hypocrisy.²¹

In another essay, published in 1966, entitled "Byron's Dark Blue Ocean and Melville's Rolling Sea," Fiess points out "various unconscious reminiscences in Melville's work of the language and imagery" of Byron's so-called "Address to the Ocean" in the fourth Canto of Childe Harold, as well as "echoes of other Byronic passages on the sea" in Moby-Dick.²² Alluding to the following stanza

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
 Man marks the earth with ruin, his control
 Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
 A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
 When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
 Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.²³
 (CH, IV, clxxix, 1603-1611)

²⁰ Byron, p. 39.

²¹ Fiess, p. 191.

²² Edward Fiess, "Byron's Dark Blue Ocean and Melville's Rolling Sea," English Language Notes, III (June, 1966), 274-278.

²³ Byron, p. 81.

Fiess calls attention to Ahab's cry "The billows have still rolled on speechless and unspoken to" (p. 81); Ishmael's awestruck observation "That serene ocean rolled eastwards from me a thousand leagues of blue" (p. 613); Ahab's remark to Starbuck "'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled" (p. 707); and Melville's final words in the last chapter ". . . and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (p. 723). Emphasizing the significant influence of Byron's language upon that of Melville, Fiess concludes that Melville's recurrent tension between romanticism and realism in Moby-Dick is equally an echo of Byron's alternations of mood.²⁴

The scholarly sleuthing of Byron's impact upon American literature which was begun early in this century by Leonard in a general and somewhat tentative manner is particularized in a study of Pierre and Manfred by Joseph J. Mogan, Jr. This article, published in 1965, seeks to establish that "Manfred is clearly Pierre's progenitor."²⁵ After suggesting the paucity of previous explorations of the similarities between Melville's hero and that of Byron, Mogan draws several conclusions which are also applicable to an investigation of Ahab as a Byronic Hero. Ahab inhabits the same

²⁴Fiess, English Language Notes, III, 278.

²⁵Joseph J. Mogan, Jr., "Pierre and Manfred: Melville's Study of the Byronic Hero," Papers on English Language and Literature, I (Winter, 1965), 240.

type of self-created world in which Mogan says both Pierre and Manfred dwell; like them, Ahab also "is fighting a monster within his own breast and stands isolated from all other humanity."²⁶ Irony of conflict results from the perception by Pierre and Manfred of the gulf between "their infinite aspirations and an intense consciousness of their extreme limitations";²⁷ Ahab, maimed and scarred, experiences this same conflict as he doggedly affirms and reaffirms his implacable resolve to destroy the white whale. Noting Pierre's Christianized Promethean aims paralleled by Manfred's awareness that "knowledge is not happiness," Mogan suggests that Pierre may say with Manfred that "Grief should be the instructor of the wise;/Sorrow is knowledge." Surely Ahab is fully qualified to add his voice to this chorusing. Strangely, however, the Byronic Hero, sensitive and cautious about another's pain, invariably brings down injuries upon the individuals whom he loves and who love him, as Mogan illustrates by the actions of Pierre and Manfred.²⁸ Ahab, even more than these two, exemplifies this trait of the Byronic Hero in his being solely responsible for the annihilation of the Pequod and her loyal crew. Mogan's statement that "Not only do Manfred and Pierre have the same blood in their veins; Manfred is clearly Pierre's progenitor" is well

²⁶Ibid., p. 234.

²⁷Ibid., p. 233.

²⁸Ibid., p. 240.

supported and acceptable.²⁹ An even stronger argument, however, is possible for Ahab as the literary descendant of the Byronic Hero. Melville's railing, raging whaling captain, motivated by an unswervable purpose which occasionally wars with his "humanities" is vitally infused with the intrinsic essences of most of the major Byronic Heroes (p. 120).

²⁹Ibid., p. 240.

CHAPTER II

THE BYRONIC HERO AND BYRON HIMSELF

Critics and scholars are not yet in agreement as to the genre, gens, and genius of the Byronic Hero, with points of view varying from positive assertions that Byron's narrative poems are simply extravagant self-portrayals to equally adamant affirmations that the Byronic Hero and Byron must be regarded as distinctly separate entities. If the Byronic Hero is simply a literary reflection of Byron, limited by his own foibles, mannerisms, tastes, attitudes, and personality quirks, a study of Ahab as a Byronic Hero is destined for quick extinction. It is absurd, of course, to consider Ahab as a Yankee rendition of England's Lord Byron. If, however, as Peter L. Thorslev, Jr. and other scholars suggest, the Byronic Hero is a composite of Romantic heroic traditions, personalized and vitalized by Byron, it is conceivable that Melville's hero is of the same literary stock and tradition as Lara, Conrad, Cain, and Manfred.

Gamaliel Bradford maintains that the heroes of Byron's Oriental tales are autobiographical. Byron's tremendous ego, Bradford suggests, is the motivating factor in the creation of these protagonists. According to this contention, Byron's heroes are extensions of the poet's personality, given

"brilliant and varied assertion";¹ and the plots of these writings are "merely a means of telling all his boy's secrets to the whole world" in a manner so shocking as never to be forgotten.² While admitting the inventive quality present in the adventurous wanderings of the Byronic Hero, Bradford maintains that "their inner nature was that of their creator and every word and gesture was significant of him."³ These characters upon whom is imprinted the "wild ferocity of hate, which is sometimes detestable and sometimes ignoble, but nearly always magnificently picturesque" are, he says, representatives of Byron's own innate surgings toward thrilling adventures marked by the paradox of futility juxtaposed with desperate heroism.⁴

In his "Byron and the Byronic," Jacques Barzun terms this type of reductive reasoning as "truly ad absurdum."⁵ He says that the application of terms such as "Machiavellian," "Rabelaisian," "Platonic," and "Byronic" to "express certain commonplace notions in frequent use" results in "but a detached fragment of the truth, and sometimes less than a fragment--a mere shadow of it."⁶ Barzun thus rejects the

¹Gamaliel Bradford, Saints and Sinners (Boston and New York, 1932), p. 226.

²Ibid., p. 238.

³Ibid., p. 240.

⁴Ibid., pp. 242-243.

⁵Jacques Barzun, "Byron and the Byronic," The Atlantic Monthly, CXCII (July, 1953), 47.

⁶Ibid., p. 47.

Byronic Hero as a stereotype of Byron, suggesting rather that Byron's protagonists are the unique results of a commingling of several related elements. Nineteenth-century melancholy, rooted in an atmosphere of repressed energy, was combined with current longings for freedom, and these were acted upon by the catalytic discharge of Byron's unique intellectual vitality. The result, emerging from the interaction between the writer's private life and the peculiar historical, social, and environmental constituents of the period, is a dramatic presentation "of the new man, the unknown who risks life for glory."⁷ Encouraged by the success of his heroes, Byron continued to study the nature of this "new man," his sensations and his reactions. Byron did not invent these traits that he presented in his poetry, however, nor did he project them from his own personality and character to the heroes of his verse narratives. They were, as Barzun points out, present in Byron's world, an intrinsic "part of the human nature of his time."⁸

Paul West, on a somewhat different tack, sees the Byronic Hero as a showcase for Byron's eccentricities of disposition, those inherent and those assumed. Byron is more concerned, West believes, with displaying his own temperament than with resolving any putative personal

⁷Ibid., p. 28.

⁸Ibid., p. 48.

problems.⁹ In The Haunted Castle, Eino Railo explains the Byronic Hero as a conception arising from Childe Harold becoming superimposed upon the heroes of Byron's Oriental tales which the poet's contemporaries expected Byron himself to represent. To Railo, Childe Harold is "an extremely thin disguise for Byron's own posing ego," a personification of his "sinfulness," and a tool for thematic exploitation of his travels, based on the poet's pessimism and radicalism, his protest against mankind's misery, and his love of liberty "whose prophet he had made himself."¹⁰

André Maurois, in his biography of Byron, marks the many resemblances between Byron and the Byronic Hero: "noble birth, a tender and passionate mind in adolescence, disappointment, rage, crime, despair." He immediately adds, however, that there are also manifest differences between the creature and its creator. Byron himself merely dreamed the dramas which his heroes lived. Whereas Lara, Conrad, and the Giaour were swarthy, vigorous men of violent action, Byron was pale and regrettably indolent. Although Byron was quite capable of momentarily becoming Conrad during a burst of rage, Maurois points out that Byron and his hero rarely agreed in everyday life and that "the Byronic hero became

⁹Paul West, Byron and the Spoiler's Art (New York, 1960), p. 95.

¹⁰Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle (London and New York, 1927), p. 240.

for his creator a false and theatrical model which Byron felt obliged to imitate."¹¹ Leslie Marchand tells of an episode in which Bertel Thorwaldsen, a Danish sculptor, witnessed Byron's affectation of the Byronic Hero's role, a seemingly calculated imitation of art. At Hobhouse's urging, Byron went to Thorwaldsen's studio in Rome to sit for a bust in 1817. Noticing that Byron seemed to deliberately alter his expression as he sat opposite the sculptor, Thorwaldsen suggested that the assumed look was unnecessary. Byron replied, "That is my expression." When Byron viewed the completed bust, widely praised as an excellent likeness, he commented that it was not at all like him because his own expression was more unhappy.¹²

It is, of course, obvious that some of the elements comprising the Byronic Hero are autobiographical. An author's personality is quite naturally projected into his characters because he must experience moods and attitudes similar to those of his characters if they are to be believable. It is quite possible, for example, to assess as Byron's romantic response to actual happenings the fact that there are no strong female counterparts to the heroes of his Oriental romances. These shadowy, undimensional heroines may well result from the poet's reaction to the strong-willed women

¹¹ André Maurois, Byron (London, 1930), p. 242.

¹² Leslie Marchand, Byron: A Biography, II (New York, 1957), 693.

who wrought havoc on his life. His erratic mother, for instance, alternately shrieked at and cajoled her son, and her violent temper and fluctuating moods destroyed any quality of serenity that might have made their relationship mutually enjoyable. When Byron was fifteen years old, he fell in love with Mary Ann Chaworth, the daughter of the master of Annesley, neighboring estate to Byron's Newstead Abbey. Not only did Miss Chaworth treat Byron's love lightly, but she made a casually cruel remark, which he either overheard or was told of, about her young admirer's crippled leg. The memories of this relationship and of his rejection also took their place in the crucible of the poet's creative imagination.¹³ Lady Caroline Lamb's tempestuous outbursts and dramatic emotional scenes provided uncomfortable punctuation to Byron's love affair with her in London during 1812 and 1813.¹⁴ Byron's wife, the former Annabella Milbanke, was an intelligent, educated, and rigidly determined woman who dedicated herself to Christian forbearance and perseverance in their marriage. Clare Clairmont, Byron's last mistress in England, boldly thrust herself, uninvited, upon him in London and shrewdly connived to continue the liaison abroad. It is hardly to be wondered at that the Giaour's Leila is a mute, phantom creature or that Zuleika's compliant response to Selim is unmarked by female histrionics. Gentle Medora quietly expires

¹³Ibid., pp. 75-78.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 334-398.

when she receives word of Conrad's probable fate, and Kaled serves Lara with humble devotion. After Mrs. Byron's tantrums, Mary Ann Chaworth's callous rejection, Caroline Lamb's jealous pyrotechnics, Lady Byron's adamant rationalization in the ending of their marriage, and Clare Clairmont's unsought and unwanted advances, Byron was justifiably content to draw his heroines with light, almost ephemeral strokes of his pen.

Although a detailed examination of the lives of Lord Byron and Herman Melville is not the purpose of this study, a juxtaposing of certain biographical facts provides insight into the Byronic elements present in Melville's work. Charles Kligerman, in his essay "The Psychology of Herman Melville," points out and explains "some of the conflicts which motivated Melville and which ultimately led to the emotional crisis which sapped his creative strength in the hour of his artistic triumph" that may be paralleled by conflicts in Byron's life.¹⁵ Melville felt rejected and unloved by his mother, "a cold, proud, narcissistic woman who had much to demand but little to give a small boy."¹⁶ He later said that his mother hated him. Byron also viewed his mother with conflicting emotions, and, as he grew older, he refused to remain in her presence for more than short periods of time. Melville, the third of eight children, probably felt as neglected as young Byron

¹⁵ Charles Kligerman, "The Psychology of Herman Melville," Psychoanalytic Review, XL (April, 1953), 125.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

did when he was left in May Gray's questionably capable care in Aberdeen in a house next to a graveyard.¹⁷

Neither Byron nor Melville had a father during their difficult adolescent years. Melville turned to Gansevoort, his older brother; Byron turned to Dr. Joseph Drury. In neither case was the father-substitution adequate for a normal boyhood. Melville's latent homosexuality was vicariously gratified in the sailors' quarters when he ran away to sea.¹⁸ Perhaps Byron's Harrow and Cambridge experiences provided a similar solution of a similar problem. In marriage, Melville sought "a pleasant sibling companionship" and married Elizabeth Shaw.¹⁹ Her father, Judge Shaw, had been like a father to Melville for years, and it was Melville's father-in-law who consistently saved the writer from penury. Maurois says that Byron liked women to treat him "as a favourite and somewhat forward sister" and that he sought in love "a blend of gay friendship, sensuality, an almost maternal tenderness."²⁰ Byron, also, looked to his wife's eventual inheritance to ease his financial embarrassments.²¹

Byron's irritability and spells of irrationality increased with his wife's approaching confinement;²² Kligerman notes that Melville's mental disintegration first became apparent

¹⁷Marchand, p. 33.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 182.

²¹Marchand, pp. 538-541.

¹⁸Kligerman, p. 131.

²⁰Maurois, p. 174.

²²Ibid., pp. 551-553.

during his wife's pregnancy. The baby constituted an unconscious threat to Melville, who had repeatedly felt himself nudged out and replaced by the advent of five younger brothers and sisters.²³ Perhaps Byron, too, was subconsciously resenting and feeling threatened by his unborn child.

Kligerman points significantly to Melville's habitual theme resolved around strife between two men, usually some variation of the father-son conflict, as being a feature of Melville's "struggle against passive homosexual feelings which in turn covered his deep but powerful mother-conflict."²⁴ In turning to the conflicts in Byron's Oriental tales, the reader is at once conscious of the same type of antagonism between Selim and Giaffir, Hugo and Azo, Mazeppa and Count Palatine, Lara and Otho, Conrad and Seyd, and the Giaour and Hassan. In each of these Byronic struggles, the son-figure revolts against the father-figure who is cruel or unjust.

Of Melville's alleged insanity, Kligerman says there is little accurate data, but he indicates that Melville's illness "possessed many psychotic features, mainly paranoid and depressive in nature."²⁵ Lady Byron's attempts to secure from Dr. LeMann medical proof in support of her conviction that Byron was subject to insane delusions were unsuccessful, but, steadfastly contending that her husband suffered from

²³Kligerman, p. 133.

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵Ibid., p. 128.

some type of madness, she persisted in seeing lunacy in all his actions.²⁶ It seems quite possible that Byron unknowingly treated his vacillating psychic equilibrium according to Dr. Kligerman's Jungian psychoanalytic technique, with its searching scrutiny of complementary and compensatory relationships between the subjective-psyche, the personal unconsciousness, and the objective-psyche, by achieving a high degree of self-realization through the fictionalized heroes who bear his name.

An investigation of the opposing concepts of fatalism and free will in Byron's life and works serves as an example of the risks involved in identifying the poet too closely with his heroes. Byron's personal concern with predestination is, of course, obvious. From childhood, Byron's mind was subjected to saturative dosages of Calvinism by the adults in his circumscribed world. His mother, Catherine Gordon Byron of Gight, Agnes and May Gray, his Scottish nursemaids, and his private tutors were all stern Presbyterians who endeavored to teach the small boy the basic doctrines of Original Sin and predestination.²⁷ Byron also heard stories of the acts of violence resulting from the wild passions of his mother's family, the Gordons of Scotland, and of the glorious wickednesses of his Byronic forebears. Epictetus might have been anticipating Byron when he said

²⁶Marchand, pp. 555-569.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

that it is not the event but one's judgment of the event that disturbs him.²⁸ Things assume formidable proportions when they happen to oneself, and Byron, acutely sensitive to everything about him, responded to situations and to individuals in a highly emotional way. Satan and the fires of hell, Cain's heinous sin, John Byron's shortcomings, the evil acts of the eternally damned, and a child's daily transgressions--all these were witnessed and judged by a God who, mysteriously and at will, could decree everlasting life or unending punishment.²⁹

Lady Byron, writing in later years of her brief relationship with Byron, remarked that her husband's conviction that he, as well as most of mankind, bore the mark of Cain and was destined for damnation was the result of his ineradicable and morose strain of Calvinism.³⁰ Byron's letters reveal an undeniable engrossment with omens, coincidences, and the stuff of fatalism. For example, in a letter to John Murray, his London publisher, written from Venice and dated January 2, 1817, Byron attaches great significance to his having received on that particular day a letter from Murray containing a publication announcement of the third canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. He notes that not only is this the day on which The Corsair had been published three years

²⁸Epictetus, "The Manual of Epictetus," The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers (New York, 1940), p. 469.

²⁹Maurois, p. 27.

³⁰Marchand, p. 515.

earlier, but it is also the date of Byron's second wedding anniversary. Including in his listing of oddly concurrent events the fact that January is his own birth month, Byron adds that he received in the same January 2 post a letter from his sister, Augusta Leigh, written on December 10, which is the birth date of Ada Augusta, his daughter by Lady Byron. He breaks off his compounding of coincidences by suggesting that the date presents "various other Astrologous matters, which I have no time to enumerate."³¹ A further reference to fate's intervention in his life is apparent in his "Detached Thoughts," begun at Ravenna on October 15, 1821. In the eighty-third section of this series of miscellany, Byron states:

Like Sylla, I have always believed that all things depend upon Fortune, and nothing upon ourselves. I am not aware of any one thought or action worthy of being called good to myself or others, which is not to be attributed to the Good Goddess, Fortune!³²

Byron's persona in the first canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, mirroring the poet's early preoccupation with fate, speaks of "Pleasure's pall'd victim! life-abhorring gloom/Wrote on his faded brow curst Cain's unresting doom" (CH I, lxxxiii, 826, 827).³³ In the second canto, he asks, "Why should we shrink from what we cannot shun? . . .

³¹Peter Quennell, editor, Byron: A Self-Portrait, II (New York, 1967), 387.

³²Ibid., p. 640.

³³Byron, p. 17.

Pursue what chance or Fate proclaimeth best;/Peace waits us
on the shores of Acheron" (CH II,vii,57,60,61).³⁴ In the
passage on Petrarch in the fourth canto, the poet refers to
those melancholy individuals who go through life

Deeming themselves predestined to a doom
Which is not of the pangs that pass away;
Making the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,
The tomb a hell, and hell itself a murkier gloom.
(CH IV,xxxiv,303-306)³⁵

The Giaour, also reflecting Byron's troubled childhood
religious concerns, confesses to the Friar: "But look--'t is
written on my brow!/There read of Cain the curse and crime,/
In characters outworn by time" (G,1057-1059).³⁶

Further study of Byron's poems suggests, on the other
hand, that the poet's personal concepts of fatalism are not
actually an intrinsic part of the Byronic Hero. Although he
does say in the third canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage
that "there are wanderers o'er Eternity/Whose bark drives on
and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be," he prefaces these lines
by pointing out that "The boldest steer but where their ports
invite" (CH III,lxx,668-670).³⁷ Disclaiming fate's role in
his destiny, the poet's narrator says

And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'T is too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same

³⁴Byron, p. 20.

³⁵Ibid., p. 60.

³⁶Ibid., p. 320.

³⁷Ibid., p. 46.

In strength to bear what time can not abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.
(CH III, vii, 59-63)³⁸

He projects his belief in free will even more positively in the statement that

Meantime I seek no sympathies, nor need;
The thorns which I have reap'd are of the tree
I planted,--they have torn me--and I bleed:
I should have known what fruit would spring
from such a seed.
(CH IV, x, 87-90)³⁹

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After acknowledging the argument of a number of critics, including Du Box, Mario Praz, and T. S. Eliot, that both the Byronic Hero and his creator are fated characters, Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., one of the outstanding Byron scholars of this decade, indicates as one of the few points of agreement in the many competent studies on Byron's personal beliefs the fact that the poet "was notoriously inconsistent" in "his casual pronouncements and in his letters" on this subject.⁴⁰ While admitting that it is quite logical to assume that the inconsistencies might carry over into the poet's work, Thorslev firmly rejects the idea that the Byronic Hero is a fatalistically doomed man, suggesting instead that such passages as the following from The Corsair are "simple scientific determinism" rather than fatalism:

Is this my skill? my craft? to set at last
Hope, power, and life upon a single cast?

³⁸Byron, p. 36.

³⁹Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁰Thorslev, p. 161.

Oh, Fate!--accuse they folly, not thy fate--
 She may redeem thee still--nor yet too late.
 (C,I,xiii,337-340)

His heart was form'd for softness, warp'd to wrong;
 Betrayed too early, and beguiled too long;
 Each feeling pure--as falls the dropping dew
 Within the grot, like that had harden'd too.⁴¹
 (C,III,xxii,661-664)

Explaining scientific determinism as "the presupposition that for every event in the psychic as well as the physical world there must be a predetermining cause," Thorslev insists that "ordinary laws of cause and effect must apply in poems as well as in case histories."⁴² The Byronic Hero may be so unfortunately enmeshed in doleful circumstances as to be considered "fate-ridden," but he is not a fatalist.⁴³

Regardless of Byron's own beliefs about predestination, then, the Byronic Hero is not characteristically a helpless victim of fate. Defiantly and proudly, he faces the consequences of his actions, even though he, like Conrad, "deserved his fate,/But did not feel it less," with "fate" meaning, in this instance, final judgment or ultimate punishment (C,III,xxi,629,630).⁴⁴ He may insolently lift his arm in a fierce gesture toward the tremendous powers of the universe which he does not fully comprehend but with which he longs to identify, but he never whiningly blames these supramortal forces for his misfortunes. Thorslev says that the Byronic

⁴¹Byron, pp. 342, 365.

⁴²Thorslev, p. 163.

⁴³Ibid., p. 161.

⁴⁴Byron, p. 365.

Hero's ever-present sense of his independent ego and of his defiant will are enough to negate any possibility of an abdication of moral responsibility by excusing himself in such a manner.⁴⁵ To do so would not only greatly diminish his splendid stature, but it would also vitiate many of the heroic qualities that are singularly those of the Byronic Hero.

The Byronic Hero's end is inherent in his nature rather than the result of supernatural, or fatal, contrivance: the seeds of his dissolution are contained within his own being. Even as he willfully pits himself against a near-invincible foe, warring elements within him tear at his sensibilities. Instinct, the generic tendency to behave in a certain way, rather than intuition, the immediate, unstudied apprehension of reality or truth, directs the Byronic Hero's course. Rather than relying upon intuition, which cannot be separated from perception of the particulars of immediate experience, the Byronic Hero is guided in his quest by instinct based on his innate dispositions. Although intuition and its accompanying knowledge would serve as a check on his recklessly determined onslaught against an adversary, instinct, devoid of intuition's restraint, may become illusion, dangerous and illogical, as it drives the Byronic Hero rashly forward toward his goal. Ahab, like Byron's heroes, recognizes his destiny and gives name to it. Resolutely, he vows, "What

⁴⁵Thorslev, p. 163.

I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do" (p. 226). To a prophecy that he will be dismembered, Ahab turns a deaf ear. Moby Dick is his goal and his fate, and he ignores the "devilish tantalization of the gods" (p. 612). Hugo is equally certain of the inevitable outcome of his love for Parisina. He knows Prince Azo's unbendable will and jealous anger. The facts that Hugo has loved Parisina first and that he is Azo's son are as irrelevant and as inconsequential as is Starbuck's anguished pleading with Ahab. Fully cognizant of his future, Hugo pursues his love for his father's wife. Acquainted with his death sentence even before his father pronounces it, Hugo deliberately embraces his fate. Selim, in The Bride of Abydos, is also free of any marionette-like attachments to the three fatal sisters as he moves with deliberation and awareness toward activating his plans. His entire life has been spent under Giaffir's roof, and there is no facet of the Pasha's character hidden from his foster-son. Although he realizes the unappeasable fury with which discovery of his love for Zuleika and of his leadership of a pirate band will be met by Giaffir, there is no hesitation in Selim's ardent proposals to Zuleika or in his treasonous activities with the outlaws. Whereas intuition would have counselled caution to the vengeance-bent Giaour, his instinct urges action, immediate and irrevocable, regardless of the inescapable consequences. Conscious awareness

based on facts gives rise to Conrad's apprehension prior to his leavetaking of Medora:

Strange tidings!--many a peril have I pass'd,
Nor know I why this next appears the last!
Yet so my heart forebodes, but must not fear,
Nor shall my followers find me falter here.
'T is rash to meet, but surer death to wait
Till here they hunt us to undoubted fate;
(C,I,xiii,311-316)⁴⁶

The deterrent power of intuition is brief, however, and, with "fire in his glance, and wildness in his breast," Conrad soon "feels of all his former self possest" (C,I,xvi,531,532).⁴⁷

In the same manner, Ahab, briefly harkening to intuition, cries out against his own actions: "What is it, what nameless, inscrutable thing is it. . . . Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? . . . Fate is the handspike" (p. 685). Shrinking from his knowledge, he seems momentarily to hesitate as he asks Starbuck, "Why this strife of the chase? why weary, and palsy the arm at the oar, and the iron, and the lance? how the richer or better is Ahab now?" (p. 684) Adamant once more, he urges the crew on against Moby Dick for two days. "This whole act's immutably decreed . . . I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders" (p. 707). With his next words, however, Ahab rejects fatalism and defiantly establishes his will, free both of intuition's constraints and of fate's intervention, as the motivating force in his unremitting pursuit of the white whale: "I feel

⁴⁶Byron, p. 342.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 345.

strained, half stranded, as ropes that tow dismasted frigates in a gale; and I may look so. But ere I break, ye'll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet" (p. 707). It is not too late; in fact, all the omens of sea and air seem to be urging Ahab to turn back as Moby Dick moves swiftly away from the ship and her puny appurtenances. On the third day of the chase, Ahab draws abreast of the destiny he has so ardently pursued.

The Byronic Hero, motivated by his own will and free of fatalistic preordination, shares with universal man a desire to peer into the future in order to gain foreknowledge of coming event. Unfortunately, the wisdom and maturity garnered from life's experiences are all too frequently consigned to oblivion by man's propensity toward supplying his own answers to life's questions, regardless of the actual facts involved. The doubloon nailed on the Pequod's quarterdeck contains a different message for each man who gazes greedily at it. Ahab sees Ahab atop the three mountain peaks engraved on the coin, and the Ahab he envisions is a triumphant, victorious Ahab. Starbuck sees in the coin's face a symbol of the Trinity, and he is comforted, even as he is warned. The Corsair, Lord Byron's pirate captain, surveys the superior forces and the strong garrisons of his adversary, the Pasha, and sees victory and riches for himself and his brigands. Lara desires to dwell in his ancestors' domain with his dark past forgotten and ignored, although he must be aware that

individuals, such as Sir Ezzelin, might re-enter his world at any moment, revealing events he wishes hidden. Selim, who knows the dislike and distaste with which he is viewed by Giaffir, is not ignorant of the fury with which Giaffir will regard his love of Zuleika. Little Pip, the Pequod's cabin boy, defines this unique quality of self-delusion as he directs his mad conjugation of the verb look toward Ahab's gold doubloon: "I look, you look, he looks; We look, ye look, they look" (p. 555).

In view of both Byron's and Melville's sanity having been debated, it is interesting to note that Ahab is motivated by the same type of madness that infects each of Byron's heroes.⁴⁸ All of Ahab's being is focused upon the tension of his monomaniacal purpose--Moby Dick's death. He is unsparing of himself, his crew, and his ship. Every sinew and beam must strain forward toward the culmination of his endeavor; each thought and each word are geared toward fulfilling his quest for revenge upon the white whale. There is a kind of madness in such single-minded purposiveness. The Giaour, crazed with grief over Leila's death and frenzied for revenge against Hassan, knows Ahab's monomania. Reasonless, blind hatred engulfs the Giaour as he wildly rides through the night after avenging Leila's murder; stopping, he fiercely lifts his arm and shakes his fist at the

⁴⁸Marchand, pp. 568, 569; Kligerman, p. 128.

skies (G,241,242).⁴⁹ Ahab's madness leads him to threaten to strike the sun if it dare defy him (p. 220). He challenges the gods to deter him from his fixed aim (p. 227), and he rails at the sun, moon, and stars as assassins (p. 720). In spite of his desperate concentration "on an audacious, immitigable, and supernatural revenge" (p. 251), the Byronic Hero retains a degree of objective awareness. Ahab says, "But I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself" (p. 226). Yet, he dissembles so skillfully prior to the Pequod's sailing that his Nantucket friends consider his actions normal for a man who has recently lost a leg (p. 250). Lara possesses something of Ahab's restrained anguish as he calmly walks among Otho's guests. Lara's past experiences are unknown, and he seems

. . . a stranger in this breathing world,
 An erring spirit from another hurl'd;
 A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped
 By choice the perils he by chance escaped;
 But 'scaped in vain. . . . (L,I,xviii,315-319)⁵⁰

In Lara's memories, as in Ahab's, dwell "the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them. . . ." (p. 246). In the throes of "that broad madness, not one jot of his great natural intellect had perished" (p. 249), and Lara calmly arranges to meet Ezzelin, an opponent who could reveal Lara's

⁴⁹Byron, p. 312.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 370.

carefully concealed past but who is destined not to keep the appointment. With skill born of practice and instinct, Lara and Ahab plan, and both might proudly affirm: "All my means are sane, my motive and my object mad" (p. 250).

The inclination to identify an author with his character poses unavoidable problems in evaluation and critical judgment. Marchand, in his remarks about Byron's Cain, for instance, says that, regardless of the poet's protestations in the Preface that Lucifer's words are essential for the character's proper dramatic development and are not those of the author, Byron does make his character "voice some of his own speculations and stand as an alter ego for Cain, who is a compound of intellectual rebel and rationalistic skeptic of the Age of Reason."⁵¹ Maurois describes Lara as "the pure Byronic hero" (which provides an interesting contrast to Thorslev's opinion of Lara as the least sympathetic of the Byronic Heroes and as the one closest to the Gothic Villain)⁵² "who bore a strong likeness to Conrad, who bore a strong likeness to Childe Harold, who bore a strong likeness to Byron."⁵³ In one of his many attempts to dissociate himself from his heroes, however, Byron, writing to Thomas Moore from Pisa in 1822, emphasizes that he does not share his characters' opinions. He then unequivocally states,

⁵¹Marchand, p. 918.

⁵²Thorslev, p. 162.

⁵³Maurois, p. 252.

"My ideas of a character may run away with me: like all imaginative men, I, of course, embody myself with the character while I draw it, but not a moment after the pen is from off the paper."⁵⁴

The same difficulties are present in scholarly attempts to equate Melville with Captain Ahab. Stanley Geist views Ahab as a literary embodiment of Melville's pride and sorrow which result from looking deeply into "the heart of darkness."⁵⁵ Lawrance Thompson believes that Ahab is created in Melville's own image in order to vicariously carry out the author's blasphemous desire, voiced by Job's wife, to "curse God and die."⁵⁶ Whereas Thompson sees Ahab as a revelation through "artistic deception" of Melville's anti-Christian dogma that "natural man should declare his independence from God, and then should fight for that independence,"⁵⁷ William W. Betts, Jr. maintains that Ahab portrays Melville's own Faustian quest of all knowledge⁵⁸ and that the tragedy of

⁵⁴Quennell, p. 689.

⁵⁵Stanley Geist, Herman Melville: The Tragic Vision and the Heroic Ideal (Cambridge, 1939), p. 49.

⁵⁶Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel With God (Princeton, 1952), p. 11.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁸William W. Betts, Jr., "Moby Dick: Melville's Faust," The Lock Haven Review, I (March, 1959), 39.

Ahab is the tragedy of Melville's failure in his personal Faustian aspiration.⁵⁹

Pointing to the enduring tendency of critics from Byron's day to the present century of identifying Byron with his heroes, Thorslev says that the Byronic Hero must be studied within the context of Byron's poetry because straining for autobiographical parallels results in character distortions and inconsistencies. The Byronic Hero is indeed "an amalgamation of Byron and his poetry," as Thorslev notes, in the same way that the heroes of other sensitive, perceptive writers reflect their creators. He also says that "Byron did not project life into literature nearly so much as he projected literature into life."⁶⁰ The Byronic Hero did not emerge full-grown and complete from Byron's mind, nor was he a mere reflection of Byron's personality. By the fusion of a number of existing literary elements and traditions in the crucible of his creative genius which was given impetus and motivation by various factors in his personal life and in his total environment in Regency England, Byron simply gave form to this unique, single image known as the Byronic Hero, whose literary ancestry may be clearly traced to the Gothic Villain of the eighteenth century.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁰Thorslev, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

THE BYRONIC HERO AND THE GOTHIC TRADITION

Gothicism is one of the common denominators of Ahab and the Byronic Hero. Although Gothic tradition was never completely quiescent at any time after the Reformation, Devendra P. Varma points out that at the beginning of the Renaissance the word Gothic was "a term of unmitigated contempt" which was used sneeringly to imply reproach.¹ Its use at this time connoted barbarity, rudeness, and uncouthness, and it was a synonym for ignorance, cruelty, and savageness. As medieval concepts returned to favor with what Varma labels "the emergence of the democratic-romantic side of the Renaissance," the term Gothic underwent an ameliorative process, gradually acquiring a flavor of respectability that obliterated its formerly derisive implications.² By the time Horace Walpole published The Castle of Otranto in 1764, the word Gothic seems to have had three closely allied meanings: barbarous, medieval, and supernatural.³ With this novel, Walpole is credited with inaugurating the Gothic literary tradition and

¹Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (London, 1957), p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 12.

with instituting the word Gothic as a critical term relating to prose fiction.⁴

Elie Halevy, a French historian of nineteenth-century England, attributes the success of Walpole's innovation to his perception that "the time was ripe for a double reaction, against the realism of the English novel and the classical manner of the French."⁵ Bertrand Evans suggests that this "impulse to Gothicize" grew quite naturally from the Zeitgeist of the third quarter of the eighteenth century.⁶ Patricia Ann Spacks, in The Insistence of Horror, describes this period as a fresh world of the imagination in which the manners and sentiments so important in the previous era were of much less significance; thus its readers found the fanciful characteristics and situations of the Gothic novels peculiarly entertaining.⁷

Whatever the reasons for its popularity, Walpole's novel fixed the imaginative, romantic setting of the medieval castle, complete with moats, drawbridges, echoing corridors, and gloomy dungeons, which became the prototype of the Gothic

⁴Ibid., p. 12.

⁵Elie Halevy, England in 1815, translated by E. I. Watkins and D. A. Barker (New York, 1949), p. 754.

⁶Bertrand Evans, "Manfred's Remorse and Dramatic Tradition," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXII (September, 1947), 754.

⁷Patricia Ann Spacks, The Insistence of Horror (Cambridge, 1962), p. 105.

novel. The standard characters in this dismal environment usually include a feudal tyrant who is frequently a cruel husband, a venerable ecclesiastic, an ill-used but virtuous heroine, and a proud hero whose cowardliness belies his boasting.⁸ Gothic writers drew much of the material for their eerily supernatural effects, their torturous plots, and their insidious motifs from the mysterious, wild extravagances of heathen Europe's ancient legends, ballads, epics, and dramas.⁹

Whereas Walpole is acknowledged as the author responsible for reversing the popular conception of Gothic from an opprobrious adjective to an epithet of praise which became, for many, a trope of the spiritual, moral, and cultural values contained in the eighteenth-century word enlightenment, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe is acclaimed as the high-priestess of the so-called Tale of Terror writers.¹⁰ According to Varma, little is known of Ann Ward Radcliffe, "in whose works we perceive the Gothic fiction approaching its meridian," beyond the facts that she was born in 1764, the year in which Walpole published The Castle of Otranto, and that she died in 1823.¹¹ Her most popular novels were A Sicilian Romance (1790), The Romance of the Forest (1791), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and The Italian (1797). Elie Halevy, praising her novels as "the masterpieces of the school," considers The Mysteries of

⁸Varma, p. 12.

⁹Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 13.

¹¹Ibid., p. 85.

Udolpho, which was translated into French, the best of these.¹² In her analysis of Mrs. Radcliffe's works, Patricia Spacks points to Mrs. Radcliffe's delimitation of terror as something soul-expanding and faculty-awakening and of horror as that which numbs and almost destroys the senses as one of her major contributions to the tradition.¹³

Varma also includes as significant in the development of Gothic literature the "fantastic and sombre genius" of Matthew Gregory Lewis.¹⁴ Lewis's The Monk (1796), his most influential work, contains among its macabre details a conjuring of sepulchral horrors and a frightful charnel-house nightmare. Varma views Lewis's grossly brutal style of negative reticence as exemplifying an extreme form of Gothic literary technique quite apart from Mrs. Radcliffe's delicate method of presentation.¹⁵

It is evident that both Melville and Byron read and were impressed by Gothic fiction. Newton Arvin's research into Gothic elements in Melville's work reveals that Melville was familiar with several classics of the Gothic school, including The Castle of Otranto, Beckford's Vathek, Godwin's Caleb Williams, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, as well as translations of Carlyle's German Romance and Schiller's The Ghost

¹²Halevy, p. 511.

¹³Spacks, p. 107.

¹⁴Varma, p. 139.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 145.

Seer.¹⁶ After noting that there are explicit references to Mrs. Radcliffe in Billy Budd, Clarel, and "The Apple Tree Table," Arvin suggests that many of Melville's descriptions possess the particularly "painterly" quality of Salvatore Rosa's Baroque tradition which Mrs. Radcliffe also affected in her writings.¹⁷ He further points out that the two paintings in Moby-Dick, the smokily indistinct picture hanging in the Spouter Inn's entry and the stormy seascape behind Father Mapple's pulpit, are in themselves typical Gothic devices, reminiscent of the frequently appearing magic portrait of Gothic fiction.¹⁸

Byron acknowledges his debt to these writers in the lines "Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art/Had stamped her image on me" (Ch, IV, xviii, 158, 159).¹⁹ Montague Summers, in The Gothic Quest, relates that Byron, in a letter from Venice to John Murray in 1817, writes of Schiller's The Ghost-Seer as being so strongly entrenched in his boyhood imagination that he "never walked down St. Mark's by moonlight without thinking of it, and 'at nine o'clock he died!'"²⁰ In The Romantic Agony, Mario Praz underscores the striking verbal similarity in the physical appearances of Byron's Lara

¹⁶ Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel," The New England Quarterly, XXII (March, 1949), 34.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 34-37.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁹ Byron, p. 58.

²⁰ Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest (London, 1938), p. 130.

and Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni by juxtaposing the following passages of description from each author.²¹

. . . the livid paleness of his face . . .
 There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that cannot easily be defined.
 It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated.
 . . . His eyes were so piercing, that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts.

That brow in furrow'd lines had fix'd at last,
 And spoke of passions, but of passions past:
 The pride, but not the fire, of early days,
 Coldness of mien, and carelessness of praise;
 A high demeanour, and a glance that took
 Their thoughts from others by a single look . . .
 And some deep feeling it were vain to trace
 At moments lighten'd o'er his livid face.

Thorslev, however, negates Praz's conclusion that Byron slavishly imitated Mrs. Radcliffe, suggesting rather that, while the resemblances are applicable in Praz's selected aspects, numerous dissimilarities invalidate an application of these characteristics either to the Byronic Hero generally or to Lara specifically.²²

The plots of Gothic fiction are interspersed with extraordinary occurrences outside the normal experience or knowledge of man. Vanna regards as Mrs. Radcliffe's most powerful effects those gained by her skillful weaving together

²¹Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (New York, 1956), p. 85. The first quotation is from Ann Radcliffe's The Italian (London, 1811), pp. 69-70; the second is from Byron's "Lara," p. 367, st. v, lines 66-72. The italics in both selections are Praz's.

²²Thorslev, pp. 56, 57.

of the supernatural and the credible, which results in the base passion of fear being elevated to romantic dignity.²³ Byron's Lara abounds in chillingly unnatural events that are never fully explained. During Lara's solitary, nocturnal walks through his castle's dark, portrait-tenanted chambers, his fearful servants hear "the sound of words less earthly than his own" (L,I,ix,140).²⁴ Lara reveals to no one either his reasons for keeping a human skull upon his reading table or why he turns his dark gaze on this ghastly memento for long intervals (L,I,ix,143-146).²⁵ The tension of mystery surrounding Lara culminates in his violent midnight encounter with an unseen foe, which leaves him unconscious and "cold as the marble where his length was laid" (L,I,xiii,211).²⁶ The terror he has confronted remains unknown, but its monstrousness is discernible in the horrible expression fixed in his partially opened, sightless eyes (L,I,xiii,221-224).²⁷ Proof of Lara's implication in the strange disappearance of Count Ezzelin is contained only in veiled hints and obscure allusions to murder (L,II,iii-vii).²⁸ Also left to conjecture are Kaled's origins, her reasons for assuming a page's disguise, and an explanation of her ardent devotion to Lara.

²³Varma, pp. 101, 102.

²⁵Ibid., p. 368.

²⁷Ibid., p. 369.

²⁴Byron, p. 368.

²⁶Ibid., p. 369.

²⁸Byron, pp. 375-377.

Ahab's character is similarly embellished by Melville's use of this same Gothic device of suggestive obscurity and half-revealed terrors. Elijah, the ragged prophet-sailor who accosts Ishmael and Queequeg near the Pequod, speaks warningly to them of Ahab, with an "ambiguous, half-hinting, half-revealing, shrouded sort of talk" that gives rise to "all kinds of vague wonderments and half-apprehensions" (p. 135). Equally mysterious is the source of the low, subterranean laugh that comes from the ship's hold following Starbuck's abortive attempt to dissuade Ahab from his vengeful course against Moby Dick (p. 222). When Fedallah and his companions, seemingly "fresh formed out of air," materialize from the ship's hold and noiselessly cast loose Ahab's boat for the first lowering, the amazed crew is momentarily paralyzed with fear (pp. 290, 291). Neither the source of the power exerted over Ahab by Fedallah, the evil-appearing, tall, swarthy leader of this yellow-skinned group, nor any plausible reason for the oddly tacit communication between the two men is ever revealed to the Pequod's crew. The "unnatural hallucination of the night" by the flaming try-works reveals "the redness, the madness, the ghastliness" of the laboring crew's "fiend shapes" that seem to be "capering half in smoke and half in fire" (pp. 540, 541). The witches'-cauldron quality of the flaming furance is intensified by its acrid, funeral-pyre odor that "smells like the left wing of the day of judgment" and "is an argument for the pit" (p. 539).

A Gothic tableau climaxes "The Candles" chapter, with the crew frozen "in various enchanted attitudes" beneath the nine lightning-ignited, white, tapering flames that tip the high yard-arms with preternatural light. Ahab grasps his burning harpoon from whose steel barb there comes "a levelled flame of pale, forked fire," and, brandishing it among his terrified crew, he fiercely reminds them that they are as irrevocably bound by their oaths to hunt the white whale as "heart, soul, and body, lungs and life, old Ahab is bound" (p. 644).

Although softened at times by langorous breezes and balmy sunshine, the essentially Gothic atmosphere that encompasses both Ahab and Byron's heroes is compounded of raw, elemental force and unrestrained energy. The Corsair's lair, a rocky stronghold built upon a forbidding cliff overlooking the sea, is lashed by storms and is far from civilization's refinements. In order to join his men aboard ship, Conrad descends from "crag to crag" (C,I,xvi,505)²⁹ to "the verge where ends the cliff, begins the beach" (C,I,xvi,534).³⁰ As his bark speeds toward its quarry, Conrad, surveys no tranquil expanse of placid water but leans over "the fretting flood" (C,I,xvii,605).³¹ On the fourth night of Conrad's imprisonment by Seyd, a thunderstorm furiously lashes Seyd's

²⁹Byron, p. 345.

³⁰Ibid., p. 346.

³¹Ibid., p. 347.

palace. Shackled and frenzied, Conrad welcomes the roaring wind and the slashing lightning that rages around his prison (C,III,vii,248-261).³² As the Giaour rides wildly through the night, the desolate caverns echo the sound of his horse's iron-clad hooves, and the ocean's tide seems to lend its froth to the foam-streaked courser (G,180-186).³³ Darkness brings dimly distorted shadows of surrounding trees, the rustling of bats' wings, and the desolate sound of night breezes to Lara's environs (L,I,xv,263,264).³⁴ Partially shielded by midnight's blackness, Selim's last tryst with Zuleika is in a rude grotto by a wave-swept shore, and "the tumbling tide" carries his body away after he is killed by Giaffir (BA,II,xxviii,623).³⁵ Zuleika's tomb is marked by a melancholy cypress tree, a bush of eternally blooming white roses, and the soft song of an unseen night bird (BA,II,xxvii,665-693).³⁶ The wild horse to which Mazeppa is brutally tied plunges over arid plains and across barren hills, the savageness of the terrain equally pitiless toward rider and steed (M,xi-xvii,423-691).³⁷ Manfred stands dangerously near the edge of a cliff in the Jungfrau Mountains, a vast expanse of great pine trees extending into the distance before

³²Ibid., p. 359.

³³Ibid., p. 312.

³⁴Ibid., p. 370.

³⁵Ibid., p. 336.

³⁶Byron, p. 336.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 411-413.

his eyes and a turbulent stream rushing over jagged rocks at the foot of the precipice below him (Mf, I, ii, 274-279).³⁸

Varma's observation that the style, tone, and material of Byron's nature descriptions in Childe Harold are reminiscent of Mrs. Radcliffe is decidedly applicable to the elemental phases of nature surrounding Ahab and his crew in the trackless space of the unbridled ocean.³⁹ "And heaved and heaved, still unrestingly heaved the black sea, as if its vast tides were a conscience; and the great mundane soul were in anguish and remorse for the long sin and suffering it had bred" (p. 312). Domed by the vastness of the skies and buoyed by the fathomless waters, the Pequod is at the mercy of the capricious elements. With the nearest land hundreds of miles away, the crew attests to strange sights and sounds that have no rational explanation. There is, for example, a horrible grandeur in the silver jet that appears night after night ahead of the Pequod's bow as she glides through the Carrol Grounds, only to disappear as the ship speeds toward this "unnearable spout" (p. 311). The uneasy crew mutters that Moby Dick is casting the jet to allure them treacherously on and on to ultimate destruction "in the remotest and most savage seas" (p. 311). Then, after passing through seas "wearily, lonesomely mild" and seemingly devoid of all life, the crew is awed by strange, nameless forms

³⁸ Ibid., p. 480.

³⁹ Varma, p. 197.

darting before the bow, while hordes of sea-ravens ominously follow in the ship's wake with brazen determination (p. 312). When the Pequod crosses the wake of the Albatross, the shoals of small fish that have been swimming beside Ahab's ship dart shudderingly away to follow the other ship (p. 315). Melville's atmosphere and scenery frequently reflect Ahab's emotions: blue skies, gentle winds, and sunshine betoken happiness and security, however fleeting; the skies darken and the elements rage as Ahab nears the object of his quest.

According to Newton Arvin, the Pequod itself is an example of Melville's insensible transmutation of Mrs. Radcliffe's Gothic settings into a genuinely Melvillean Gothic environment. Citing the ruined pile or haunted castle as Gothic fiction's leading symbol, Arvin points to the strangely poetic and somberly picturesque description of the Pequod's weather-stained hull, venerable bows, spire-like masts, ancient and worn decks, trophy-garnished bulwarks, and general melancholy grotesqueness as emblematic of this symbol.⁴⁰ He further suggests that the lookout station built around the royal mast far above decks is the Pequod's counterpart to the recurring tower of Gothic fiction, and that the ship's labyrinthine bowels represent the gloomy vaults and oppressive corridors of Beckford, Mrs. Radcliffe, and "Monk" Lewis.⁴¹ Ahab's aged craft, with its tiller carved from a

⁴⁰Arvin, p. 38.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

whale's lower jaw, thus appears no less Gothic than does Lara's gloomy ancestral castle with its vaulted ceilings, its arched windows, its ribbed and buttressed roof, and its somber wall-hangings depicting the long-dead. The same tradition that inspired Mazeppa's account of his vengeful desolation of his enemy's castle is present in Melville's narration of the Pequod's destruction by Ahab's Nemesis.

Thorslev, in his enchiridion of the Byronic Hero, offers a succinct genealogy of the character type's evolution from and relation to the pre-Romantic villains of Gothic fiction. Noting the shallow colorlessness of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and heroines, Thorslev points to the mysterious, indomitable, ingeniously evil Radcliffean villains as her greatest creations and as progenitors of the Byronic Hero.⁴² Thorslev's list of the most representative of the pre-Byronic Gothic villains reflected in the Byronic Hero includes Walpole's Manfred in The Castle of Otranto, Montoni in Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Schedoni in her The Italian, and M. G. Lewis's Ambrosio in The Monk.⁴³ Bertrand Evans sees the main function of these "specialized" villains, "born in and of a castle ruin," as serving as "chief accessory of the ruined edifice itself."⁴⁴ Although Spacks views the Gothic Villain as often only superficially vivid with his details

⁴²Thorslev, p. 52.

⁴³Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁴Evans, p. 755.

seemingly drawn mechanically from lifeless traditions,⁴⁵ Eino Railo depicts this Byronic Hero prototype as "a kind of approved composite portrait" outwardly characterized by "a high, white forehead shadowed by ebony curls, a dark, piercing glance, general beauty of countenance, a manly character and a mysterious glance," enshrouded in melancholy and driven by defiance.⁴⁶

Thorslev's discussion of the physical properties of the Byronic Hero developed from the Gothic Villain is as applicable to Ahab as it is to Byron's heroes. Age is of little consequence, although the Byronic Hero is never an inexperienced boy or a doddering old man. Even though Selim of The Bride of Abydos and Hugo of Parisina die before they attain Ahab's maturity of years, they are both competent warriors whose skill and courage have been tested in actual combat. Lara, the Corsair, and Manfred are of indeterminate age, probably not middle-aged but certainly not untried youths. Mazeppa, though not a wholly typical Byronic Hero because of his age and his occasional hints of ironic humor, speaks proudly of his "seventy years of Memory" (M,iv,126),⁴⁸ but Ahab's fifty-eight years weigh heavily upon him as he discusses with Starbuck his forty years of whaling, begun as an

⁴⁵Spacks, p. 187.

⁴⁶Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle (London, 1957), p. 219.

⁴⁷Byron, p. 408.

eighteen-year-old boy harpooner (p. 683). The Pequod's captain mirrors his crew's concept of him as aged as he speaks of himself as a weary old man whose "locks so grey did never grow but from out some ashes" (p. 684). Venerated by his men as "old man of Oceans" (p. 635), "his old Mogul-ship" (p. 598), and "terrible old man" (p. 313), Ahab is actually younger than the ship's carpenter, the old Manxman, and Fedallah. The crew's near-worshipful respect is actually engendered more by the fact that "Ahab's larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted" (p. 249) than by their captain's advancing years.

Sinewy, steadfast strength rather than bulging muscles and gigantic breadth is another Gothic hallmark of the Byronic Hero. Closely resembling Thorslev's description of the Gothic Villian's tall, stalwart physique,⁴⁸ Conrad is "robust but not Herculean--to the sight/No giant frame' sets forth his common height" (C,I,ix,197-198).⁴⁹ Ahab's "whole high, broad form seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus" (p. 168). Splendid physical condition is as necessarily concomitant to Ahab's survival of the rigors of forty years' whaling as it is to Mazeppa's endurance of his terrifying ordeal astride the wild stallion. Ahab and Conrad display the same economy of motion

⁴⁸Thorslev, p. 53.

⁴⁹Byron, p. 341.

and physical dexterity as they captain their ships and rencounter their foes.

The pale complexion the Byronic Hero inherits from the Gothic Villain is essential for the occasional outward manifestation of his inner torture. The Giaour's "sallow front/Is scathed by fiery passion's brunt" (G,ii,194,195).⁵⁰ As he breaks his wild ride to dismount and fiercely shake his hand toward the heavens, his face, "pale as marble o'er the tomb,/Whose ghostly whiteness aids its gloom" (G,ii,288, 289),⁵¹ is briefly suffused by anger's "reddening flush" (G,ii,236).⁵² Conrad, though tanned by long hours of exposure to sea and sun, also has a "forehead high and pale" (C,I,ix,203)⁵³ upon which may be viewed emotion's "varying hues" (C,I,ix,209).⁵⁴ Ahab's "tawny scorched face and neck," however, are indelibly marked by a symbol both of the Byronic Hero's "sallow front" and of the rufescence that emanates from his impassioned, yet restrained, spirit. A "lividly whitish" scar, like that made by lightning upon a great tree trunk, emerges from Ahab's grey hair and runs scaringly down one side of his face and neck, disappearing into his clothing. The crew's speculations on the source of the vicious mark range from conjectures of a wound received during an

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 312.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 312.

⁵² Ibid., p. 312.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 341.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

elemental fray at sea to the old Manxman's insinuation of a birthmark extending from the captain's crown to his sole (p. 169). This livid, rod-like mark, legacy to Ahab of a long-ago but unforgotten encounter, evinces a permanent arresting of the Byronic Hero's customary pallor resulting from a recession of passion's sudden, darkening rise of hot blood.

The Byronic Hero's eyes are unmistakably those of his Gothic ancestor. For example, Thorslev says that Schedoni, one of Mrs. Radcliffe's most famous villains, has large, melancholy eyes whose single glance pierces and probes men's secret thoughts and before whose scrutiny most men quail.⁵⁵ Lara, in his turn, sweepingly reaps one's thoughts with a single, penetrating look (L,I,v,71,72).⁵⁶ Few persons survive the full impact of Conrad's "searching eye" that cunningly impales the curious gazer upon his own impudent stare (C,I,xi,215-220).⁵⁷ The nameless horrors of the past revealed in the Giaour's flashing eyes at once repel and fascinate those who fall beneath the mesmerizing spell of his glowering countenance (G,832-845).⁵⁸ Selim's very soul seems to burst flashingly from his eyes when he hears Zuleika's avowal of her love for him (BA,I,xii,328-339).⁵⁹

⁵⁵Thorslev, p. 54.

⁵⁶Byron, p. 367.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 341.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 318.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 327.

When Ahab first stands before his crew, "a crucifixion in his face," the uneasy men are instantly conscious of "being under a troubled master-eye" (p. 170). Ahab's eyes seem to flash at Stubb, who has incurred his captain's wrath, like fiery powder-pans (p. 173). Grasping the crossed lances of his three mates during the maledictory ceremony in "The Quarter-Deck" chapter, Ahab directs the burning intensity of his gaze into the eyes of each man before him. He seems to be willing "the same fiery emotion accumulated within the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life" into his recoiling mates who are unable to withstand Ahab's "strong, sustained, and mystic aspect" (pp. 223, 224). When Ahab's incessant battle with his ever-present anguish becomes unbearable, and hell with its flames and torments opens tearingly within him and all about him, he burst wildly from his stateroom, his intolerable spiritual agony reflected in his burning eyes (p. 271). As the Pequod nears its confrontation with Moby Dick, Ahab's consuming desire for vengeance upon the white whale is mixed with his "aspect of nailed firmness." Pacing the quarter-deck between the binnacle and the mainmast, he pauses at each turn for a deliberately directed look at a particular object before him: his swift inspection of the compass upon the binnacle is "shot like a javelin with the pointed intensity of his purpose"; he then fastens "the same riveted glance" upon the doubloon nailed to the masthead (p. 548). One night during a shrieking squall, Starbuck

comes upon Ahab asleep in his chair with his head back so that his closed eyes point toward the cabin's ceiling compass; even in sleep, the steadfast, unyielding purpose of the captain's eyes holds and intimidates his followers (p. 313).

Along with and closely related to his physical appearance, the Byronic Hero's aristocratic birth, the details of which are usually shrouded in mystery, is also inherited from his Gothic predecessor. Thorslev points out that this nobility of background is essential to the Byronic Hero's inherent sense of power and to his commanding manner.⁶⁰ Courteous, disdainful, or coldly commanding as occasion demands, the Corsair's aloof mien is well served by his "high-born eye" (C,I,xvi,539-545).⁶¹ His noble origins, like those of the Gothic Villain, are obscure but unmistakable as his "rising lip reveals/The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals" (C,I,ix,205,206).⁶² Lara, "born of high lineage, link'd in high command," returns to his ancestral estate after many years' absence, loathe to discuss his previous activities or whereabouts, and is immediately accepted as a peer by and included in the social life of "the magnates of his land" (L,I,vii,97,98).⁶³ As he looks closely at Manfred, the last member of a once-powerful family to inhabit his forebears' castle, the old Abbot notes that

⁶⁰Thorslev, p. 54.

⁶¹Byron, p. 346.

⁶²Ibid., p. 341.

⁶³Ibid., p. 367.

"this should have been a noble creature" (Mf, III, i, 160).⁶⁴ Mazeppa, as well as Hugo and Selim, is of royal descent, and he was once chieftain to thousands (M, vii, 290-292).⁶⁵ No ordinary sea captain, Ahab assumes the Byronic Hero's aristocratic heritage without formal, manorial blazonry or baronial accouterments: "Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air!" (p. 199). Captain Peleg portentously explains to Ishmael that Ahab, named for an ancient Hebrew king, is "above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales" (p. 119). Ahab's strange solitude for a time prior to and after the Pequod's sailing is referred to as "Grand-Lama-like exclusiveness" (p. 591). Royally enthroned upon his ivory stool on the Pequod's deck, Ahab appears as "a Khan of the plank, and a king of the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans" (p. 175). Meals on the ivory-inlaid officers' table in Ahab's cabin are as solemn and silent as the Coronation banquet at Frankfort am Main after the Holy Roman Emperor's election "where the German Emperor profoundly dines with the seven Imperial Electors," with kingly Ahab presiding over his table like a "mute, maned sea-lion on the white coral beach,

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 493.

⁶⁵Byron, p. 409.

surrounded by his warlike but still deferential cubs" (p. 202). As he stands erectly unafraid before the pallidly burning yard-arms at the height of an electrical storm, one foot upon the kneeling Parsee, Ahab is regally defiant and majestically suppliant (pp. 639-641). Sensing his grandeur and awed by his courage, yet fearing his purpose, some of the crew run from Ahab "in a terror of dismay," much as men during a hurricane flee the vicinity of a stately, solitary tree lest its very greatness draw the fury of the thunderbolts (p. 644).

Although the Byronic Hero's physical resemblance to the Gothic Villain is strikingly evident, it must be noted that the similarities are in appearances only. The "kind of approved composite portrait" in Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle which depicts the Gothic Villain as being outwardly characterized by "a high, white forehead shadowed by ebon curls, a dark, piercing glance, general beauty of countenance, a manly character and a mysterious glance" is one with which most scholars of Gothicism seem to agree.⁶⁶ (The saturnine, enigmatic Gothic Villain, however, is inherently evil and virulently cruel--a villain in the most malignant sense of the word.) The Byronic Hero, on the other hand, is capable of genuine love and has none of the misogynous sadism that Thorslev speaks of as invariably marking the Gothic Villain.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Railo, p. 219.

⁶⁷Thorslev, p. 55.

Solitude rather than malicious misanthropy, soul-wrenching aspiration but not malevolent selfishness, and compassion instead of deliberately cruel machinations further dissociate the Byronic Hero from his Gothic rhizome. A flawed human being in whom "inexplicably mix'd" there is "much to be loved and hated, sought and fear'd" (L,I,xvii,289,290),⁶⁸ the Byronic Hero nonetheless engenders admiration tinged with pity rather than the scorn and aversion produced by the Gothic Villian. Captain Peleg describes Ahab to Ishmael as "desperate, moody, and savage sometimes; but that will pass off." After admonishing the young man that "it's better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one," Peleg voices a remarkably discerning opinion: ". . . stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his humanities!" (p. 120). In his terse epithet, Peleg unwittingly points out the major disparate element in the Byronic Hero's character that differentiates him from the Gothic Villain--his "humanities." A plumbing of the depths of these humanities, then, is the logical next step in a study of Ahab as a Byronic Hero.

⁶⁸Byron, p. 370.

CHAPTER IV

THE BYRONIC HERO AND HIS "HUMANITIES"

The eighteenth-century villain's heroic obversion unquestionably implies a transitional phase, a literary transcendence from unrelieved evil to marred virtue. Although this character modulation from Gothic Villain to Byronic Hero is readily perceivable in the lineaments of Byron's heroes, it is difficult to ascertain the precise manner in which this change took place. The tenuity of the filament bridging the gap from villain to hero is apparent in the inconclusive nature of the scholarly theories on this subject. Three of these speculative approaches to the Byronic Hero's mode of metamorphosis from Gothic Villain, while marked by a lack of unanimity, are particularly relevant to a study of Ahab as a Byronic Hero.

Eino Railo, for instance, proposes that Sir Walter Scott's consolidating of the Gothicism of Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe, and "Monk" Lewis with his own knowledge of history and folklore produced the intermediary character who bridges the chasm between the Gothic Villain and the Byronic Hero.¹ In accord with Railo's point of view, Halevy also sees Scott's romances, emerging from the final shock waves of the

¹Railo, p. 221.

literary revolution that produced the school of terror writers, as the immediate precursors of Byron's Oriental tales. Scott's Waverly, a tale of the rebellion of Scotland's Chevalier Prince Charles Edward in 1745, had the same psychological appeal to readers as that of Mrs. Radcliffe's stories, but his hero is of a different ilk than either her flaccid protagonists or her sinister villains. Although Scott's Waverly is not yet the forceful, vivid hero of Byron's Oriental tales, his character is dimensional as well as believable, and Halevy says that Scott's utilization of the romance as a vehicle for presentation of the manners and history of a previous era prepared the way for Byron's adventuring heroes in their exotic settings.²

Thorslev also comments that Scott's influence on the development of the Byronic Hero is unmistakable, noting that Scott's Noble Outlaw--a composite of the ballad outlaws, the Gothic Villains of England and of Germany, and the two major Teutonic outlaws of the period, Goethe's Götz and Schiller's Karl Moor--is remarkably similar to the heroes of Byron's Oriental tales.³ For example, if Marmion's mysterious secret were more honorable, his regard for women wholly courteous, his passion intensified, and his character more enigmatic and complex, he would be, in Thorslev's opinion "a true Byronic Noble Outlaw."⁴ Scott's heroes, though

²Halevy, p. 517.

³Thorslev, p. 77.

⁴Ibid., p. 79.

usually outside the law, are chivalrous and patriotic; the Byronic Hero, solitary and consumed by the passions of his quest, also is unfailingly courteous and brave to a fault. The sympathy of the reader is thus engaged by the heroes of Scott and Byron, whereas the Gothic Villain's sadistic misogyny marks him as completely unregenerate.⁵

Byron knew Scott well, of course, and the two men openly admired each other. Since Byron read all of Scott's romances and Waverly novels, which emerged from the same Zeitgeist that produced The Corsair and Lara, it would be unusual if there were no residual traces of Scott's heroes in the Byronic Hero.⁷ An extensive contemplation of the Byronic Hero, however, reveals many dissimilarities in his character and that of Scott's swashbuckling, charming Noble Outlaw. That the two are related in their development from the same spirit of the age is indisputable, but the relationship is more that of cousins-german than that of immediate progenitor and offspring.

A second theory of the Byronic Hero's metamorphosis from the Gothic Villain is presented in Ernest J. Lovell's Byron: The Record of a Quest. In the chapter entitled "The Wordsworthian Note and the Byronic Hero," Lovell contends that John Moore's Zeluco, published in 1789, provides the

⁵Ibid., p. 55.

⁶Marchand, p. 530.

⁷Thorslev, p. 77.

proximal character to the Byronic Hero descended from the Gothic Villain.⁸ The first point upon which he bases this premise is that Moore's Zeluco, though undeniably culpable, is tormented by remorse and guilt. These qualities, never experienced by Mrs. Radcliffe's villains, are, however, painfully present in Byron's heroes. Lovell next points to Zeluco's villainy and misanthropy as having been forced upon him by powers outside his control. Like Byron's Conrad and Lara, Zeluco is mistreated by the world, and his disfigured character is the result of what Lovell calls "environmental determinism."⁹ The Gothic Villain ruthlessly elects to be cruel; Zeluco's pseudo-villainous role is chosen no more deliberately than is the role of the unhappy Giaour. Finally, Lovell contrasts the total absence of psychological subtlety in the Radcliffean villain with "Dr. Moore's careful dissection of motive and slow hardening of habit" in his delineation of Zeluco.¹⁰ Noting that Byron was impressed by and commented on Moore's acumen in observing mankind, Lovell suggests that the creator of the Byronic Hero, while definitely indebted to Mrs. Radcliffe's villains for his characters' general outward appearances, is far more deeply, as well as immediately, indebted to Dr. Moore's guilt-ridden Zeluco.¹¹

⁸Ernest J. Lovell, Jr., Byron: The Record of a Quest (Austin, Texas, 1949), pp. 117-185.

⁹Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 143.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 142, 143.

He strengthens this argument by tracing the Zeluco theme in novels "which with certainty or good possibility" Byron had read.¹² Among these are Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther, translated into English in 1779; Godwin's Fleetwood or: The New Man of Feeling (1815); Chateaubriand's René; Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya, or The Moor (1806); three of Maturin's early novels, Fatal Revenge or The Family of Montorio (1807), The Wild Irish Boy (1808), and The Milesian Chief (1812); and Shelley's Zastrozzi (1810) and St. Irvyne (1811).¹³ Although the villains of Mrs. Radcliffe and of "Monk" Lewis were doubtless villains from infancy and thoroughly devoid of sympathetic qualities, Lovell does see the Zeluco theme of remorse and melancholic contemplation mirrored in some of the minor characters of these two writers.¹⁴

Zeluco's influence on Byron is unmistakable. Marchand says that Byron's youthful exposure to this "semi-gothic novel," whose "misanthropic hero-villain" is "fated to perform dark deeds by forces beyond his control," strengthened the poet's concept of himself as being predestined to evil.¹⁵ That Byron was deeply impressed by Zeluco is apparent in the addition to his preface to the first two cantos of Childe Harold in which he states that he had intended to sketch "a modern Timon, perhaps a poetical Zeluco."¹⁶ There is cogency

¹²Lovell, p. 144.

¹³Ibid., pp. 144-168.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 149-154.

¹⁵Marchand, I, 39.

¹⁶Byron, p. 2.

in Lovell's theory that it is Moore's Zeluco, wretchedly incapable of enjoying nature or man because of his cruel destiny, who, in the sense of character development, is the adjacent character providing the tradition and the pattern by which the unregenerate Gothic Villain develops into the pensively brooding, remorseful (though not penitent) Byronic Hero. This postulation lacks, however, the conclusive quality of a third theory to which it is somewhat similar.

Bertrand Evans, while admitting that the Byronic Hero is obligated to the Gothic tradition begun by Walpole in 1768 and is descended from the villains of this school of writers, maintains that the link in the progress from villain to hero is to be found in Gothic drama. In plays such as John O'Keefe's Banditti, William Hayley's Lord Russel (1784), Miles Peter Andrews' The Enchanted Castle, and Bertie Greatheed's The Regent (1788),¹⁷ the villains gradually evolved into more attractive characters than the villains of Gothic novels because of two theatrical circumstances, only accidentally related. One of these was the late eighteenth-century rise of principal actors to places of great power in the theater. The role of villain was invariably much more challenging than that of the ineffectual protagonist, and Gothic playwrights took special pains to make their villains attractive to leading actors of this period. Although these

¹⁷Evans, p. 759.

plays end with villainy defeated by virtue, the impotent hero never contributes to the villain's ultimate downfall. The villain's role was essentially central since the total dramatic purpose of Gothic drama was dependent upon the villain's function within the plot.¹⁸

As the villain, played by outstanding actors, grew in stature, he inevitably became endowed with a dual personality which Evans terms "a mixture of odium and attractiveness."¹⁹ In the course of the transformation, the villain, still possessing unlimited capacities for evil, was provided with princely manners and a great soul.²⁰ Since identification with leading actors of the day made the already central role of villain even more dominant as well as more attractive, the agony of remorse became one of the essential components of the villain's character. While serving as an excellent vehicle for the actor's histrionics, this remorseful agony made a compelling bid for the audience's sympathy. As the audience responded to the now remorseful villain, Evans asserts the Gothic Villain passed through that remorse-induced sympathy in the final stages of his evolution to Byronic Hero.²¹

At the same time the star actors' exploitation of the agony of remorse was projecting the eighteenth-century villain

¹⁸Ibid., p. 762.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 761.

²⁰Ibid., p. 761.

²¹Ibid., p. 762.

much nearer the nineteenth-century hero of Byron, the result of another theater-related situation was paralleling this evolutionary character development. Gothic dramatists were forced to give positive evidence of their moral integrity because of the intense moral scrutinizing their plays underwent at this time. The villain, always brought to destruction, thus became an object lesson as he agonized through repeated scenes of remorse which served the double purpose of ostentatiously displaying the actor as well as of placating the eighteenth-century censor.²² A survey of the monstrous actions in plays by leading dramatists such as "Monk" Lewis, Bertie Greathead, Francis North, William Sotheby, and Joanna Baillie reveals that the censor of Gothic drama allowed illimitable representation of vice so long as it was balanced by equally unlimited remorse.²³ This remorse, required of the villain as a moral requital, evoked the sympathy that became an important part of the Gothic Villain's elevation to hero. These remorseful villains of Gothic drama are not Byronic Heroes or even Romantic rebels, as Thorslev points out, but their connection to the Byronic Hero is too close to be ignored.²⁴

This quality of remorse that Evans underscores in the villain of Gothic drama as an important transitional element

²²Evans, p. 763.

²³Ibid., p. 765.

²⁴Thorslev, p. 61.

in the development of the Byronic Hero from Gothic Villain is a characteristic of Azo, the antagonist in Byron's Parisina.²⁵ In appearance and in purpose, Azo resembles both the villains of Gothic novels and of Gothic dramas. He has the typical "fair broad brow" that is scarred by "Intersected lines of thought" (P,xx,539,540),²⁶ and his tyrannical behavior toward his son is reprehensible, to say the least. After the consummation of this revenge, however, Azo's character parallels that of the remorseful villain of Gothic drama rather than that of the unconscionably malevolent villains of Gothic novels. Upon discovering the love between his young wife, Parisina, and his son Hugo, Azo adamantly declares that death is Hugo's penalty for this love, his "crime's reward" (P,xii,208).²⁷ The betrayed husband and father justifies his merciless act by insisting that "there breathes not one/Who would not do as I have done" (P,xii,203,204),²⁸ but he soon becomes the victim of his own vengeance. Even before Hugo dies, the remorse that consumes his despotic father is apparent. With a shaking hand, Azo hides his face to veil from onlookers the passion reflected there, "For on his brow the swelling vein/Throbb'd as if back upon his brain/The hot blood ebb'd and flow'd again" (P,xiii,224-226).²⁹

²⁵Byron, pp. 396-402.

²⁶Ibid., p. 402.

²⁷Ibid., p. 398.

²⁸Ibid., p. 398.

²⁹Ibid., p. 396.

Hugo dies unrepentant, his death heralded by Parisina's insane shriek and witnessed by curious spectators, and Azo's vindication is complete. The emptiness of his revenge, however, is attested by the deep furrows of sorrow on his once-handsome face, "Scars of the lacerating mind/Which the Soul's war doth leave behind" (P,xx,543,544).³⁰ No jubilation such as that enjoyed by a successful Gothic Villain marks lonely Azo's future. Haunted by memories too deeply planted to be uprooted, his frozen heart receives no surcease from his banished tears. His wretched old age is as barren as a great tree whose trunk has been blighted by lightning striking its upper branches (P,xx,537-586).³¹ Unforgiving and unforgiven, Azo is something of a monster, but he is a remorseful monster. The remorse strikes a sympathetic note in the reader, who feels a degree of affinity with the villain and his self-bequeathed legacy of "sleepless nights and heavy days" (P,xx,547).³² Victim as well as victimizer, Azo personifies the remorse which both Lovell and Evans see as bridging the gap from Gothic Villain to Byronic Hero.

Remorse is an identifying trait of the Byronic Hero and an intrinsic part of his character. Because of its importance in the concept of Ahab as a Byronic Hero, this remorse must be definitively separated from other emotions with which it

³⁰Ibid., p. 402.

³¹Ibid., p. 402.

³²Ibid., p. 402.

is commonly considered interchangeable or essentially inter-related. For instance, remorse must accompany penitence, but penitence is not necessarily attendant upon remorse. Contrition, too, is ineffectual without remorse, but remorse does not always include contrition. Repentance is impossible without remorse, but it is not concomitant with remorse. In other words, the qualities of penitence, contrition, and repentance are always supported by remorse, but remorse, on the other hand, is not necessarily repentant, contrite, or penitent. Guilt, however, is a basic factor in remorse, and the intensity of the remorse is governed by the individual's peculiar sensibility. The Byronic Hero is acutely susceptible to painful or to pleasurable impressions, and the violence of his remorse is a consequence of this responsive awareness.

The Byronic Hero never deliberately arranges the circumstances and events that eventuate in the tragic situation that encompasses him, but he fully understands his compliance with Fate's machinations. He implicitly accepts a large portion of responsibility for the misfortunes that overwhelm him and his associates, although he may at times cast wildly about for some scapegoat to share his blame. His sense of guilt is no surface manifestation or pose but has eaten its way into the very essence of his being. From this central core of his spirit, the Byronic Hero's remorse is a fermenting, molten agony that pervades his every thought and action. Incapable of succumbing to contrition's healing balm or to

repentance's alluring offer of a new, less arduous course, he embraces his guilty anguish and feeds upon it until he is its creature. During his waking hours, he mercilessly flagellates himself with remorse; at night, his dreams are guilt-ridden nightmares that drive him from his bed.

Byron's Manfred is, in Evans' opinion, a study of remorse, the cause of which is veiled and unexplained.³³ Whereas the Gothic playwright ultimately reveals the source of his villain's remorse, Byron stops short of complete revelation, and the reader must be satisfied with hints and glimpses of Manfred's dark secret. Manfred, considered by Evans the "best of Byron's 'Byronic' heroes,"³⁴ suffers just as the Giaour does from "innate tortures of that deep despair/Which is remorse without the fear of hell" (Mf,III, i,70,71).³⁵ The Giaour's face, "mark'd with inward pain" (G,794).³⁶ reveals the same brooding remorse that torments Azo. Unqualified by vain regrets or penitence, this remorse wracks the brooding Giaour's mind "like the Scorpion girt by fire" (G,423).³⁷ The Giaour writhes in the throes of his anguish, vainly searching for escape from "the mind Remorse hath riven" (G,435).³⁸ For the maddened scorpion encircled by the flames' torment, there is release through the venom

³³Evans, p. 771.

³⁵Byron, p. 492.

³⁷Ibid., p. 314.

³⁴Ibid., p. 173.

³⁶Ibid., p. 318.

³⁸Ibid.

of its own sting; for the Giaour's mind, however, "Unfit for earth, undoom'd for heaven,/Darkness above, despair beneath," there is no deliverance save oblivion (G,436,437).³⁹ Friendless and unshriven when he dies, the attrition of remorse is the Giaour's sole link with humanity. Craving no boon from man or God, he wearily says, "I would not, if I might, be blest;/I want no paradise, but rest" (G,1269-1270).⁴⁰ The Giaour is no paragon of human virtues, for the finer instincts of "Courtesy and Pity died/With Hassan on the mountain side" (G,346,347),⁴¹ but his overwhelming remorse, undergirded by solitary defiance, marks him as a Byronic Hero evolved from the Gothic Villain.

Although Conrad's misanthropic façade makes credent the line that "he hated man too much to feel remorse" (C,I,xi, 262),⁴² his actions belie this assumption. The intensity of his emotional conflict is mirrored in "his' features' deepening lines and varying hue" (C,I,ix,209),⁴³ and hatred alone is an inadequate explanation of Conrad's "murkiness of mind" in which "work'd feelings fearful and yet undefined" (C,I,ix, 211,212).⁴⁴ Remorse, wrathful and charged with vindictive fury against a miscreant world, gives rise to "the scathing thought of execrated years" that sears his "lone and blighted

³⁹Byron, p. 314.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 322.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 313.

⁴²Ibid., p. 342.

⁴³Ibid., p. 341.

⁴⁴Ibid.

bosom" (C,I,x,245,246).⁴⁵ After he is imprisoned by Seyd, Conrad's bitter reflections reveal fully the depths of the Byronic Hero's passion of remorse:

There is a war, a chaos of the mind
 When all its elements convulsed, combined,
 Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force,
 And gnashing with impenitent Remorse;
 That juggling fiend--who never spake before--
 But cries 'I warn'd thee!' when the deed is o'er.
 Vain voice! the spirit burning but unbent,
 May writhe, rebel--the weak alone repent!⁴⁶
 (C,II,x,328-335)

When he returns to his island fortress after escaping from Seyd, his mind still stretched upon the rack of guilt-laden reflections, Conrad's remorse becomes consummate. He learns that Medora, his only hope on earth or in heaven, has died during his absence. Lord Conrad, known and feared on every shore, is remembered for his impassive daring and his fabled courage, but these traits prove untenable against the convulsive remorse that sweeps through his being after he hears of Medora's death. Overwhelmed by "helpless, hopeless, brokenness of heart" (D,III,xxii,655),⁴⁷ the Corsair disappears, leaving no clue, sending no word.

Lara, too, is haunted by remorse "fix'd too deep for words" in "that corroding secrecy which gnaws/The heart to show the effect but not the cause" (L,I,xvi,281-284).⁴⁸ His agony, typically unexplained, emerges from "a heart the world

⁴⁵ Byron, p. 341.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 365.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 352.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 370.

hath stung" (L,I,v,74),⁴⁹ and remorse is his "heritage of woe,/That fearful empire which the human breast/But holds to rob the heart within of rest!" (L,I,ii,14-16).⁵⁰ Its intensity belabors him to seek escape in sleep from the wretchedness of thought, but he awakes only "to curse the wither'd heart that would not break" (L,I,viii,130).⁵¹

The Byronic Hero's remorse, unalleviated by sentiment and still enigmatic, devolves upon Ahab, in whose character it is expanded by Melville to even greater vehemence. Ahab's greatness is partially explained by his reactions to the inexorable castigation of this remorse. Constantly flayed and tormented by his inner anguish, Ahab resolutely steels himself against the surging thoughts that menace his inflexible purpose and denies himself the solace of human companionship just as he rejects nature's panoplied display as debilitating to his unyielding spirit.

It was not always so, however. Before vengeance-impelled remorse robbed Ahab of his "enjoying power," he was inspired by sunrises and soothed by sunsets. Now, "all loveliness is anguish" to Ahab, who is "damned in the midst of Paradise" (p. 226). Peleg's words to Ishmael suggest that Ahab has not always been self-incarcerated in solitude, a man deliberately apart from other men. Ahab's name is known and

⁴⁹Byron, p. 367.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 366.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 367.

respected in the Nantucket whaling industry, and the loyalty it inspires in Peleg bespeaks previously happy days of congenial comradeship. Recalling that Ahab, though never a frivolous man, has always been "a swearing good man," Peleg implies that Ahab has at one time been a part of convivial gatherings, has exchanged jokes and confidences with other whaling captains, has willingly touched other human spirits and as willingly allowed himself to be touched (p. 120). Puzzling over the change in the Pequod's captain, Peleg clumsily explains that Ahab is neither actually sick nor well but that his desperate moods must spring from "a sort of sick" that is not evidenced on his sinewy body (p. 119). Feeling "a sympathy and a sorrow" for the yet unseen Ahab, Ishmael thus senses, "with a certain vagueness of painfulness," that his captain is a suffering man and that the source of his pain is not to be found at the base of his mutilated leg (p. 120).

Vengeance alone, shorn of the Byronic Hero's remorse, could never exact such emotions as those which Ahab's agony engenders. Peleg labels the manifestations of Ahab's remorse "his humanities," but an exegesis of these humanities reveals that they may well be the source and agency of his remorse as well as its effects. Ahab speaks of his wife only twice, but the deep tenderness of his words underlined with guilt reveals that much of his torture arises from thoughts of "that young girl-wife," widowed while yet a bride (p. 682).

There is grief as well as guilt in Ahab's despairing description of himself as "more a demon than a man" in his forty years' of "the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood, and the smoking brow, with which, for a thousand lowerings old Ahab has foamingly chased his prey" (p. 683). Wearily calling himself a fool, Ahab looks into Starbuck's eyes and sees in their compassionate depths the wife and the child he has abnegated for "the strife of the chase" (p. 684). Except for his love of Medora, Conrad is "exempt/from all affection and from all contempt," but this great, sustaining love is futile in deterring him from his disastrous attack on Seyd (C,xi,271,272); Ahab's love for his wife, perhaps even deeper for having come to him late in his lonely life, is equally impotent at holding him back from his fevered pursuit of Moby Dick. Medora's passionate but futile plea to Conrad is probably similar to that made by Ahab's wife before the Pequod's sailing from Nantucket:

Would that those days were over! wilt thou ne'er,
 My Conrad! learn the joys of peace to share?
 Sure thou hast more than wealth, and many a home
 As bright as this invites us not to roam.
 Thou know'st it is not peril that I fear,
 I only tremble when thou art not here;

 How strange that heart, to me so tender still,
 Should war with nature and its better will!
 (C,I,xiv,388-393,396,397)⁵²

⁵²Byron, p. 343.

And Conrad's reply of self-justification might well have been uttered by Ahab:

Yea, strange indeed--that heart hath long been changed;
Worm-like 't was trampled, adder-like avenged,
Without one hope on earth beyond thy love,
And scarcely a glimpse of mercy from above.
(C,I,xiv,398-401)⁵³

The Byronic Hero, incapable of half-hearted emotion of any kind, must love as completely and as unreasoningly as he hates, and, for this reason, his love eventuates in tragic unhappiness. Hugo and Selim die for their love; for love of Leila, the Giaour invites damnation on earth and in heaven; Conrad's escape from death at his enemy's hands is an empty regret rather than a triumph because Medora is dead; Ahab, as he thinks of the possible outcome of his venture and of the wife to whom he has given so little of himself, cries out in his pain, "God! God! God!--crack my heart!--stave my brain!--mockery! mockery! bitter, biting mockery of grey hairs, have I lived enough joy to wear year . . .?" (p. 684).

Invariably separated by Fate's malicious intervention from the woman he loves, the Byronic Hero diverts a portion of his capacity for love toward certain of his followers. This redirection is particularly manifest in his impulse of compassion for mistreated, weak, or oppressed individuals or groups. Conrad's concern for the women in Seyd's harem is

⁵³Byron, p. 344.

an example of this facet of the Byronic Hero's humanities. Although his action to save these women lessens the impetus of the pirates' fierce ambush of Seyd and imperils the venture's success, Conrad's men heed his cautionary shout to

. . . wrong not on your lives
 One female form, remember we have wives.
 On them such outrage Vengeance will repay;
 Man is our foe, and such 't is ours to slay:

 --but Heaven will not forgive
 If at my word the helpless cease to live.
 (C,III,v,202-205,207-208)⁵⁴

and are deterred from total rapine of the enemy's stronghold. This momentary respite, resulting from Conrad's sympathy for Seyd's female captives, gives the Pacha the time necessary to recoup his forces. The pirates' ranks are decimated, consequently, and Conrad is captured. His release is effected by Gulnare, "the Haram queen--but still the slave of Seyd" (C,II,v,224),⁵⁵ who murders the sleeping Pacha, but Conrad instinctively recoils in horror from Gulnare's act. The Byronic Hero, ruthless in conflict, scorns "the secret knife" (C,III,vii,364),⁵⁶ and Conrad is filled with revulsion at Gulnare's perfidious deed, even though it was performed for him. Kind, almost to a fault, where the helpless are concerned, the Byronic Hero never stoops to the employment of treacherous stealth, even in dispatching an enemy. His rebuke of Gulnare unspoken but deeply felt, the Corsair, no

⁵⁴Byron, p. 362.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 350.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 361.

longer caring "if rescued or betrayed" (C,II,xii,449),⁵⁷ follows her to the waiting ship. Captivity, noxious and debilitating, is less abhorrent to the Byronic Hero than is the debasement of release through dishonorable means. Gulnare, one of the women for whom Conrad risked the lives of his men, is to him now a vile thing, "Gulnare, the homicide!" (C,II,xiii,463).⁵⁸

This seemingly paradoxical element of humanitarianism is present in Lara's character, also. Lara is "cold to the great," but he offers understanding and asylum beneath his roof to the wretched and humble (L,II,viii,184-186).⁵⁹ When "the soil-bound slaves," their "feudal fetters newly riven" (L,II,viii,216-218),⁶⁰ rise up against the tyrants who have held them in subjugated thralldom for generations, Lara stands at the forefront of the peasant revolt, "a leader not unequal to the feud" (L,II,ix,261).⁶¹

His followers' strong commitment to his leadership is one measure of this trait in the Byronic Hero's nature. The Corsair's men are a motley crew, pirates all, owing allegiance to no flag save that of Conrad. In a like manner, Ahab's whalemens, a miscellany of rough, barbaric sailors, stand in awe of their captain, with whom they enjoy no exchange of

⁵⁷Byron, p. 362.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 377.

⁶⁰Byron, p. 378.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 378.

raillery but to whom their loyalty and obeisance are unqualified by dissension or mutinous murmurs. The Byronic Hero's leadership is not brutal; both Ahab and Conrad are somewhat paternalistic toward their men, exacting obedience through the dominance of will rather than by physical tyranny. Conrad's concern for his men is paramount in his foreboding soliloquy prior to their sailing to attack Seyd's strongly fortified position:

Long have I led them--not to vainly bleed;
 No medium now--we perish or succeed!
 So let it be--it irks not me to die;
 But thus to urge them whence they cannot fly.
 (C,I,xiii,331-334)⁶²

So assured are Ahab's men of their captain's competence and sound judgment that they willingly consent to the pursuit of the white whale, taking small thought of their monetary losses that must result from empty oil casks at the journey's end. This unequivocal loyalty that approaches reverence is apparent in Stubb's reaction to the dream in which Ahab kicks him. Recounting this dream to Flask, Stubb sums up its meaning by stating firmly that a kick from Ahab is a great honor, and that he, the kick's recipient, has been made a wise man by it (p. 178). Even in the final weeks of the long chase which has been plagued from the beginning by misfortunes and evil omens, Stubb still contends that Ahab's obstinate course

⁶²Byron, p. 342.

is the best one: "And damn me, Ahab, but thou actest right; live in the game, and die it!" (p. 635).

The Byronic Hero's protective compassion for weak, helpless beings is a product of his remorse as well as an agential force in the enhancement of that passion. Although he is adept at concealing his humanities behind his stern countenance, they appear in his relationship with certain individuals. Condescendingly aloof to his aristocratic neighbors and icily contemptuous of Count Ezzelin as a threat to the closely guarded secret of his past, Lara has a "chilling mystery of mien" that discourages attempts at intimacy by his fellow noblemen (L,I,xix,361).⁶³ There are moments, however, when there is "a softness too in his regard" that reveals "a heart as not by nature hard" (L,I,xvii,303,304).⁶⁴ Kaled, his young page, is aware that beneath Lara's scornful mask there is "more capacity for love than earth/Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth" (L,I,xviii,321,322).⁶⁵ Having accompanied his master "from those climes afar," the slight youth serves Lara with unquestioning loyalty and adoration (L,I,xxv,512).⁶⁶ Disinclined "to mingle with the menial train" of household servants, Kaled jealously attends Lara, mutely anticipating his needs before they are voiced (L,I,xxvii,554-557).⁶⁷ Consistently kind to his page, Lara is

⁶³Byron, p. 371.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 370.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 374.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 373.

Kaled's "friend, his all," and the two are never apart (L, I,xxv,525-527).⁶⁸ Kaled, her female identity finally revealed, kneels by Lara during the final moments of his life, vainly attempting to staunch the rush of blood from "his welling side" (L,II,xvii,417-421).⁶⁹ Disdaining a proffered rosary and presenting a passionless, darkly unrepentant face to on-lookers, Lara gazes kindly into Kaled's eyes as he dies. This parting gift of tenderness fails to avert the ultimate tragedy of Kaled's insanity and death, but it underscores the Byronic Hero's compassion for the weak or helpless individual with whom he is associated.

Ahab's solicitude for Pip, the cabin boy from Alabama, results from this same peculiar impulse to compassion that emanates from and is, at the same time, a contributory factor to the Byronic Hero's agonizing and insatiable remorse. Temporarily abandoned to the ocean's immensity, Pip saw "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spake it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad" (p. 530). To Ahab, however, Pip's insanity is in reality "heaven's sense," free of the sham and deceit with which men frequently blind themselves to truth (p. 530). The child's helplessness and innocence touch the core of Ahab's humanities, serving as both response to and added cause of his anguish. When the Manxman impatiently thrusts Pip away, Ahab commands the old sailor to

⁶⁸Byron, p. 373.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 381.

keep his hands "off from that holiness" and mutters, "The greater idiot ever scolds the lesser" (p. 659). Berating the heavens as "creative libertines" in having begat and then wantonly abandoned Pip to his void of madness, Ahab tells the boy that "Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives" (p. 659). The intensity of Ahab's emotional involvement with Pip is revealed as he says, "Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings" (p. 659).

The vast scope and depth of Ahab's character precludes the possibility that there will be no detractors among his critics, of course, but there is a ludicrous incongruity in two of the literary fusillades launched at Ahab's kindness to Pip. In his essay "Melville's 'Isolatoos,'" R. E. Watters blandly states that "Ahab remained unswerved by Pip's abounding affection."⁷⁰ This statement is incomprehensible in the light of Ahab's almost unbearably intense empathy for Pip. His agony encompasses, in its innermost part, Pip's tragedy, and his excruciating response to this is apparent in every word he says to the boy. Closely following his admission that Pip's presence is "too curing for my malady" (p. 672), which Watters quotes completely out of context in his effort to prove that Ahab died "alone in hate and selfish

⁷⁰R. E. Watters, "Melville's 'Isolatoos,'" Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, LX (December, 1945), 1145.

concentration of purpose,"⁷¹ Ahab reveals the depth of his emotional response to Pip's wild protestations of affection as well as the extent to which he is moved by the boy's plea to remain by his captain's side throughout the impending encounter with Moby Dick. In answer to Pip's entreaty to accompany him, Ahab says, "If thou speakest thus to me much more, Ahab's purpose keels up in him. I tell thee no; it cannot be" (p. 672). As he leaves the cabin, Ahab takes Pip's hand, saying, "True art thou, lad, as the circumference to its centre. So: God for ever bless thee; and if it come to that,--God for ever save thee, let what will befall" (p. 673). Far from remaining "unswerved," Ahab's stern purpose is attacked by Pip's love in its most vulnerable zone: Ahab's deeply sensitive instinct toward humaneness.

In his book Melville's Quarrel With God, Lawrance Thompson also employs a singularly obtuse viewpoint toward Ahab's compassion for Pip's madness in an endeavor to vitiate any commendable trait in what he terms "Melville's sinister allegorical narrative."⁷² The chapter entitled "Wicked Book," is, in fact, wholly devoted to analyzing "Melville's sophomoric attitude" of "arrested development" displayed in Moby-Dick through "various forms of taunting ridicule, aimed at

⁷¹Ibid., p. 1145.

⁷²Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel With God (Princeton, 1952), p. 228.

Christian dogma and at the Christian concept of God."⁷³ In this chapter, Thompson alleges that the comment upon Pip's madness, "man's insanity is heaven's sense," is a sarcastic inversion of a rhetorical question asked by Paul in I Corinthians, first chapter, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" According to Thompson, Melville implies, by extension, that if individuals such as Pip and Ahab "perceive and become maddened by the maliciousness of God's indifference," their fallacious attitude will be erroneously described as a form of "man's insanity" by normally "blind human beings."⁷⁴ In other words, Thompson contends that Melville sardonically uses a Biblical allusion in a deliberately ironical way to dramatize the fact that both Pip and Ahab are maddened by their accurate perception of God's intentionally malevolent lack of concern. "The wisdom of perceiving the malice of God's indifference, Melville' again implies, is a correct perception; but it is woeful, and it is 'maddening.' So man's insanity is heaven's sense!"⁷⁵ By means of his ecclesiastically couched doubletalk, Thompson insists that Melville's insidious aim in the account of Pip's tragic loss of reason, as well as in the entire novel, is to entrap the unwary, naive reader in a morass of antichristian ridicule, cleverly concealed as ironic satire.⁷⁶ Frail, inoffensive

⁷³ Ibid., p. 239.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 240.

Pip's terrifying encounter with the mind-numbing horrors of the ocean does, indeed, constitute an irony that is typical of the ironic tragedies which, unexpected and unmerited, often befall the weak and helpless; Ahab's humane response to the boy's misfortune, however, is as genuinely benevolent as it is totally devoid of the Machiavellian impulses attributed to Melville by Thompson.

Among the Byronic Hero's humanities and closely related to his compassion for the less strong is his sympathy for animals, an emotion that frequently approaches empathic identification. This is apparent in Mazeppa's recollections of the wild stallion to which he was tied. The terror manifested by the horse's "full foam of wrath and dread" is still a palpable presence in the old man's memory of an event that took place fifty years ago.⁷⁷ Mazeppa's acute sympathy for the wild horse is sustained and actually intensified as he details the animal's failing strength and straining nerves near the end of their macabre ride. For many hours, the horse plunges on "with glossy skin and dripping mane,/And reeling limbs, and reeking flank" (M,xv,601,602);⁷⁸ finally, however, "his savage force at length o'er spent,/The drooping courser, faint and low,/All feebly foaming went" (M,xvi,625-628).⁷⁹ Mazeppa then abruptly presents his vivid recollection

⁷⁷Byron, p. 410.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 412.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 413.

of the herd of wild horses that burst trampling, prancing, and plunging from the forest. The contrast of the arrogant strength and the freedom of this thousand-horse squadron

With flowing tail, and flying mane,
Wide nostrils never stretch'd by pain,
Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
And feet that iron never shod,
And flanks unscarr'd by spur or rod,
A thousand horse, the wild, the free,
Like waves that follow o'er the sea,
Come thickly thundering on . . .
(M,xvii,679-686)⁸⁰

with the utterly spent power of the dying, but still valiant, horse ridden by Mazeppa is acutely poignant. Scarcely aware now of his hated burden, the staggering horse neighs faintly to the wheeling herd, and then falls dying; "his first and last career is done!" (M,xvii,694).⁸¹

Conveyed through phrases that more nearly approximate poetry than prose, this characteristic feeling-with capacity of the Byronic Hero toward animals is displayed by Ahab in the brief chapter "The Dying Whale." In the sweetly plaintive sunset following the "spearing of the crimson fight" in which the Pequod's crew have killed four whales, Ahab watches "the final wanings" of a sperm whale (p. 628). "Soothed to a deeper gloom" by the strangely placid spectacle of the "sun and whale both stilly" dying together "in the lovely sunset sea and sky," Ahab is conscious of "a wondrousness unknown before" (p. 628). As the whale's head slowly moves sunward,

⁸⁰Byron, p. 413.

⁸¹Ibid.

Ahab reveals his strong kinship with nature and with nature's creatures:

He turns and turns him to it,--how slowly, but how steadfastly, his homage-rendering and invoking brow, with his last dying motions. He too worships fire; most faithful, broad baronial vassal of the sun! . . . here, too, life dies sunwards full of faith; but see! no sooner dead, than death whirls round the corpse, and it heads some other way.-- . . . In vain, oh whale, dost thou seek intercedings with yon all-quickenning sun, that only calls forth life, but gives it not again. Yet dost thou, darker half, rock me with a prouder, if a darker faith . . . (pp. 629-630).

Ahab's far-reaching sunset thoughts are faintly reminiscent of Childe Harold's reflective observations of a sunset on "the deep-dyed Brenta" river that flows south from northeast Italy into the lagoons of Venice. As contending day and night infuse the Brenta with streams of color, "the odorous purple of a new-born rose," this dying glory

Fill'd with the face of heaven, which from afar
Comes down upon the waters; all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse.
And now they change; a paler shadow strews
Its mantle o'er the mountains; parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till--'t is gone--and all is
gray.

(CH, IV, xxix, 253-261)⁸²

The Byronic Hero's response to nature's softening effects is closely allied to his other humanities. Just as the Byronic Hero's oppressive burden of remorse is simultaneously increased by and responds to his love of the one woman who "yields to

⁸² Ibid., p. 59.

one her person and her heart, / Tamed to her cage, nor feels
 a wish to rove" (CH, II, lxi, 543, 544),⁸³ this remorse both
 yields to and is increased by wild mountains and caverns,
 trackless forests and oceans, solitary deserts and plains,
 and skies stormy or blue. Conrad is met by nature's genial
 side on his return from Seyd's dungeon. "The very rocks
 appear to smile," the "sportive dolphins bend them through
 the spray," and "even the hoarse sea-bird's shrill discordant
 shriek" greet the returning Corsair with welcoming delight
 (C, III, xiii, 556-561).⁸⁴ These cajolings of nature, however,
 serve only to intensify the crushing despair that blights
 Conrad's homecoming. In similar fashion, Lara's "soul no
 more could contemplate" the beauty of the night through
 which he walks on his estate (L, I, x, 174).⁸⁵ The serenity of
 the stars and the calm waters that "scarcely seem to stray,
 / And yet they glide like happiness away" (L, I, x, 156-158)⁸⁶
 seems designed "only for the good" (L, I, x, 171)⁸⁷ but it con-
 jures up memories of other, more beautiful nights in distant
 lands. Although Lara, in his anguish, would welcome a storm's
 beating about his head, he cannot bear the soft loveliness
 of this night of beauty that mocks "such breast as his"
 (L, I, x, 178-180).⁸⁸

⁸³ Byron, p. 28.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 362.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 368.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Ahab's breast is similarly mocked by the assaulting force of nature. Less than twenty-four hours before Moby Dick is sighted, Ahab and his "close-coiled woe" come under the spell of an enchanted, "clear steel-blue day" in which the azure sky and sea blend inseparably (p. 681). The soft air is "transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea" heaves "with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep" (p. 681). The Czar-like sun seems to bestow impartially the winsome day and its caressing air upon the boldly rolling sea and the Pequod's crew (p. 681). Ahab's ravaged, starkly Gothic visage contrasts strangely with this encompassing loveliness that, for a brief time, permeates to the essence of his being:

Tied up and twisted; gnarled and knotted with wrinkles; haggardly firm and unyielding; his eyes glowing like coals, that still glow in the ashes of ruin; untottering Ahab stood forth in the clearness of the morn; lifting his splintered helmet of a brow to the fair girl's forehead of heaven (p. 682).

The ensuing tableau between Ahab and Starbuck against this gently glorious Pacific backdrop presents a finely drawn portrait of the Byronic Hero metamorphosed from the Gothic Villain through the searing agency of remorse's refining furnace. Starbuck is allowed a revealing glimpse of his captain's remorse-stained humanities, but the moment passes quickly. Even as Ahab, softened but not soothed, speaks from "the desolation of solitude" of a feverishly spent lifetime and of his wife and child in Nantucket, the "nameless,

inscrutable, unearthly thing" that is his "cozzening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor" commands him onward "against all natural lovings and longings" (p. 685). Deeply moved by nature's catalytic action upon him, Ahab experiences an inward reaching and an outward yearning that delineates the wrenching agony of the eternal struggle between the Byronic Hero's humanities and his indomitable purpose. Driven relentlessly forward in endless quest of the very demons which reside within him, the Byronic Hero's unrepentant remorse dooms him to Luciferian aspirations and crowns him with Promethean grandeur.

CHAPTER V

THE BYRONIC HERO AND PROMETHEUS-LUCIFER

If remorse were the basic characteristic of Byron's heroes, it is unlikely that the Byronic Hero as a literary tradition would have survived the era in which the Oriental tales were penned. The humanities which, in pelican fashion, nourish the very remorse from which they spring are indeed important in that they establish the Byronic Hero's mortal vulnerabilities. The peculiarly human vacillations that result from his agonizing remorse, however, do not, in themselves, impel him to the heroic stature that marks Ahab as a Byronic Hero. These humanities are, in fact, potentially detrimental factors that constantly threaten the perseverance of will essential to his indomitable purpose. While it is necessary to establish remorse as the sympathy-evoking quality that sets the Byronic Hero apart from the Gothic Villain to whom he bears a notable physical resemblance, it is more important to trace the elements in the Byronic Hero's character that give rise to his manifest and enduring magnificence.

Just as the character attributes of remorse place the Byronic Hero on the side of mankind, subject to all the weaknesses and woes of mortality, the overriding quality of

defiance against insuperable force elevates him very near to the realm of the gods. This defiance reflects both Satanic and Promethean traits, connate and yet discernible at times as separate forces, that firmly brace and strengthen the Byronic Hero's resolve. For example, the Byronic Hero's motive, like that of Satan, unleashes overwhelming forces in his personality and subjects his followers to inevitable peril. Unlike that of Satan, however, the Byronic Hero's motive is devoid of self-aggrandizement; his fighting, always for something greater than personal success, is invariably a Promethean aspiration. Like both Prometheus and Satan, the Byronic Hero experiences a constant inner conflict between acquiescence and rebellion and between faith and questioning. The oppressions and constraints from without, against which he rebels, objectify to the Byronic Hero the insuperable subjugation of the spirit to the limitations of the human condition of time, space, and matter--while yet the spirit defiantly refuses to accept this subjugation. His most dominant trait, inherited jointly from Prometheus and Satan, is his defiant reaction to tyranny and inviolable omnipotence. These traits also subordinate remorse's enervating paralysis, as they pertinaciously undergird the tenacity of purpose that is the signal characteristic of the Byronic Hero.

Although the greater components of defiant resolve are intrinsic elements, deeply submerged within the integral personality, the Satanic and Promethean constituents of the

Byronic Hero's character are implicit in his bearing and appearance. Much as Satan's tarnished splendor indicates that he was originally entitled to heaven's exalted privileges by virtue of his derivation from the Father and as the chained Titan's undiminished, though trammelled, power marks him a peer of the Olympian deities, the Byronic Hero "has the air of the fallen angel, the gentle soul perverted, the mind born for nobler things."¹ The Byronic Hero's noble demeanor, then, indicates that he was intended for an existence far different from that into which he is propelled by the accidental coupling of his instincts and actions with the machinations of fate. Time and bitter passions have not completely obliterated traces of the Giaour's

. . . noble soul, and lineage high;
 Alas! though both bestowed in vain . . .
 It was no vulgar tenement
 To which such lofty gifts were lent. . .
 (G, 869-873)²

The devout monk who narrates this portion of Byron's poem views the Giaour as an actual incarnation of Satan:

If ever evil angel bore
 The form of mortal, such he wore:
 By all my hope of sins forgiven,
 Such looks are not of earth nor heaven!
 (G, 912-915)³

Hugo is intended by birth for an honorable life as heir to his noble father's position and wealth, but circumstances

¹Thorslev, p. 151.

²Byron, p. 319.

³Ibid.

destine him for the role of renegade chieftain. Thus, "that high command" that speaks "in his eye, and tone, and hand" never realizes its potential, and he is doomed to briefly live and to die on the outer fringes of society, his glowing promise an unconsummated reality (BA,II,ix,147,148).⁴

Conrad, "warp'd by the world in Disappointment's school" (C,I, xi,253),⁵ is not "by Nature sent/To lead the guilty"; his piracy, like that of Selim is forced upon him by circumstances that change his soul before his deeds drive "him forth to war with man and forfeit heaven" (C,I,xi,249-253).⁶ Because he was "betray'd too early, and beguiled too long" (P,xxii,662),⁷ the Corsair, like Prometheus, is "doom'd by his very virtues for a dupe" (C,I,xi,256).⁸ Lara, too, is radically altered by events that "leave him half undone" (L,I,iv,56),⁹ and, reflecting Satan's transmutation from Lucifer, "what'er he be, 't was not what he had been" (L,I, iv,66).¹⁰

It is equally apparent that Ahab is not what his background of religion, education, and experience suggest that he might be. Instinctively perceiving but not understanding the change in his old comrade, Peleg staunchly defends Ahab

⁴Byron, p. 330.

⁵Ibid., p. 342.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 365.

⁸Ibid., p. 342.

⁹Ibid., p. 367.

¹⁰Ibid.

to Ishmael by naming the ways in which the Pequod's captain has always been "above the common" (p. 116). Unable to explain the present aberrations in his friend, Peleg attempts to quell the disquieting rumors concerning Ahab with a direct reminder that "he's Ahab, boy; and Ahab of old, thou knowest, was a crowned king" (p. 119). His instincts are sound, but Captain Peleg's vague rationalization of this altered aspect of Ahab's character is inadequate. The discrepancy between what could have been and what actually is, prefigured by Milton's Satan and Aeschylus' Prometheus, is apparent in Ahab's somber words to Starbuck on the day before Moby Dick is sighted. Reflectively, Ahab equates his forty years at sea with forty years of loneliness that might not have been. His thoughts then turning to "that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty," Ahab speaks heavily of "leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow" (p. 683). In this brief period of acutely subjective perception, Ahab acknowledges that he has allowed an inner, "nameless, inscrutable, unearthly force" to barricade him "against all natural lovings and longings" with a lifetime of reckless "pushing, and crowding, and jamming" toward a goal that "in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare" (p. 685). The somber thoughts with which the captured Corsair's mind is teeming reflect this same Satanic-Promethean quality of apperceptive reasoning based on retrospective acuity that, in this respect, marks Ahab as a Byronic Hero:

There is a war, a chaos of the mind,
 When all its elements convulsed, combined,
 Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force,
 (C,II,x,328-330)

.
 But the wild prospect when the soul reviews,--
 All rushing through their thousand avenues,--
 Ambition's dreams expiring, love's regret,
 Endanger'd glory, life itself beset;
 The joy untasted, the contempt or hate
 'Gainst those who fain would triumph in our fate;
 The hopeless past, the hasting future driven
 Too quickly on to guess if Hell or Heaven;
 Deeds, thoughts, and words, perhaps remember'd not
 So keenly till that hour, but ne'er forgot;
 But now to stern Reflection each a crime;
 The withering sense of evil unreav'd,
 Not cankering less because the more conceal'd:
 (C,II,x,340-353)¹¹

The isolation to which the Byronic Hero consigns himself in his defiance is also Promethean and Satanic in intensity and in duration. Though he is surrounded by hosts of fallen angels who obsequiously follow him, the Satan of Paradise Lost is an essentially solitary figure, as is the Prometheus of Prometheus Bound, who walked alone in the midst of gods and men even before his treacherous confinement upon an isolated rock by Zeus. The Giaour, after exacting retribution for Leila's death by killing her murderer, imposes his own sentence of self-incarceration in a Christian monastery. Although he lives among the devout votaries until he dies, the Giaour shuns the cloister's inhabitants and their religious activities. His ascetic solitude complete, the Giaour "broods within his cell alone" (G,806),¹² stands upon a cliff

¹¹Byron, p. 352.

¹²Ibid., p. 318.

and raves "as to some bloody hand" that beckons him "to leap into the wave" (G,826-831),¹³ or lurks about the monastery's rooms and proches listening to, but never participating in, the prayers and rituals of the communicants.

The Byronic Hero's ability to lead men is partially explained by "the lofty port, the distant mien" (C,I,xvi,541)¹⁴ that, while discouraging undue familiarity, exempts him "from all affection and from all contempt" (C,I,xv,271,272).¹⁵ Conrad, "that man of loneliness" (C,I,vii,172),¹⁶ shares with Prometheus "the weight of splendid chains" (C,I,vii,191),¹⁷ and, like Satan, the Corsair has "learn'd to curb the crowd,/ By arts that veil and oft preserve the proud" (L,xvi,539-540).¹⁸ Despite studied efforts to adapt himself to his neighbors and their activities, Lara, too, seems more "a stranger in this breathing world,/An erring spirit from another hurl'd" (L,I,xviii,315,316)¹⁹ than like a returned nobleman bent upon enjoying the sociality that was evidently no part of his mysterious life in "those climes afar,/Where the soul glows beneath a brighter star" (L,I,xxv,512,513).²⁰ Although "he could appear gay amidst the gay" to the casual observer (L,I,xvii,298),²¹ Lara's eyes never mirror the infrequent

¹³Byron, p. 318.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 346.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 342.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 340.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 346.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 370.

²⁰Ibid., p. 373.

²¹Ibid., p. 370.

smile that mirthlessly curls his lip because "his mind abhorring this had fix'd her throne/Far from the world, in regions of her own:/Thus coldly passing all that pass'd below" (L,I,xviii,349-351).²² For days at a time, Lara avoids not only the company of his acquaintances but also the presence of his attendants.

Ahab, like the Giaour, is self-incarcerated within a close-knit brother hood from whose daily rituals and mundane affairs he is remotely aloof. Bound both to his own dark purpose and to the Pequod's crew with the Titan's heavily freighted "spendid chains," fast-locked by obligation yet tempered in ambition's fires, that confine without subduing, Ahab is alien to the ship's microcosmic world of which he is nominally a part. Much as the last of Missouri's "Grisly [sic] Bears" escapes mankind's depredation and winter's onslaught by burying himself in a hollow tree, sustained solely by the reserve of vigor within his own body, Ahab's soul, "in his inclement, howling old age, "is shut up in the caved trunk of his body" where it feeds in solitude "upon the sullen paws of gloom" (p. 206). Ahab and Satan, "damned in the midst of Paradise," move in brooding, lonely grandeur among man, dominating and compelling these lesser creatures' wills. The communion, however, is largely devoid of human warmth, "a ray of living light, to be sure, but without an

²²Byron, p. 371.

object to color, and therefore a blankness in itself" (p. 272). Ahab's contemplation of the doubloon nailed to the ship's mainmast reveals a proud and defiant awareness of his solitude. Studying the coin's engraving of three Andean peaks crowned respectively with a flame, a tower, and a crowing cock, Ahab relates his own nature, solitary as that of Prometheus and Satan in its regal appointment, to the coin's symbols:

There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look there,--three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self (pp. 550, 551).

Refusing the invasion of men's solacing intimacy in life, the Byronic Hero chooses to face death in the same manner. At death, neither Byron's heroes nor Ahab look "to priesthood for relief" (G,1207).²³ After he learns of Medora's death, Conrad vanishes from his island home, "nor trace, nor tidings of his doom declare/Where lives his grief, or perish'd his despair" (C,III,xxiv,689,690).²⁴ The Giaour's lifetime of solitude eventuates in total obliteration of every trace of "his name and race" when he dies (G,1329,1330).²⁵ Lara, mourned only by Kaled, "sleeps not where his fathers

²³Byron, p. 323.

²⁴Ibid., p. 366.

²⁵Ibid., p. 323.

sleep,/But where he died his grave was dug as deep" (L,II, xxii,520,521).²⁶ Alone, Hugo faces the curious, gaping crowd that rings the executioner's block to watch his beheading. After Selim has died on Giaffir's sword, unavenged, his body is washed beneath "the tumbling tide, whose wave/Denied his bones a holier grave" (BA,II,xxviii,723-724).²⁷ When "the great shroud of the sea" closes over Ahab, his bones become a part of the "unnamable inminglings" of "once living things" whose expiring breaths were converted into the buoying waters (p. 630). Far from New England's grassy mounds, Ahab's grave, unmarked by convention's platitudinous epitaphs and unin- vaded by staid, ancestral shades, is as isolated and as wild as Prometheus' element-tormented, barren rock.

If the quality of isolation is removed from the Byronic Hero's defiance, he is in danger of descending to the level of common crowd-pleaser, supporter of popular causes, or glibly rhetorical political opportunist. Hail-fellow-well- met affability, the antithesis of the Byronic Hero's defiant solitude, is conducive to pleasant companionship and is essential to genially unstrained relations between individuals, but there is rarely anything of greatness in it. The soli- tary individual who defies the social norm for a cause must, of necessity, embrace and imbue himself with potentially dangerous ideas and ideals in the accomplishing of his aim.

²⁶Byron, p. 382.

²⁷Ibid., p. 336.

Childe Harold knows "that the lightning sanctifies below/
 What'er it strikes" (CH, IV, xli, 368, 369);²⁸ symbolically,
 Ahab grasps the main-mast chains in an attempt to channel
 the blazing lightning into his body, while crying out, "I
 would fain feel this pulse, and let mine beat against it;
 blood against fire!" (p. 641). Prometheus appropriates
 celestial fire; Satan learns to exist in the midst of fire.
 If Byron's heroes were gregarious, amiable men, their en-
 deavors would be mere posturings, futile as well as ridiculous.
 The Giaour, for instance, would accommodate himself to the
 services and sacraments of the monastery, penitently mumbling
 his bread and water and meekly accepting the monks' commiseration
 for his life's injustices; at death, he would probably
 be lowered solemnly into hallowed ground to the accompaniment
 of devout phrases that commend him to eternal peace. By the
 same reasoning, it seems likely that Gonsalvo and Juan might
 have dissuaded the Corsair from ever undertaking such an im-
 practical and foolhardy venture as an attack upon Seyd's
 heavily guarded palace. Lara, minus the Promethean-Satanic
 solitude of the Byronic Hero, could be expected to return to
 his ancestral home seeking the balm of a gay round of social
 events to assuage the physical and spiritual maltreatment he
 has previously suffered. In all probability, he would
 quickly decry the peasant uprising as a rabble-inspired and

²⁸Byron, p. 61.

rabble-manned rebellion and take his rightful place of leadership at Count Otho's side, safe in the ranks of the nobility.

It is equally absurd to attempt to conceptualize Ahab's character without its Promethean-Satanic quality of splendid solitude. If Ahab's lofty mien were replaced by jocular efforts at camaraderie, the Pequod's captain and crew would be concerned only with filling the hold with whale oil and returning safely to port for an equitable apportionment of the cargo's profit. There would be no fiendish ceremony presided over by Ahab for the crew's inspiration before the doubloon on the quarterdeck at the journey's beginning and no vendetta between Ahab and the thunderstorm's lightning near the journey's end. Moby Dick would merely be a remarkably large, long-lived white whale, and Ahab would assuredly not be Ahab. Remaining at head-level with the encircling herd may assure security in safe anonymity, as well as freedom from irksome responsibility, but it is equally effective at obviating all vestiges of greatness.

Faust-like, the Byronic Hero is simultaneously greater than and inferior to other men. Naming the unyielding Promethean spark, "the lightning of my being" that is "coop'd in clay" (Mf, I, i, 145, 155, 157),²⁹ Manfred points to the conflict that must arise from the Byronic Hero's Promethean-Satanic components embedded in human protoplasm:

²⁹Byron, p. 480.

Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
 To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
 A conflict of its elements, and breathe
 The breath of degradation and of pride,
 Contending with low wants and lofty will,³⁰
 (Mf, I, ii, 301-305)

Ahab's sensibility to this inner contending between the titanic resolve and the human limitations of his being is conveyed in his half-whimsical word-play with the Pequod's carpenter and blacksmith. Addressing the smith as "Prometheus," Ahab orders the forging of "a complete man after a desirable pattern." He then presents his specifications to the astonished craftsman:

Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel; then, legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains--and let me see--shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, but put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards. There, take the order, and away (p. 599).

Ignoring the consternation his command has caused the blacksmith, Ahab turns to the sneezing carpenter, who continues to work on the bone replacement for Ahab's splintered peg, and demands of the old man, ". . . would'st thou rather work in clay?" (p. 599). Turning away from the confounded workmen, Ahab utters a defiant imprecation against the mortal restrictions that impede his Promethean purpose:

³⁰ Byron, p. 482.

Oh, Life! Here I am, proud as Greek god, and yet standing debtor to this blockhead for a bone to stand on! Cursed be that mortal inter-indebtedness which will not do away with ledgers. I would be free as air; and I'm down in the whole world's books. I am so rich, I could have given bid for bid with the wealthiest Praetorians at the auction of the Roman empire (which was the world's); and yet I owe for the flesh in the tongue I brag with. By heavens! I'll get a crucible, and into it, and dissolve myself down to one small, compendious vertebra. So (p. 601).

The Byronic Hero's magnificent defiance is the tantalum element in his character, resisting all corrosive, alloying agencies that seek to weaken its impenetrable quality. Before his requital for Leila's death had been accomplished, the young Giaour's challenging gesture seemed to encompass both heaven and earth as "he raised his arm, and fiercely raised,/And sternly shook his hand on high" (G,241,242).³¹ Then, "down glanced that hand, and grasp'd his blade," as action complemented the defiant gesture it implemented (G, 246).³² Standing before the grate of his cell while a storm lashes the Pacha's castle, the imprisoned Corsair, in a similar manner, lifts his chained hand toward heaven, defiantly willing the lightning with "one pitying flash to mar the form it made:/His steel and impious prayer attract alike--" (C,III,vii,264-266).³³ After verbally lashing his crew into a frenzy that mirrors his own monomaniacal resolve to sight and slay Moby Dick, Ahab vehemently reveals the

³¹Byron, p. 312.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 359.

source of his unremitting defiance of the white whale. Directing his words to Starbuck, who has called blasphemous such an intensity of rage against a dumb beast, Ahab says:

All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If a man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me (pp. 220, 221).

Ahab's defiance of the white whale who "swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung" (p.246) closely parallels Prometheus' unyielding defiance that remains steadfast even while Zeus's vulture tears at the soft, exposed portion of the chained Titan's body. Moby Dick symbolizes to Ahab the same "intangible malignity" that the vulture represents to Prometheus (p. 247). Whereas lesser man prostrates himself before this "intangible malignity which has been from the beginning" (p. 247), the Byronic Hero must set himself, "all mutilated," against some visible symbol of that evil (p. 247). The Giaour, in the fevered vigor of youth, seizes upon Hassan; the malignity is not

destroyed with Hassan, however, and the Giaour is racked by it until he dies. In an attempt to dismantle the inscrutable force behind man's affliction, Conrad fails against Seyd; although the venture fails and Conrad never destroys the sinister power that rends him, the gesture is as splendidly defiant as is Ahab's battle against Moby Dick. The unwitnessed midnight duel with an eerie adversary is evidence that Lara's pursuit of this baleful power is not ended when he returns to his estate. The frightened servants find their master "cold as the marble where his length was laid,/Pale as the beam that o'er his features played" (L,I,xiii,211,212),³⁴ but "still defiance knit his gather'd brow" (L,I,xiii,216).³⁵ The chase continues into the peasant revolt with Lara as "leader not unequal to the feud" (L,II,ix,261).³⁶ Although he lunges and slashes at Otho's troops, Lara's battle is actually against the same monstrous, universal malignity that Ahab sees in the white whale:

All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil . . . were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it (p. 247).

³⁴Byron, p. 369.

³⁵Ibid., p. 369.

³⁶Ibid., p. 378.

Ahab is certain that his vindictive defiance is a living, electrical force which in its fiery overflow, must somehow be transmitted to his men. Following his revelation before the doubloon of the Pequod's central task, pursuit of the white whale, Ahab mistakes Starbuck's shocked silence for tacit acquiescence and exults, "Something shot from my dilated nostrils, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine . . ." (p. 222). Then, before the awed crew, Ahab grasps the axis of the mates' crossed lances before him, while gazing intently at the men holding these "three, level, radiating lances." Twitching the lances, Ahab seems to be trying, through "some nameless, interior volition," to shock "into them the same fiery emotion accumulated within the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life" (p. 224). He quickly covers his disappointment when the mates quail and drop their eyes by crying out that if the men had absorbed the intended "full-forced shock," then Ahab's "own electric thing" might have been depleted and the impact could have killed the mates (p. 224). Ahab's Promethean identification with fire is seen again during the violent thunderstorm that results in unearthly appearing corpusants burning pallidly at the tips of the yard-arm masts against the night's blackness. Urging the white flame into his own form, Ahab pays defiant homage to this "speechless, placeless power" that, like him, has an "incommunicable riddle" and an "unparticipated grief" (p. 643). He concludes his wild invocation by reminding the leaping

fire that ". . . I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee!" (p. 643). Childe Harold voices the Byronic Hero's compelling desire to become "a portion of the tempest" (CH,III,xciii,872)³⁷ as he says:

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,--could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel and yet breathe--into one word,
. . . that one word were Lightning . . .
(CH,III,xcvii,905-911)³⁸

Ahab physically epitomizes this Promethean urge by absorbing the elemental force into his own body.

Ahab has need of every volt of his "electric thing" when the actual chase of Moby Dick begins. On the first day of the chase, the white whale capsizes and splinters Ahab's boat, spilling the captain ignominiously into the roiling sea. Battered and half-drowned by the churning wake from Moby Dick's tail, Ahab is finally "dragged into Stubb's boat with blood-shot, blinded eyes, the white brine caking in his wrinkles" (p. 694). Momentarily, Ahab's defiance yields helplessly "to his body's doom," as he lies, crushed and wailing in the bottom of Stubb's boat--but not for long (p. 695). As "in an instant's compass, great hearts sometimes condense to one deep pang, the sum total of those shallow pains kindly diffused through feebler men's whole lives," the intensity of Ahab's "physical prostration did

³⁷Byron, p. 49.

³⁸Ibid., p. 50.

but so much the more abbreviate it" (p. 695). Struggling to rise, Ahab first ascertains that the harpoon is not lost, and he then commands the crewmen to help him to his feet. Conrad, wounded, captured, and chained by Seyd, was, like Ahab, "disarm'd but undeprest" (C,II,vii,286),³⁹ and "a laughing wildness half unbent his brow" as he defied his enemy (C,II,xiii,454).⁴⁰ The sight of Moby Dick's arrogant spout completes Ahab's physical and spiritual resuscitation: "Hands off from me! The eternal sap runs in Ahab's bones again!" (p. 695)

When Moby Dick breaches the next day, tossing "his entire bulk into the pure element of air," Ahab shouts his defiance at the disporting monster: "Aye, breach your last to the sun, Moby Dick! Thy hour and thy harpoon are at hand!" (p. 702). The three boats pull directly toward the white whale's forehead for a "head-and-head" attack that excludes the whale's "sidelong vision" (p. 702). With dexterity that seems fiendishly calculated, Moby Dick's "untraceable evolutions" entangle the boats' lines into an impossible maze into which are woven the ominously bristling loose harpoons and lances flung during the attack. In his frantic efforts to free the snarled lines, Ahab inadvertently jerks this "intercepted fagot of steel" into the chocks of his boat. Acting with instinctive skill born of fury, Ahab

³⁹ Byron, p. 351.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 353.

reaches through the deadly mass of twisted barbs and points, deftly cutting through the boat's rope and dropping its lethal burden into the sea (p. 702). Moby Dick then drags the boats of Stubb and Flask together by their still involved lines, and the two crews, along with the "odorous cedar chips of their wrecks," are deposited in the boiling froth left by the diving whale (p. 704). Ahab's movement into the midst of "that wild simultaneousness of a thousand concentrated perils" to rescue the shark-threatened men is short-lived, however (p. 704). Surfacing with tremendous momentum directly beneath Ahab's boat, Moby Dick dashes his broad forehead against the boat's bottom, the impact catapulting men and craft end-over-end into the air. Seemingly satisfied that the havoc wrought by his impersonal malice is complete, the white whale continues "his leeward way at a traveller's methodic pace," majestically pushing his inscrutable, "pleated forehead through the ocean" (p. 704). Starbuck, having witnessed the entire, swiftly concluded debacle from the Pequod's deck, effects a swift rescue of floating men and usable debris.

Sensing in the crew's apprehensive scrutiny an unspoken fear of the despair to which he had briefly succumbed on the previous day, Ahab ruefully glances at the fragmented remnant of his bone leg, his personal souvenir of Moby Dick's buffeting, and then he speaks: ". . . old Ahab is untouched. . . . Nor white whale, nor man, nor fiend, can so much as graze

old Ahab in his own proper and inaccessible being" (p. 705). When Manfred is derided by the spirits as a "Child of Clay" (Mf, I, i, 133),⁴¹ his taunting reply parallels Ahab's daring boast:

The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
(Mf, I, i, 154-157)⁴²

The unqualified defiance of his words supplying the assurance essential to the bruised and lacerated crew at this moment, Ahab includes men, sea, and heaven in his challenging question: "Can any lead touch yonder floor, any mast scrape yonder roof?" (p. 705). The livid heat of his unconquerable will forges a reinforcement of faith and a reaffirmation of purpose which, distilled, are communicated to the watching men:

I'll ten times girdle the unmeasured globe; yea
and drive straight through it, but I'll slay
him yet! . . . Ye see an old man cut down to the
stump; leaning on a shivered lance; propped up
on a lonely foot. 'Tis Ahab--his body's part;
but Ahab's soul's a centipede that moves upon
a hundred legs (pp. 706, 707).

The next day, despite his parting vow to Starbuck that the white whale will be destroyed, "tied by head and tail" to the Pequod's bow by nightfall, there is a dark presentiment in Ahab's lingering farewell that includes ship, crew, sky, wind, and earth (pp. 711-713). The whale sounds, and Ahab

⁴¹Byron, p. 480.

⁴²Ibid., p. 480.

and his crew sit in a "becharmed" silence, waiting for it to surface (p. 714). Suddenly, Moby Dick bursts obliquely lengthwise from the violently heaving water, "maddened by yesterday's fresh irons that corroded in him" and overspread his broad, white forehead with "wide tiers of welded tendons" (p. 715). With uncanny selectiveness, he flails the boats apart with his lashing tail, and lances and irons spill from the two mates' boats as the lethal tail staves in one end of each boat (p. 715). Then, as though deliberately leaving Ahab's boat unscathed this time, Moby Dick turns and seems "now only intent upon pursuing his own straight path in the sea" (p. 716). Quickly setting sail, Ahab's boat alone pursues the white whale, accompanied only by numbers of sharks that continuously bite at the flashing oars. Ranging near the whale's flank, Ahab lifts his lance with both arms and, arching his back, heaves both the iron and "his far fiercer curse into the hated whale" (p. 718). Writhing sideways into and then away from the boat, Moby Dick wheels toward the approaching ship, "retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice . . . in his whole aspect" (p. 720). He strikes the ship's starboard bow with "the solid white buttress of his forehead," and the watching crew, bemused and motionless, hear "the waters pour, as mountain torrents down a flume" (p. 720).

Ahab, an entranced spectator of this holocaust, is momentarily swamped with an unutterably tragic awareness of

his responsibility for the whirlpool of death and destruction that engulfs a ship manned by living men--his men, consigned to this fate by their captain's monomaniacal commands--and of his immeasurably lonely grief.

Oh! ye three unsundered spires of mine; thou uncracked keel; and only god-bullied hull; thou firm deck, and haughty helm, and Pole-pointed prow,--death-glorious ship! must ye then perish, and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief (p. 721).

This essentially human, but devitalizing, remorse is supplanted, almost at the moment of its inception, by a wrathful resurgence of titanic defiance. Ahab's audacity in the face of inevitable destruction mirrors Manfred's fearless words to the spirits shortly before his death: "My life is in its last hour,--that I know,/Nor would redeem a moment of that hour./I do not combat against death, but thee . . ." (Mf, III, iv, 370-372).⁴³ First directing his challenge to the "bodiless" source of "all things that most exasperate and outrage mortal man" (p. 710), Ahab cries out, "Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death!" (p. 721). Manfred's valedictory declaration to the powers of evil is typical of Ahab's refusal, even in his last moments, to relinquish responsibility for his destiny: "I have not been thy dupe nor am thy prey,/But was my own destroyer, and will

⁴³Byron, p. 496.

be/My own hereafter" (mf,III,iv,370-372).⁴⁴ His defiance now reaching a scintillating, glorious crescendo, Ahab flings his final challenge to Moby Dick:

Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale: to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear (p. 721).

If the Byronic Hero's success were to be measured in terms of enterprises brought to successful conclusion, Ahab's life must be termed as finally ineffectual in its abortive termination in a fouled whaling line that, "voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim" (p. 722), whisks him into the sea's insatiable maw. The counting-house gauge of success is, however, by the very nature of its conventionally rigid columns of debits and credits, a totally inadequate standard by which to appraise Ahab's success or failure.

A solitary giant, Ahab has stood "alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor mountains his neighbors" (p. 697), and from the cold incubator of this solitude issues the Byronic Hero's indisputable ability to command men; irresistibly "all the individualities of the crew" are "welded into oneness" and "directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their lord and keel did point to" (p. 701).

⁴⁴Byron, p. 496.

As, in life, he had rather

. . . be the thing that crawls
 Most noxious o'er a dungeon's walls,
 Than pass my dull, unvarying days,
 Condemn'd to meditate and gaze (G,990-993),⁴⁵

so, in death, Ahab, like the Giaour, chooses "to sink beneath
 the shock/Than moulder piecemeal on the rock!" (G,970).⁴⁶

Attempting to explain this to Starbuck on the final day of
 the chase, Ahab says, "Some men die at ebb tide; some at low
 water; some at the full of the flood;--and I feel now like a
 billow that's all one crested comb . . ." (p. 713).

Driven forward by the compelling force of his defiance
 that is Promethean in the dizzying heights to which it soars
 and Luciferian in the searing depth it plumbs, the Byronic
 Hero pursues his Moby Dick. "Thrusting through the wall,"
 he strikes at "that inscrutable thing" that plagues man with
 reasoning malice from behind an "unreasoning mask," until
 death ends the chase (p. 221). It does not matter that both
 the agent and the principal of this evil escape destruction.
 The gesture of vindictive defiance is, in itself, the im-
 portant thing; the venture's success is in its having been
 undertaken. The final lines of Byron's "Prometheus" are a
 tribute to this indomitable aspect of the Byronic Hero:

. . . equal to all woes,
 And a firm will, and a deep sense,
 Which even in torture can descry
 Its own concenter'd recompense,

⁴⁵Byron, p. 320.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 319.

Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory. (54-58)⁴⁷

⁴⁷Byron, p. 191.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

There is a pertinence, both contemporary and universal, in the peculiar interrelatedness of the Byronic Hero's Promethean and Luciferian traits. Although based on separate archetypal entities, these characteristics appear variously in the Byronic Hero as convergent, parallel, and disparate. The concept of the suffering, unconquerable Titan, for example, blends at times indivisibly in the Byronic Hero's indomitable defiance and perseverance of will with that of the rebellious, irrepressible fallen angel of Paradise Lost. On the other hand, the disaster that the Byronic Hero's action frequently brings upon his followers is often as calamitous as that suffered by Lucifer's compliant hosts of doomed angels, while, at the same time, the Byronic Hero's selfless compassion for these beings whose destruction he implements is akin to Prometheus' concern for mankind. These ambivalencies in the Byronic Hero exemplify an essentially human propensity, indefinite and paradoxical, toward simultaneously conflicting particularization in character appraisal.

For instance, the tendency, prevalent since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to regard Milton's

Satan as something of a rebellious hero contravenes the earlier, traditional view of him as the vile representative of Christianity's antithesis. Prior to the Romantic Age, a defense of Satan would have elicited general outrage and condemnation and would have been equated with blasphemy and antichristian tenets. As the Romantic mind encountered Satan, a new image emerged bearing small resemblance to the traditional image of the devil. Satanism in the Byronic Hero is not an element of evil but, rather, the poetical merging of two different but analogous ideas, the principles of sublimity and defiance, which were already assimilated into the Romantic mentality.

A contrasting of the Prometheus in Hesiod's Theogony with Aeschylus' Prometheus provides another instance of the contradictory element present in individual viewpoint and evaluation. Hesiod describes the Titan as "crafty Prometheus of shifty counsels"¹ and consistently refers to him as Prometheus of "cunning counsel,"² "crooked counsels," "crafty guile," or "crafty intent."³ Hesiod's Zeus is a benevolent but sternly just ruler whose "dear heart" is sorely wounded and gravely angered by wily Prometheus' perfidious theft of fire for man.⁴ In Aeschylus' Prometheus Vinctus, ruthless

¹Hesiod, Hesiod: The Poems and Fragments, translated by A. W. Mair (London, 1908), p. 49.

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴Ibid., p. 52.

Zeus attempts to debase Prometheus before the gods and mankind. The Titan suffers the unmerited indignities of his confinement and torment with defiant dignity, steadfastly refusing to yield to or to cringe before Zeus's cruel tyranny.

Byron's admiration of Napoleon, whom he saw as a kind of Promethean figure, mirrors the Romantic inclination to exalt to Titanism one in whom others may see evil depravity. In the first canto of Childe Harold, the poet speaks of Napoleon as ". . . he whose nod/Has tumbled feebler despots from their sway" (CH,I,lii,540,541),⁵ and, even after Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Leipzig in October, 1813, Byron continued to hope that "mine Héros de Roman" would somehow emerge from the ignominy of defeat and repeat his past victories over the Allies.⁶ Quite atypical for a British peer, Byron's comment on news that the Allies had entered Paris was, "The thieves are in Paris."⁷ On this same day, April 10, 1814, Byron wrote a scornful ode to his erstwhile Promethean hero beginning: "'T is done---but yesterday a King/And arm'd with Kings to strive--/And now thou art a nameless thing:/So abject--yet alive!"⁸ After addressing to Napoleon several disdainful phrases,⁹ Byron contemptuously derides Napoleon's

⁵Byron, p. 12.

⁶Maurois, p. 245.

⁷Ibid., p. 245.

⁸Byron, "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," p. 180.

⁹Ibid., lines 8, 10, 11, 34, 35, 36-39, p. 180.

surrender: "To die a prince--or live a slave--/Thy choice is most ignobly brave!"¹⁰ His Promethean-Luciferian frame of reference is unmistakable in the poem's sixteenth stanza:

Or, like the thief of fire from heaven,
Wilt thou withstand the shock?
And share with him, the unforgiven,
His vulture and his rock!
Foredoom'd by God--by man accurst,
And that last act, though not thy worst,
The very Fiend's arch mock;
He in his fall preserved his pride,
And, if a mortal, had as proudly died! (136-144)¹¹

Less than two years later, Byron's acute disappointment that France's "Eagle, whose gaze in that moment was blasted" failed to soar on "with eyes fix'd on victory's sun" (15, 16)¹² appears appreciably lessened, but, even so, in the third canto of Childe Harold, the poet's concept of Napoleon at Waterloo is definitely Luciferian rather than Promethean:

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,
Whose spirit antithetically mixt
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt,
Extreme in all things! . . . (CH, III, xxxvi, 316-320)¹³

Struggling to maintain a vestige of Napoleon's wavering Promethean image, the poet says

If, like a tower upon a headlong rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had help'd to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone,
(CH, III, 361-365)¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid., p. 180.

¹¹Ibid., p. 181.

¹²Byron, "Napoleon's Farewell," p. 186.

¹³Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 41.

Then, reproachfully realistic, Byron diagnoses the Luciferian source of Napoleon's failure:

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
 And there hath been thy bane; there is a fire
 And motion of the soul which will not dwell
 In its own narrow being, . . . (370-374)

 . . . but once kindled, quenchless evermore,

 . . . a fever at the core,
 Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.
 (CH,III,xlii,376,378,379)¹⁵

Although the Byronic Hero's Promethean and Luciferian traits are often so inextricably mixed that there is only filose separation, one of these characteristics usually preponderates in accordance with the beholder's point of view. The Corsair, illustrative of the conflictive aspects assigned to a single individual by different viewers, is credited "with one virtue and a thousand crimes" (C,III,xxiv,696).¹⁶ The exact nature of Conrad's "one virtue," however, is contingent upon individual regard. While Medora undoubtedly knows him as a lover, constant and tender, his crew views him as a "man of loneliness and mystery," mirthless and dispassionate, who "sways their souls with that commanding art/That dazzles, leads, yet chills" even the fiercest of "his lawless train." His orders, like those of Lucifer and of Ahab, are unquestioned because his "power of Thought" and "magic of the Mind" are "link'd with success, assumed and kept with skill"

¹⁵Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 366.

to mould "another's weakness" to his will (C,I,viii,171-184).¹⁷ Luciferian also is the Corsair's ability to make "even their mightiest deeds appear his own" (C,I,viii,186).¹⁸ His Promethean compassion, however, impedes his Luciferian ruthlessness as he orders the enslaved harem women removed to safety. Whereas Seyd considers Conrad a personification of evil lawlessness whose desinence deservedly must be accomplished through agonizing degrees of torment, Gulnare, the harem queen, visits Conrad in his cell and is deeply moved by the Promethean pride and defiance with which he awaits the inevitable hour that will "doom him worse than dead" (C,III,vi,211).¹⁹

Promethean and Luciferian elements are admixed in Byron's character to such an extent that his most impartial biographers are hard pressed to resolve the contradictory and commingled components. Throughout his life, he was lauded and condemned, sometimes alternately and sometimes simultaneously. Although G. Wilson Knight says that the persons who knew Byron best recognized his "true greatness, his generosity and kindness, his chivalry, courtesy, humility and courage,"²⁰ the poet left England in 1816 under a barrage of vilification. In his defense against an attack

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 340.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 358.

²⁰ G. Wilson Knight, Lord Byron: Christian Virtues, II (New York, 1953), 29.

published by Blackwood's, Byron says, I was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour. . . . I perceived that I had . . . become personally obnoxious in England."²¹ In striking contrast are the events following Lord Byron's death at Missolonghi on April 19, 1824. Greeks and Turks alike lamented the loss of "the friend of humanity and the protector of the oppressed,"²² and Prince Alexander Movrocordatos ordered a general mourning and a firing of the fortress's cannon at regular intervals.²³ Dr. Millengen, on viewing Byron's body, called him "the hope of a whole nation and the admiration of the civilized world,"²⁴ and the idolization of the poet by Greece's common people and soldiers was expressed in the many klephtic ballads composed and sung after his death.²⁵

The overwhelming grief that swept Greece was echoed in some of the reactions in England to Byron's death. Allan Cunningham reported in the London Magazine that word of Byron's death "came upon London like an earthquake";²⁶ fifteen-year-old Alfred Tennyson, disconsolate at the news, wrote on a rock, "Byron is dead";²⁷ Thomas Carlyle called Byron's "the noblest spirit in Europe."²⁸ There were

²¹Ibid., pp. 35, 36.

²²Ibid., p. 93.

²³Marchand, p. 1231.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 1235, 1236.

²⁶Ibid., p. 1248.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

reverberations of the old scandals in London, of course, and the poet's body was refused burial in Westminster Abbey; however, the attendant crowds and the extravagant pomp of the funeral procession satisfied even John Cam Hobhouse, Byron's oldest and closest friend in England.

And then there is Ahab--Melville's "grand, ungodly, god-like" whaling captain (p. 119) in whom are "light and darkness, / And mind and dust, and passions and pure thoughts, / Mix'd, and contending without end or order" (MF, III, I, 164-166).²⁹ Driven toward Moby Dick by a convergence of Titanism and Satanism, Ahab evinces different qualities to various observers. The crew, expended by its captain in a Luciferian furtherance of his own purpose yet yearned over with Promethean sorrow as Ahab watches the ocean's engulfment of men and ship, regards Ahab as authority, enigmatical, impersonal, and invincible. Fedallah sees in Ahab a reflection of his own fiendish diabolism, while Starbuck despairingly views his old friend as a great man in whom righteousness and sound judgment have been perverted by some inhuman, evil force. The compassion and patient understanding with which Ahab buffers Pip's helplessness and insanity are not present in Ahab's harsh rejection of Captain Gardiner's plea that the Pequod join the Rachel in searching for missing crew members (pp. 670, 671).

²⁹Byron, p. 493.

Ahab's confervial Luciferian and Promethean characteristics also result in a diversity of critical opinions. Thornton W. Booth says that Ahab's failure "to rise above the misfortunes brought by the powers of the universe" and his attempt at personal revenge on these powers through "his own slight power" are proof of Ahab's unintelligence, indicate his domination by "the less noble aspect of his own nature," and result in his destruction.³⁰ To William S. Gleim, Ahab is a Promethean character, "a practical redeemer" on man's behalf, who pits himself against a living symbol of the unknown power responsible for human suffering.³¹ Alfred Kazin, however, says that Ahab's aim is "to dominate nature, to impose and to inflict his will on the outside world," including "the crew that must jump to his orders" and "the great white whale that is essentially indifferent to him."³² In short, Ahab's confluent Promethean and Luciferian characteristics result in as many varied critical interpretations of his character as there are interpreters.

The presence of these paradoxical tendencies result in an equally paradoxical assessment rendered any man who

³⁰Thornton Y. Booth, "Moby Dick: Standing up to God," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XVII (June, 1962), 41.

³¹William S. Gleim, The Meaning of Moby-Dick (New York, 1962), p. 124.

³²Alfred Kazin, "Ishmael and Ahab," The Atlantic Monthly, CXCVIII (November, 1956), 83.

"surpasses or subdues mankind" (CH, III, xlv, 499).³³ Achilles, Socrates, Macedonia's Alexander, Jesus of Nazareth, and Napoleon were reviled and adored. Among the peasants of Mexico, Pancho Villa is still regarded as a Promethean benefactor in the Robin Hood tradition. Before his Luciferian traits were recognized as dominant, Adolph Hitler was often admired in Europe and America as a Promethean figure fighting against tyranny. Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne saw Melville as full of "Promethean fire,"³⁴ while Lawrance Thompson views him as a Satanic perverter of man's mind. Whether they are judged as predominantly Luciferian or Promethean, all such men, at one time or another, are seen by their admirers as

Souls who dare use their immortality--
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell him that
His evil is not good! (Cain, I, i, 137-140)³⁵

The verity implied in Pip's observation before the doubloon is equally relevant to a generalization of the Byronic Hero's Promethean-Luciferian traits. The coin's unalterable face holds diverse meanings for its viewers: each crew member sees in Ahab's doubloon a different prognostic based upon individual aspirations, standards, and backgrounds. Little Pip, with his "unearthly idiot face"

³³Byron, p. 42.

³⁴William Braswell, Melville's Religious Thought: An Essay in Interpretation (New York, 1959), p. 56.

³⁵Byron, p. 629.

succinctly summarizes this as he says, "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look" (p. 555). In much the same manner, the consequence of a universal disposition to estimate character through a process of biased individuating is that one man's Prometheus may well be another man's Satan.

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