

BYRON AND THE SUBLIME

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to fill the lack of scholarship regarding Byron and the sublime by tracing and investigating how and where Byron utilises the sublime in his major late-period works: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (hereafter *CHP*) cantos III and IV, *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Don Juan*. Each text will be the focus of its own chapter, whilst considering possible sources of inspiration regarding the sublime. These include the theories of Longinus, Edmund Burke, and Immanuel Kant, as well as postmodern interpretations.

The 'Alpine stanzas' of *CHP* (canto III) demonstrate the various aspects of the Longinian sublime. Here, Longinus focuses on the role language plays in bringing the reader towards the sublime. *Manfred* is engaged with the relationship between sublimity and religion, especially in the two versions of the third act.

CHP (canto IV) moves away from the sublime of the natural world and, as I argue, shifts towards the construct of the human sublime. Harold's journey continues through Italy, and in each location there is a different aspect of the Byronic sublime. The Venetian stanzas exemplify the grotesque, the Florentine stanzas illustrate the beautiful, and the Roman stanzas are the epitome of the human-created sublime.

Next, I come to *Cain* where I argue that Byron utilises the Lucretian sublime, paying special attention to 'the swerve' of atoms in the void. In the final chapter, I look to *Don Juan* and focus on five crucial cantos. Canto X continues the discussion of the void, whereas cantos XI and XIII present the opportunity to analyse how scepticism shapes the Byronic sublime. Canto XIV is the product of doubting and scepticism, because it focuses on the abyss. Lastly, in canto XVI, Byron has moved beyond the abyss in order to bring the reader to the religious sublime—the highest form of sublime.

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INTRODUCTION: BYRON AND THE SUBLIME

‘a well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a bolt of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker at a single stroke’.¹

Byron’s love for classical literature began whilst he was a schoolboy at Harrow, and this fondness would last throughout his life. In his early years, Byron composed translations and imitations of Æschylus, Catullus, Anacreon, Euripides, and Horace, emulating the latter’s *Ars Poetica* in his own ‘Hints from Horace’ (1811), a kind of Byronic treatise on the aesthetics of poetry and drama, and modelled after his predecessor’s highly influential work. In ‘Hints’, readers will find striking parallels between Byron and Horace, and yet underneath his imitation and in-between the satirical attacks against those who either do not follow neo-classical poetics or those who have publicly attacked him, Byron formulates his own poetics in which the poet is looked upon favourably. Also, it is here that Byron sets forth his own precepts of literary aesthetics, which he believes will revolutionise English poetry and bring it back to the brilliance of Alexander Pope.

We do not have a specific poem written in honour of Longinus, in the way that we do with Byron’s imitations of Sappho, Æschylus, Anacreon, Catullus, and Virgil. Instead, while there are few explicit references to Longinus in Byron’s writings, his influence is, nevertheless, evident. This search for proof of the Longinian concept of the sublime in Byron’s poetry, broadly speaking, is the partial focus of this thesis, although I will also examine Burkean and Kantian versions of the sublime. The aims of the thesis are to perform a close textual reading of Byron’s major, middle, and late-period works, most notably *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (hereafter, *CHP*) cantos III and IV, *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Don Juan*, and to analyse them through the lens of the concept of the sublime. I will address questions such as: ‘To what extent does Byron’s poetry engage with the concept of the sublime?’ and ‘How significant is the concept of the sublime to the development of Byron’s poetics?’ It is my intention to answer these questions, as well as demonstrate the need for a

¹ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W.H. Fyfe rev. Donald Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 209.

work that examines the sublime through Byron's *oeuvre*, because, at the time of writing, there is no single-authored study of Byron and the sublime.²

Scholars are aware that Byron utilised, in various forms, the Longinian, Burkean, and Kantian versions of the sublime throughout his major works.³ There are instances of the sublime in the *Hebrew Melodies*, the first two cantos of *CHP*, 'The Prisoner of Chillon', 'The Dream', 'Darkness', and 'Prometheus'. However, I would like to focus on the works that Byron wrote while abroad during his self-imposed exile, because the poems of exile mark his 'middle period' and his greatest transformation as a poet. This, I believe, is one of the reasons why the sublime is so prevalent in the major, middle, and late-period works, such as the final two cantos of *CHP* (III and IV), *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Don Juan*. Before I introduce readers to recent research pertaining to Byron and the sublime, I would like to provide an outline of the major ideas of the various forms of the sublime that Byron utilises in his poetry. This will afford readers the opportunity to acquaint themselves with previous modes of the sublime prior to an analysis of relevant scholarship.

Longinus and the Language of the Sublime

Longinus's incomplete text, *On the Sublime* (*Peri hypsos*), examines the poetics of the sublime, focusing on diction and heightened language that reveal the speaker's emotions. Longinus continues the classical tradition by beginning his treatise with a discourse (*logos*) on sublimity (*hypsos*). This affords him the opportunity to look at the role of language and diction as a way to bring the reader to the sublime, but not before he expounds upon its experiences, mainly ecstasy (*ekstasis*), astonishment (*ekplêxis*), wonder (*thaumasion*), and the moment (*kairos*). Ecstasy is a characteristic of 'elevation', and so when the individual is elevated through the poem, he is brought out of himself and into ecstasy. The ecstatic moment will then lead to astonishment, which is seen as amazement, and subsequently to

² There are, however, single-authored studies on Wordsworth and the sublime, including *Wordsworth and the Sublime* by Albert O. Wleke; *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* by Vincent Arthur De Luca; *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* by Cian Duffy; *Keats and the Sublime* by Stuart A. Ende.

³ In 2003, the theme of the International Byron Society's annual conference was 'Byron and the Sublime', and the proceedings were published in 2005. Today, this collection remains the only significant scholarly work on Byron and the sublime. These essays will be discussed, in part, later in this introduction, with special attention given to their effects on this thesis.

wonder, which is another term for ‘awe’.⁴ As we will uncover, each of these attributes will be found in Byron’s poetry beginning with, but not exclusively in, *CHP* canto III.

For Longinus, the sublime ‘is associated with the divine’ and, as a result, affords the individual attaining sublimity to connect with the divine.⁵ It is, in many respects, the way an individual can come to know a supernatural being. Language is paramount in obtaining the sublime, because it is through language that the individual is elevated into ecstasy and astonishment, and transformed with wonder. In Longinus, emphasis is placed on the choice and order of words as a way to bring the reader into the moment that the author (or the poet, in this case) is trying to convey, because it is imperative to the function and development of the sublime experience. Therefore, one must begin where Longinus begins: hyperbaton.

Hyperbaton is ‘arranging words and thoughts out of the natural sequence, and is, as it were, the truest mark of vehement emotion’.⁶ The poet ‘often suspends the sense which he has begun to express, and in the interval manages to bring forward one extraneous idea after another in a strange and unlikely order’.⁷ Through the use of proper (or fitting) words, language can amplify (or intensify) the experience that the poet is aiming to express to the reader. It is the ‘enlargement’ of words, phrases, descriptions, and scenarios that stimulates the reader’s interest in the text. The intensity of language and descriptions, then, leads to the disturbance in the flow of thoughts and phrases. The literal and figurative appearance of words and phrases becomes disjointed in their depiction, and as a result the reader may be taken aback, momentarily, as he tries to situate himself within the new setting. This is most clearly evident in the thunderstorm scene of canto III, stanzas 92 to 93 and 96 to 97:

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
[...]
And this is in the night:—Most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—

⁴ Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime: From Longinus to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 41.

⁵ Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 26.

⁶ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 239

⁷ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 241.

A portion of the tempest and of thee!
 [...]
 Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
 With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
 To make these felt and feeling, well may be
 [...]
 Could I embody and unbosom now
 That which is most within me, —could I wreak
 My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
 Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
 All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
 Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
 And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;

(CHP III. 92-3; 96-7; *passim*)

Here, readers are gripped by the sudden breaks and drawn into the scene, as if they are standing next to the speaker. Long gone are the stanzas where Harold floats effortlessly down the Rhine, and instead readers are jostled into the Alps by the jolting of heart-pounding thunder and sky-crackling lightning. Our attentions are seized and held firm by the raw eloquence of unadulterated and passionate language. Hyperbaton plays the crucial role in the thunderstorm passage, through the arrangement of words and thoughts expressed out of logical order; instead of presenting ideas in succession, there is a jostling of ideas and expressions that is met with what appears to be a flurry of composition. For example, in first part of the sequence (stanzas 92-93), the poet-narrator's description of the sky is interrupted by the description of night which, in turn, is suspended for 'storm' and 'darkness'. And, just as the reader is trying to comprehend the arrangement of words, the poet-narrator returns to 'night:—Most glorious night!' Whilst the reader might think of night as a time for 'slumber', the poet-narrator informs us that this is not the case. Instead, it is the time of fierce tempests that prevent the relaxation of sleep. Of course, all of this gives way to stanza 96 when the 'Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings!' coupled 'With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul' interrupt the description of night 'To make these felt and feeling'. Near exhausted, the reader figuratively stumbles into stanza 97, where he

is unbosomed and wreaked and weak, both physically and mentally. Thus, through stanzas 92-93 and 96, the poet-narrator has exposed the reader to descriptions of ecstasy, amazement, and wonder, and stanza 97 is the after-affect, where both the poet-narrator and reader are left exhausted.

In the mountains, summer thunderstorms are not an uncommon occurrence. Generally speaking, they can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours, and can range from a light drizzle to a crashing downpour, and thus Byron takes an event that is ordinary and turns it into something extraordinary. He relates the qualities and characteristics that make it unique, and by isolating the hyperbated lines we see an immediate thrusting of the reader to the forefront of the sublime experience through the 'disturbance' of thoughts and ideas.

Passionate language is that which excites and stimulates the senses, imagination, and emotions 'when it seems not to be premeditated by the speaker but born of the moment'.⁸ Following his discussion of hyperbaton, Longinus provides an account of 'amplification', which he defines as a mode of 'language which invests the subject with grandeur. [...] Sublimity lies in elevation, amplification rather in amount; and so you often find sublimity in a single idea, whereas amplification always goes with quantity and a certain degree of redundance'.⁹ According to Malcolm Heath, 'To make amplification sublime requires not something *other* than amplification, but a quality of the amplification that raises its level in the same way that sustained emotional intensity secures the sublime effect of selection and combination'.¹⁰ If language can be utilised properly, then it can produce a higher quality of sustained imagery that would, in turn, lead to the sublime. Later, in the thesis, we will see how Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and 'The Pedlar' demonstrate amplification, and this effect is also evident in *CHP* III's 'Alpine stanzas'.

What makes the thunderstorm passage sublime is Byron's use of a rhetorical style, which, with its illusions and juxtapositions, runs the risk of destroying narrative comprehension. For example, one would think that the alliteration or smoothness of words,

⁸ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 233.

⁹ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 207.

¹⁰ Malcolm Heath, 'Longinus and the Ancient Sublime', in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy E. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 11-23 (p. 18).

diction, and language would convey a more melodious moment that leads to the sublime moment. Yet it is Byron's use of hyperbated lines, punctuated with the dash, which forces the reader to slow down and focus on each of the words singularly. As such, emphasis is placed on the words and the reader is obliged to think of them while encountering them, and consider the contextual meaning that is described within the lines. In his essay 'Byron's Aposiopesis', Jonathon Shears argues that aposiopesis is evident in *Lara*, *Manfred*, *Sardanapalus*, and the eponymous *Don Juan*. The ancient Greek term 'aposiopesis' refers to when the speaker interrupts himself or herself excitedly and the tension of the lines is altered in such a way that there may be a misunderstanding of what is stated.¹¹ By utilising the dash, Byron is able to demonstrate the broken thought process that enables him to illustrate better the impact that the thunderstorm has on him.

Byron is able to present the thunderstorm passage with such vividness because the past events are written as if they are happening at the present moment, and there would be an apparent transcendence of time through the sublime. I would argue that the sublime is linked to the amplification that is used to convey the moment that builds towards the climax and, as a result, 'the true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled with joy and pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we heard'.¹² The thunderstorm passage allows the reader to be drawn into the experience that Byron conveys, and so through his choice of words, as a reader I am drawn into the poem. In addition, as I continuously read and pause, the constant tension between what Byron is expressing through the language and his use of commas and dashes helps to provide the same type of tension that Byron experiences in the Alps. Finally, I would argue that the amplification of words and diction helps bring the reader into a moment of terror and awe, as experienced by the poet and elucidated upon by Edmund Burke.

The last classical literary concept that Byron utilises, and which I would like to address, is parabasis, which comes from ancient Greek plays. Although parabasis is not used by Longinus, it is nevertheless important to my discussion on the sublime. In *Don Juan and Regency England*, Peter Graham alludes to the idea of parabasis as a motif that Byron employs in order to explain the relationship between the comedic and serious

¹¹ Jonathon Shears, 'Byron's Aposiopesis', *Romanticism*, 14.2 (2008), pp. 83-89 (p. 183).

¹² Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 179.

elements in *Don Juan*. According to Graham, parabasis is ‘Literally a “coming forward—[that] shatters dramatic illusion from Greek old comedy—suspension of action that takes place at or toward the middle of the play, as the chorus advances to present the author’s opinions”’.¹³ Parabasis began, most notably, with the comedies of Aristophanes, who seemed to invent the idea as well as perfect it, before it was carried into the Roman tradition by Lucilius, Horace, and Juvenal. Of course, Horace and Juvenal are noted for their comedic plays as well as for being early influences for Byron, both in structure and in translation material. Nevertheless, the grounding of parabasis in the ancient traditions and the fact that we know that Byron read the classics at Harrow, provide scholars with a direct connection between the ancients and Byron. For now, I will postpone any further discussion of parabasis until Chapter Five, as it will prove prevalent to my analysis of the sublime found in *Don Juan*.

Language is the foundation that brings the reader to an awareness of the power of something terrific, which once understood, will elevate the reader in the Longinian sense. The eighteenth-century philosophers Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant both looked closely at the dynamics of the sublime and its impacts on the reader or individual perceiving the actions of the world. If Longinus’s sublime is firmly rooted within language, then it was to be Burke and Kant who would expand the definitions and interpretations of the sublime to focus on a more philosophical point of view. Burke’s version of the sublime exacts feelings and will be seen primarily within the boundaries of *pathos*, that is to say, the pathetic, a terror based upon the irrational and sensations. Kant’s philosophy, on the other hand, moves towards a *noetic* sublime, in which there is a focus on the overcoming of sensuous imagination by the higher faculty of reason.

Edmund Burke and the ‘Awe of Terror’

Moving beyond the constructs of language in attaining the sublime, Burke explores the psychology of the mind. Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Burke was interested in a psychologically-based philosophy, in which the senses stimulate and mould the mind. According to Rudolph Gasché, Burke ‘was the first to propose an uncompromising

¹³ Peter Graham, *Don Juan and Regency England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985), p. 127.

empiricist—that is, sensualistic—account of aesthetic experience, and to have radically uncoupled his experience from extrinsic considerations’.¹⁴ If I understand Gasché’s interpretation correctly, then I would argue that for Burke the sublime experience is one in which outside influences, coupled with the senses, allow the individual to experience the sublime. For Burke, poetry can imitate, but often it must go beyond imitation and description in order to be sublime; for example, in order for poetry to be sublime, it will go beyond language’s imitation and description, but it will bring the reader to the sublime through the utilisation of the senses. Burke sees language (and poetry, to a greater extent) in anti-platonic ways, as ‘to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of things themselves’.¹⁵ Where Longinus examines the stylistic elements of language and its relation to the sublime, Burke is interested in the sublime and its psychological effects on the mind. Not only do words describe what can be perceived by the senses, they also create impressions in the mind that can give rise to other imaginative creations in order to reach the sublime. As we will see throughout this thesis, Burke’s sublime provides a link between the language-based sublime of Longinus and the rationalist sublime of Kant.

Bernard Beatty clearly elucidates that the Burkean sublime looks towards the ‘spatial extension (“the higher, the more awful, and the more sublime”), because of the blurring of height and depths (the higher = the deeper fall), and the confusion of feelings (hope and fear)’, all of which culminate in awe and terror.¹⁶ Prior to Burke, the sublime was grounded in the mechanics of language usage, but since then there has been the addition of ‘spatial extension’, according to Beatty, meaning that physical space coupled with language helps bring the reader to the sublime. The notion that language will be used in conjunction with a description of physical space to bring about the sublime is what Byron is attempting in *Manfred* and *Cain*.

¹⁴ Rodolphe Gasché, ‘And the Beautiful? Revisiting Edmund Burke’s “Double Aesthetics”’, in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy E. Costello (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 24-36 (p. 24).

¹⁵ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 95.

¹⁶ Bernard Beatty, ‘“An awful wish to plunge within it”: Byron’s Critique of the Sublime’, in *Revue de l’Université de Moncton*, 2005, ed. Paul M. Curtis (Montreal: University of Moncton Press, 2005), pp. 265-76 (p. 276).

For Gasché

The imagination, then, is the place where our fears and hopes—that is, our concern with ourselves and with others—bring about the polarization of our affects, or passions, in terms of the association of the sublime with pain, and the beautiful with pleasure.¹⁷

The spatial extension, coupled with the ‘cathartic effect on the body and the mind’, gives rise to the dualistic tension between the recognition of terror and awe in the self. Here, spatial extension and the description of language in the poem help convey moments of terror and awe; thus, the sublime, for Burke, is all of these elements working together. It is this intersection of the sublime’s variables that directly leads the individual to astonishment, which is seen as ‘the sudden awareness of being alive’.¹⁸ This moment of lucidity is the conscious recognition of one’s connection to the sublime and its feeling of vitality.

Unlike Longinus, Burke does not see language as the end, but rather the means to the end by invoking the sublime through words, their descriptions, and the impressions brought to the senses. As words describe a scene, an impression is formed in the recipient’s mind that, as it develops, begins to escalate towards a mixed sensation of pleasure and pain. Thus, ‘For Burke, it is the *confusion* of images—which is more easily attained in poetry than painting—that produces the effect of sublimity’.¹⁹ Those objects or events that strike fear or excitement are sublime because they leave the individual with a sense of unease and an inability to adequately describe the event. The poetic techniques associated with this breakdown of verbal description include, as we have seen, amplification and hyperbaton. In both instances, the impression is given that the speaker is at a loss to explain or know what has happened. For Byron, then, it is the language that the poet uses to correlate and convey the relationship with nature, which leads to the description of a state of mind in which the mind is lofty or elevated, even to the point of being terrified, because language is used to convey what the senses apprehend.

An interpretation of stanza 97 of the thunderstorm scene is warranted because it affords the reader a fine example of the Burkean sublime:

Could I embody and unbosom now

¹⁷ Gasché, ‘And the Beautiful?’, p. 27.

¹⁸ Gasché, ‘And the Beautiful?’, p. 29.

¹⁹ Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime*, p. 165.

That which is most within me, —could I wreak
 My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
 Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
 All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
 Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
 And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
 But as it is, I live and die unheard,

With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword. (*CHP* III. 97)

Closely examining these lines, one sees how Byron uses language to evoke moments of sublimity; for example, the poet-narrator wishes that he could both ‘embody and unbosom’ something that is within him. The duality of being able to both embrace and unload something that is unexplainable is due to the inability to elucidate and clarify, and this is what helps make the stanza sublime. Next, the ‘thoughts upon Expression’ are unable to be conveyed in any kind of logical manner, and this is evident in Byron’s choice of the verb ‘throw’ in line three. What exactly is thrown? The poet-narrator declares that it is not merely one thing that has been thrown, but rather it is the ‘Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak’, including ‘all I seek’. Here, Byron is unable to express adequately what the poet-narrator seeks, and as a result, he falters in his ability to articulate what the sublime is, and thus he utters one word: ‘Lightning’.

Finally, the poet-narrator feels as if he will ‘live and die unheard | With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword’. After engaging with the sublime, he is left feeling unsure of himself, and in possession of the psychological ramifications evident in the final two lines. There is a kind of despondency in his acceptance of living and dying voiceless, as if resigned he feels that he has nothing to say, not because he does not want to speak, but because he cannot; the sublime has taken his voice away.

Immanuel Kant and two versions of the sublime

Despite a lack of proficiency in German, it is still possible that Byron could have known of Kant’s theory of the sublime from one of three sources. First, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a one-time nemesis and then eventual friend of Byron, was fluent in German and had read Kant’s third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgment*, so he could have discussed Kant with

Byron. Second, whilst visiting Madam de Staël's salon at Coppet, Byron would in all likelihood have met August Wilhelm Schlegel, who may have shared his own views on the sublime.²⁰ Finally, the third option would be Matthew 'Monk' Lewis's intimate knowledge of German, which he may have shared with Byron and his entourage on the shores of Lac Leeman in the summer of 1816.

While Kant's First Analytic of the third *Critique* analyses the beautiful (which is derived from understanding and imagination), it is the Second Analytic (on the sublime) that concerns us. For Kant, 'the term "sublime" does not properly apply to any object in nature: no craggy peak, turbulent sea, or thunderous sky is sublime *sensu stricto* [and] the sublime is the representation of something as great as beyond all comparison'.²¹ Criticising Burke's 'psychological' and sense-based sublime, Kant views the sublime as arising from the faculty of Reason, as it is this that sees the sublime, in nature, as a representation of a sublime power inherent in the mind of humanity. As a result, Kant differentiates between the two types of sublime: the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime. According to Robert Doran:

the Mathematically Sublime relates to theoretical reason's demand for *totality*; the Dynamically Sublime to practical reason's demand for *autonomy*. [...] Both forms of sublimity recall and reaffirm the main thrust of Kant's moral philosophy: the idea that man can transcend the limitations placed on him by his sensuous nature and natural causality, thereby realizing the essential freedom on which rational moral consciousness is grounded.²²

The mathematically sublime, for Kant, is that which is formless or excessive in size and exceeds the grasp of reason and, through this, it produces the capacity within the individual's mind that is essentially transcendent. In essence, the sublime is beyond the

²⁰ According to James Vigus, Henry Crabb Robinson 'sailed to Germany on 3 April 1800'. Enrolling at the University of Jena, he studied Kant's metaphysics and aesthetics in October 1802 and, on 24 January 1804, he called upon Mdm. de Staël. After several fruitful discussions on Kant, Schelling, and German Idealism, de Staël requested Crabb Robinson's notes on Kant's philosophy. See, James Vigus, *Henry Crabb Robinson: Essays on Kant, Schelling, and German Aesthetics* (London: Modern Research Humanities Association, 2010).

²¹ Melissa McBay Merritt, 'The Moral Source of the Kantian Sublime', in *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Timothy E. Costelloe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 37-49 (p. 37; p. 39).

²² Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime*, p. 221.

comprehension of reason. Because reason cannot comprehend these moments, Kant argues that they are sublime. On the other hand, the dynamically sublime is more abstract, not perfect, and concerned with the powerful, and it is commonly apprehended in the natural world. In the dynamically sublime, we appreciate nature because it demonstrates our insignificance compared to its mightiness. For example, instances like Byron's description of the Alps in the Alpine stanzas (including the thunderstorm scene) or in *Manfred* question the Kantian versions of the sublime and its relationship to the natural world because they afford the poet-narrator or Manfred the ability to feel inconsequential in the world.

According to the Kantian scholar Paul Guyer:

The experience of the mathematical sublime is a complex mixture of displeasure at the inability of imagination to comprehend in a single grasp (*comprehensio aesthetica*) the apparently infinite magnitude of a natural vista and of pleasure connected to the fact that the task of such a *comprehensio aesthetica* stems from our own power of theoretical reason. [...] Kant characterizes the dynamical sublime in similar terms, although in this case he speaks of a combination of a perception of fearfulness (not outright fear) with self-esteem triggered by the perception of mighty and potentially destructive forces in nature (hence the 'dynamical') rather than of a complex displeasure and pleasure.²³

Thus, when the poet-narrator stands in the rain witnessing the power of the thunderstorm, from the Kantian point of view, it is dynamically and mathematically sublime for him and only for him. The mathematically sublime is demonstrated when the poet-narrator's imagination is overwhelmed and cannot comprehend the moment being witnessed. Thus, the Kantian sublime 'grabs' hold of the mind in a 'momentary inhibition of the vital powers and the immediately following and all the more powerful outpouring of them; hence as an emotion it seems to be not play but something serious in the activity of the imagination' through the abstract and powerfully destructive forces of nature.²⁴

²³ Paul Guyer, 'Kant's Distinction between the Beautiful and the Sublime', *The Review of Metaphysics: A Philosophical Quarterly*, 35. 4 (1982), 753-83 (p. 774).

²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 431.

Regarding the mathematically sublime, the five stanzas of the alpine storm denote what Philip Shaw summarises as ‘the ability of the mind to submit formlessness, such as the random, excessive movements of a storm, or the imperceptible contours of a vast cathedral, to the rational idea of *totality*’.²⁵ When readers arrive at stanza 97, they have already been thrown into the midst of the storm, with all of its turbulent happenings, and what they see is a definite shift away from the empirical ‘feelings’, sights, and sensations that would be markedly Burkean. Instead, what Byron presents his readers with is, unbeknownst to him, a shift towards the dynamically sublime:

could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak (CHP III. 97)

Byron, in witnessing the storm from a ‘safe’ distance, begins to imagine how best to convey the experience for *CHP*’s readers. He realises that he will not be able to communicate appropriately the exact experience in the Alps, due to the failure of imagination to match a sensuous concept to the sublime idea in the Kantian sense. Therefore, Byron reverts to hyperbaton as a way to portray and depict the sublime experience suitably, which can be seen as the supremacy of reason over nature. For Vincent Newey, ‘The self can never be fully embodied or fully lost (“unbosomed”) through language, though we may devoutly wish it’.²⁶ In this instance, terror has subsided in favour of awe and, as a result, Byron composes the 97th stanza with a flurry of dashes so that he might capture the moment, no matter how ineffectual language might be.

As we will see throughout this thesis, Byron will utilise all three sublims as he finds his own voice on sublimity. According to Kant, the sublime ‘describes a state of mind’, [marking] ‘the limits of imagination and expression together with a sense of what may lie beyond these limits, [and finally referring to the moment when the ability to

²⁵ Shaw, *The Sublime*, p. 82.

²⁶ Vincent Newey, ‘Authoring the Self: Childe Harold III and IV’, in *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, ed. Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), pp. 148-90 (p. 163).

apprehend, to know, to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for what lies beyond thought and language'.²⁷ Longinus uses words and language to postulate, describe, and achieve the sublime. Burke looks to the impressions that are left on the senses to bring the reader to the sublime, while Kant moves beyond the fallible senses and turns to the power of reason in guiding the poet and reader to the sublime. Both Burke and Kant argue that it is not the sublime's relationship with language that foregrounds the experience, but rather it is the sublime's inability to be adequately conveyed that demonstrates its sublime qualities.

So what then does the sublime mean to Byron? If we look at the two direct influences on Byron—Longinus and Burke—as well as Kant as an indirect influence, we see that he begins with language. It is this that describes scenarios, and which elucidates two Burkean characteristics, terror and awe, both of which are sensory-based. In the thunderstorm passage, lightning is seen, thunder is heard, and rain, fear, and awe are all felt. Byron uses the storm to convey moments of Burkean sublimity to the reader via the poet-narrator. Where Kant sees the thunderstorm as formless, boundless, and abstract, Byron is surrounded and enveloped by the thunderstorm's formless boundlessness, which adds to the storm's mystique and, in my opinion, to its sense of sublimity.

Recent Scholarship

Among the most recent critical studies of Byron and the sublime are the proceedings from the International Association of Byron Societies' 2003 conference, on the theme of 'Byron and the Romantic Sublime', published in 2005. Within this collection are several essays that specifically address Byron, the sublime, and most notably *Manfred*. In addition, there have been whole studies on the Romantic poets and the sublime.²⁸ However, there remains a crucial need for a single-authored study of Byron and the sublime, and this thesis therefore

²⁷ Shaw, *The Sublime*, pp. 1-3.

²⁸ The individual studies include: Albert O. Wleke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); Stuart A. Ende, *Keats and the Sublime* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976); Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of the University of Florida, 1985); Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Vincent Arthur de Luca, *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

attempts to fill a gap within Romantic studies by addressing Byron's notion of the sublime through a close and sustained examination of the major middle and late period works. Yet, before I closely examine the conference proceedings from 2003, I would like to take a moment and situate the aforementioned works and how my thesis will be positioned within these studies.

In his landmark study *Wordsworth and the Sublime*, Albert O. Wlecke offers 'a description of Wordsworth's act of imagination' and demonstrates how it comes into contact with and is shaped by the sublime.²⁹ Wlecke notes that the sublime is rooted in the consciousness that makes the individual aware of the sublime qualities in nature. For example, 'in Wordsworthian terms, sublime consciousness seems to offer suggestive possibilities for the marriage of mind and nature, especially for a marriage by the mind to nature in its more extended prospects'.³⁰ Here, Wlecke demonstrates that, for Wordsworth, the sublime has Burkean roots as it stems from the operation of the mind. What distinguishes Wordsworth's concept of the sublime from Burke's is the fact that the sublime does not just 'live' in the mind but is constituted through the interaction of mind and world. Building on this notion, Wlecke believes that for Wordsworth, 'Sublime consciousness thus might be described as an experience in which the mind can improve not only its awareness of its own excellence but even the very object of that self-applauding awareness'.³¹ Wordsworth thus adopts a more 'philosophical' approach to the sublime and, even though Wlecke does not explicitly point out the connection to Coleridge and German transcendental philosophy, it is not difficult to see the relationship.

In *The End of the Line* Neil Hertz draws on Kant and Freud to examine the formation of the sublime in texts by, among others, Flaubert, George Eliot and Wordsworth. It is worth discussing, albeit briefly, because it is the first essay 'A Reading of Longinus' that is of particular interest to my thesis. In one key passage Hertz states that, 'Great thoughts spur men to great language...and among such thoughts are those dwelling on the

²⁹ Albert O. Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. vii.

³⁰ Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime*, p. 52.

³¹ Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime*, p. 59.

power of the gods'.³² For Hertz, language is key to the production of the sublime. Through a reading of Longinus's interest in the ability of language to display sublimity while, at the same time, seeking to conceal its artificiality, Hertz concludes that the sublime is a purely textual effect. Hertz thus differs from Wlecke and later related commentators in his insistence that the sublime is a purely linguistic phenomena, without extra-textual origins in mind or nature. I will examine these ideas in greater detail in Chapter One, where I look at Byron's use of language and punctuation in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* canto III.

In her study *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* Frances Ferguson, like her predecessors, neglects Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, but looks at Wordsworth in regards to the role of the individual in the natural world. In a critique of deconstructive approaches to the sublime, Ferguson argues that

The self-reference that language or discourse is able to achieve by virtue of being a thing that I based neither on mind nor on objects ironically recuperates all that was earlier involved in the causal model of relationship between mind and world. Language and discourse is treated as animated matter that produces more of the same by virtue of its inability to coincide with itself (let alone mind and objects), as the spacing within language creates words as separate from one another (and therefore as excess rather than identity) and creates the individual as a subject position, an 'opening within discourse'.³³

Drawing on Kant, Ferguson goes on to argue that language should be regarded not 'as a thing' but as a 'medium' through which the sensible may be related to the transcendental. She thus insists on the theoretical necessity of the noumenal, a view that, while at odds with deconstructive approaches to the sublime, has some similarities with Gasché's remarks on the role of the 'quasitranscendental' in Derrida's thought.³⁴ Unlike Hertz and de Bolla, Ferguson thus gives qualified support to the idea of the sublime as an extra-discursive phenomenon and, by extension, to the role of the individual in the formation of the sublime.

³² Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 2.

³³ Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 19.

³⁴ See Rudolph Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 317.

Raimonda Modiano's landmark study on Coleridge, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, seeks to illustrate the influence of the German Idealist philosophers on Coleridge. According to Modiano, 'Coleridge was keenly interested in the sublime and followed closely the radical developments in German aesthetics'.³⁵ In this respect Coleridge stands apart from his contemporaries because he is the only poet to look to continental Europe for ideas, and this is important because it allows the English Romantic poets an avenue in which to be exposed to non-empiricist thought. Coleridge certainly would have shared his findings on German thought with Wordsworth. Nevertheless, Modiano's study is important, not just because of the literary historical significance, but because it provides a link between late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth British and German thought: 'Coleridge devised a formula for the sublime that mediates between an empirical and transcendental philosophy'.³⁶ Within the parameters of Byron and the sublime, this is vital because Modiano offers readers a distinctive reading of the Romantic poets and the sublime that breaks disrupts typical readings of the past, where the poets were essentially bound to Anglo-European thought.

Next, I would like to introduce Stuart Ende's examination of Keats in *Keats and the Sublime*. As its title suggests, Ende's aim is to expound upon the sublime in Keats's poetry; he does this by framing the influence of Milton coupled with Freudian psychology. Ende situates the sublime 'in the ecstasy that is poetic fire, and to retain one's sentient being'.³⁷ By doing so Ende tries to humanize the sublime, for Keats, which is a kind of 'poetic self-sacrifice' the goal of which is 'emotional completion'.³⁸ It is here that he locates the Keatsian sublime as close to the Wordsworthian sublime where there is a more prevalent connection between the sublime and the mind; for example, 'Like Wordsworth, Keats fears the power of the sublime to strip the mind naked, to divest it not only of all things but of all relationship, except that with the daemon of otherness, who is, after all, merely another "I". According to Ende:

³⁵ Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1985), p. 101.

³⁶ Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 101.

³⁷ Stuart Ende, *Keats and the Sublime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. xiv.

³⁸ Ende, *Keats and the Sublime*, p. 43.

Keats saves nature for the mind, though at the cost, it is true, of lyrical power. For such diminution enables the poet to continue his survey of descriptive sketches of landscape and poetic history, but it prevents the nakedness of the self that causes the poet to reach out to the dusky region of the daemon.³⁹

Surely Keats understands the wedding of mind and nature from Wordsworth, and I would maintain that if Ende is correct in his assertion that the saving of nature for the mind comes at the cost of the nakedness of the self or, what I see as, the poet's vulnerability when exposing himself to the power of language on the mind, then this is where Byron is able to excel in his treatment of the mind and nature; one needs only to look at the alpine stanzas of *CHP* III or *Manfred* in order to see the Byronic version where the 'nakedness of the self' is expressed through the appearance of disjointed language.

Markus Poetzsch's *Visionary Dreariness: Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime* aims to 'widen the traditionally narrow scope of sublime analytics'.⁴⁰ In contrast to previous studies of the sublime, Poetzsch metaphorically leaves the mountaintop and chooses to focus on how, why, and in what ways the sublime can occur in the everyday.⁴¹ In the spirit of Anne Mellor's *Romanticism and Gender*, Poetzsch looks to the first-generation female poets in order to situate the *quotidian* sublime as a way to expand and understand the sublime's appearance in ordinary, everyday situations. He acknowledges that he begins with Wordsworth, 'because he, perhaps more than any other writer of the Romantic era, has been associated with a sublime of mountaintops and grandeur....' before going on to explain that 'Wordsworth is the poster-boy for masculine transcendence, insatiably consuming nature's mightiest prospects and in the process annihilating the female other'.⁴² As we shall see, with my thesis Byron's use of the sublime is not like that of the everyday as Poetzsch believes, but it is important nonetheless because it will fill the gap in sublime studies surrounding the Romantic poets.

³⁹ Ende, *Keats and the Sublime*, p. 57.

⁴⁰ Markus Poetzsch, *Visionary Dreariness: Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 21.

⁴¹ Poetzsch only mentions Byron once; Shelley is scantily mentioned in passing; and Keats receives the most coverage with only two pages of study devoted.

⁴² Poetzsch, *Visionary Dreariness: Readings in Romanticism's Quotidian Sublime*, p. 10.

Next we come to alleviating the void of scholarship concerning Blake and the sublime, which is filled with Vincent de Luca's astute study *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime*. De Luca 'aims to demonstrate that Blake's relation to the sublime is not superficial but profound; it argues that traditions of the sublime extant in his time play a major influential role in his aesthetics, his style and organization of his chief poetical works'.⁴³ Instead he understands and explains the Longinian and Burkean sublimities in relation to Blake's major works, but also informs his audience of how Blake comes to understand these sublimities before he interprets Blake's comprehension and use. For example, he examines the sublime theories of: Addison, Burke, and Kant, especially focusing on the ways in which Blake brings sees the sublime in religious terms (something which De Luca argues stems from Blake's reading of Milton), as well as the ways in which Blake chooses to look at the sublime through both language and images.

Cian Duffy's *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* attempts an 'exploration of the relationship between the sublime and the revolutionary in Shelley's work'.⁴⁴ Duffy focusses on *Queen Mab*, *Laon and Cynthia*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *A Philosophical View of Reform*, to demonstrate that Shelley did not merely add to the discussion of the natural sublime in 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' and 'Mont Blanc', but changed the conversation on the sublime by linking it with revolutionary discourse. Duffy sees what he calls the 'Shelleyan sublime' 'as a discourse concerned not only to regulate and politicise the affective response to the natural sublime, but also to emphasise the historical and political implications of the landscape, per se'.⁴⁵ This approach enables Duffy to examine the sublime through a political and revolutionary lens; Duffy demonstrates that Shelley, unlike his fellow Romantic poets, does not turn towards nature for the sublime, but rather locates sublimity within the realm of politics.

Another 'revolutionary' Romantic scholar is Anne K. Mellor whose *Romanticism and Gender* helped change the ways in which we look at gender within the period. For example, Mellor questions and challenges our assumptions that the Romantic period gave

⁴³ Vincent de Luca, *Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1991), p. 3.

⁴⁴ Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 10.

accurate and just representation to female poets and female characters. Employing a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, Mellor clearly illustrates the distinctive qualities of female Romantic writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Felicia Hemans, and Ann Radcliffe. Once Mellor articulates her attack on Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth for marginalising female characters in literature and making women writers portray their female heroines in their works, she takes the opportunity to demonstrate what she calls the ‘feminine sublime’ in the works of Radcliffe. According to Mellor, ‘The positive Radcliffian sublime both inspires and sustains love by giving each individual a conviction of personal value and significance. It thus enables the women who experience it to effect a mental escape from the oppressions of a tyrannical social order’.⁴⁶

The ‘tyrannical social order’ that Mellor refers to is that of the ‘masculine Romantic’, as represented by Wordsworth and Coleridge:

For Coleridge, Wordsworth and Kant, the joy of the sublime experience is dependent upon the annihilation of Otherness, upon the erasure of the female. [...] If that other is an oppressor, the sublime arouses a sense of personal exaltation, consciousness of virtue and self-esteem, and hence of tranquillity, a mental freedom from the tyrannies of men and women who are now reduced to impotent insignificance. If the other is beloved, then the experience of the sublime mediates a renewed connection between the lovers grounded in individual integrity, self-esteem, and mutual respect.⁴⁷

What we see here is Mellor’s attack on the negation of women into a loss of self where their individuality is stripped away and reduced to an alienated ‘otherness’, to the benefit of the patriarchy. So, for men, once the ‘other’ has been removed, according to Mellor, they are able to engage with the sublime. One might think that Mellor would also attack Byron for his perceived treatment of women in the *Eastern Tales*; however, this is not the case. Instead Mellor is silent in her opinions on Byron’s treatment of women, and this can

⁴⁶ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 95.

⁴⁷ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p.96.

provide us with an opportunity to engage with a Mellorian reading of Byron's female characters.⁴⁸

Mellor does offer an optimistic alternative to her interpretation of the masculine sublime. Referring to Radcliffe, Mellor posits,

On the other hand, Radcliffe constructs an alternative, more positive representation of the sublime. [...] however, by grounding the experience of the positive sublime on recognition of the *distance* of the perceiving self from the other [...] the experience of the sublime in nature is one that is finally *beyond* language, one that impresses the finite self with the presence of an inexpressible other. At the same time, this confrontation with the divine elevates the perceiving self to a sense of her or his own integrity and worth as a unique product of the divine creation.⁴⁹

It appears that the sublime transcends language, and this is something that I address when I examine Byron's use and understanding of the Longinian sublime, especially in the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.⁵⁰ The right use of words and phrases allows the sublime to be experienced to poet and, to a degree, the reader. Of course, aiding in this endeavour is the way in which words and phrases are used to create images within the poetry.

Returning to Byron, I would like to look first at Ian Balfour's essay 'Genres of the Sublime: Byronic Tragedy, *Manfred*, and "The Alpine Journal" in the Light of Some European Contemporaries'. Balfour succinctly states that the sublime is 'Obscure, infinite,

⁴⁸ I do not propose to examine Byron's female characters and their encounter with Mellor's feminine sublime in this thesis; however, it is something that I would like to explore further in a monograph.

⁴⁹ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁰ I would argue that using Mellor's idea of the feminine sublime, it is possible to look at the Aurora Raby stanzas of *Don Juan* in order to illustrate the possibility that Byron comes close to formulating his own ideas of the female sublime. However, this was thought of during my final revisions of the thesis and is something that I am interested in exploring, in the future, either as a publication paper or expansion of chapter five.

boundless, unfathomable, un-imaginable, [and] incomprehensible’,⁵¹ and these generalities afford him and those studying the sublime to begin their research. By stating that something is ‘unfathomable’ or ‘incomprehensible’, a mental framework is established that affords the individual, Byron included a starting point from which to venture a definition of the sublime. I would agree that Balfour is correct in his broad definition, and I would also argue that an attempt to define the sublime must begin somewhere in order for the foundation to be laid; thus, scholars and thinkers following Longinus are able to build on their predecessor’s notions. Balfour goes on to state that ‘Burke [...] follows Longinus who had implicitly promoted hyperbaton—or inversion—as the paradigmatic figure of the sublime, which is to say, a literary figure that cannot easily be understood in terms of the representation, understood phenomenally’.⁵² In his analysis of *Manfred*, Balfour moves beyond Longinus, only to mention him in passing, in favour of Burke, because the latter initiates the idea that the sublime brings terror to the forefront of the individual’s consciousness. In doing so, Balfour offers support to my argument in Chapter Two regarding Byron’s movement away from a Longinian sublime in *CHP* canto III and towards the Burkean sublime of terror in *Manfred*; Manfred’s recognition that death is the termination of life is sublime, because it brings forth to consciousness the terror that death is the final aspect of life. This is something that I will address in greater detail in Chapter Two.

Balfour argues that ‘In Byron’s “Alpine Journal” his telegraphic notation—with its plethora of paratactic dashes—is well suited to the discontinuous, rupturing mode of the sublime’.⁵³ This is crucial to Byron’s understanding and utilisation of the sublime, because as I point out in Chapter One, Byron will borrow the idea of the dash from Longinus, something that Balfour fails to acknowledge, and this provides the basis for the Longinian sublime in *CHP* canto III. And, since both the third canto and the ‘Alpine Journal’ were written at the same time, during the summer of 1816, it is only logical to connect these two texts within the framework of the sublime.

⁵¹ Ian Balfour, ‘Genres of the Sublime: Byronic Tragedy, *Manfred*, and “The Alpine Journal” in the Light of some European Contemporaries’ in *Revue de l’Université de Montcon*, 2005, ed. by Paul Curtis (Montcon: U Montcon, 2005), p. 3.

⁵² Balfour, ‘Genres of the Sublime’, p. 8.

⁵³ Balfour, ‘Genres of the Sublime’, p. 12.

Finally, before moving on, let me briefly comment on one last quotation from Balfour's essay: 'Typically in the sublime, one is at least temporarily overwhelmed, cast out of oneself, disoriented, un-comprehending, astonished, or figuratively dead'.⁵⁴ In *CHP* we will see this come to fruition in both cantos III and IV, and certainly in *Manfred*. Byron moves beyond Balfour's assertion in *Cain* and *Don Juan*, as it is there that the sublime takes on a more philosophical or religious perspective in the 'abyss of space' lines or the Norman abbey stanzas, respectively.

Next, I come to "'Congenial with the Night": The Sublime and Byron's Tragedies', by Yoshie Kimura. While the essay tends to focus on *Marino Faliero* and *Sardanapalus*, Kimura comments on twilight and the sublime. For example, she states that 'darkness is a cause of the sublime' and that 'Twilight thus exerts a mysterious power to change the landscape into one filled with supernatural influence'.⁵⁵ Even though Kimura chooses to focus on the later tragedies, her understanding of Burkean terror is one that will be clearly evident in *CHP* III and *Manfred*, because of the portrayal of the Swiss Alps as being representative of the natural world and that which is greater than us. According to Kimura, twilight can help bring the individual to the sublime because of several facets: firstly, there is twilight's ability to illuminate its surroundings with different colours, because of the physics of light and darkness; secondly, there is a kind of perceived serenity that comes with twilight, whether one is in an urban or natural setting; and finally, there is a manifestation of the transition from illumination during daylight hours versus the transition towards the obscurity of darkness that is inevitably going to arrive. Each of these elements helps to shape the individual's confrontation and experiences with the sublime.

Kimura also holds that 'Byron finds sublimity in a certain congeniality between the human world and a vaster spatial and historical world'.⁵⁶ I would argue that this is what Harold experiences in the Alps, as described in the third canto, as well as Manfred coming to terms with his history with Astarte combined with the spatial dimensions of the precipices above and the valley floor below. Of course, one cannot forget Harold's (or perhaps Byron's) stunned silence upon entering St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, or Cain's awe

⁵⁴ Balfour, 'Genres of the Sublime', p. 20.

⁵⁵ Yoshie Kimura, "'Congenial with the Night": The Sublime and Byron's Tragedies', in *Revue de l'Université de Montcon*, 2005, ed. by Paul Curtis (Montcon: U Montcon, 2005), p. 42.

⁵⁶ Kimura, 'Congenial with the Night', p. 48.

when being taken through space by his Virgilian guide, Lucifer. I will address each of these moments later in the thesis, in the respective chapters.

Itsuyo Higashinaka's essay 'Manfred and the Sublime' draws upon how Byron 'creates characters, settings, situations, speeches, and so forth in his poetry that can be termed sublime and Miltonic'.⁵⁷ I will look to Higashinaka's ideas as a way to support and develop my own thoughts on Byron's sublime further. Higashinaka defines a 'sublime man' as:

one who has strong self-will, believing in his own principles, not yielding easily to others and having a high opinion of human dignity. He is a heroic and fearsome man, defying peril and despising death. [...] he does not conquer nations, but tries to conquer human limitations.... In this sense he can be described as heroic. He is a Promethean figure and believes in human dignity.⁵⁸

Higashinaka's definition of the sublime man can be inserted into the definition of the Byronic Hero, so one could surmise that the Byronic hero is also a sublime hero. Given the above parameters, it is no wonder that Byron (un)intentionally utilises the various modes and forms of the sublime throughout his major works. If Harold entertains notions of the sublime, then it is Manfred who will put theory into practice before the expansion of the Byronic sublime in *Cain* and *Don Juan*.

In 'The Rise of the Sublime and the Fall of History', Vitana Kostadinova argues that 'The sublime in Byron's poem is both Burkean and Kantian'.^{59,60} Kostadinova provides a basis from which I can explore the intricacies of the Burkean and Kantian influences on Byron's sublime, as well as being able to afford a foundation from which I can delve deeper into my analysis. She also holds that 'Kant's understanding of the sublime introduces the subjectivity indispensable in Byronic discourse' and that there are traces of the Burkean sublime in *CHP* IV.⁶¹ This will be crucial to the development of my argument in Chapter

⁵⁷ Itsuyo Higashinaka, 'Manfred and the Sublime', in *Revue de l'Université de Montcon*, 2005, ed. by Paul Curtis (Montcon: U Montcon, 2005), p. 66.

⁵⁸ Higashinaka, 'Manfred and the Sublime', p. 70.

⁵⁹ Kostadinova's essay focuses on *CHP* III.

⁶⁰ Vitana Kostadinova, 'The Rise of the Sublime and the Fall of History', in *Revue de l'Université de Montcon*, 2005, ed. by Paul Curtis (Montcon: U Montcon, 2005), p. 190.

⁶¹ Kostadinova, 'The Rise of the Sublime', p. 190, 196.

Three. While the author solidifies the argument that Kant was an influence on Byron, the question remains: ‘To what degree is Kant’s influence seen on Byron’s sublime?’ This is a question that I shall take up later in the thesis, facilitated by the opening up of scholarly discourse as a result of Kostadinova’s work.

Finally, we come to Bernard Beatty’s magisterial “‘An awful wish to plunge within it’: Byron’s Critique of the Sublime’:

Byron rarely thinks in an absolutely coherent way but he always thinks. The Sublime is wheeled in here because of the extra-human scale of the spatial extension (‘the higher, the more awful, and the more sublime’), because of the blurring of height and depths (the higher=the deeper fall), and the confusion of feelings (hope and fear).⁶²

What Beatty is saying is that even though Byron may not think in a systematically philosophical way, this does not preclude his ability to contemplate and employ various modes of philosophical thought. The sublime is no different. In the first three chapters of this thesis, I plan to demonstrate Byron’s understanding and use of Longinian, Burkean, and Kantian sublimities, but also show that in later works such as *Cain* and *Don Juan*, Byron is able to move beyond the borrowed versions of the sublime in order to create his own uniquely Byronic sublime. Beatty states that:

The idea that the Sublime may so fill the mind that one can think of nothing else, and that this can be related to terror, is familiar enough in Burke and in Kant but even when this is associated with melancholy, it dignifies and exalts.⁶³

This quotation is apropos of what we shall see in each chapter. Very briefly, we shall see Childe Harold in amazement of the summer thunderstorm on the shores of Lake Lemane in canto III, and Manfred will exhibit a dignified melancholy that will be evident in his attempted suicide and conversations with the chamois hunter and abbot. Harold will stand in sheer awe of the decay of Venice, the beauty of Florence, and the human sublime of St. Peter’s at the Vatican, whereas Cain will share thoughts and feelings of terror and exaltation whilst being led through the abyss of space by none other than Lucifer. Finally, Juan will

⁶² Bernard Beatty, ‘Byron’s Critique of the Sublime’, p. 267.

⁶³ Beatty, ‘Byron’s Critique of the Sublime’, p. 269.

become speechless at the sight of the angelic and beatific Aurora Raby, who is sublime in her own right.

Also published in 2005, but not part of the Montcon conference collection, is William D. Melaney's essay 'Ambiguous Difference: Ethical Concern in Byron's *Manfred*'. Whilst Melaney's article does indeed focus on ethical issues in *Manfred*, he also explores the Kantian sublime within the dramatic poem's structure:

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* relates the truth of the sublime to the experience of what is boundless, and, in some sense, un-presentable. The experience of the sublime is identified with our capacity to think of the elevation of nature in terms of the subjective presentation of ideas.⁶⁴

Melaney uses the Kantian notion of boundlessness as a way to fuse the Kantian sublime into *Manfred*. I would argue (and will argue in greater detail in Chapter Two) that Manfred's literal elevation in nature is high in the Alps, whereas his figurative elevation is the heightened awareness of his self with regards to the ethical dilemma of guilt towards Astarte's death.

Melaney goes on to state that 'The Byronic sublime is therefore unlike the sublime in classical poetics and modern aesthetic theory, since it is linked to a disruptive event that is suffered rather than accomplished, endured in silence rather than expressible in verbal terms'.⁶⁵ Here, Melaney situates the Byronic sublime away from the classical tradition, somewhat like Beatty, and holds that there is a disruption that leads to suffering in the individual. So, one can surmise that Manfred's 'disruption' has to do with Astarte's death, and the 'suffering' is the guilt that consumes his being which brings him to the precipice in the Alps and his attempted suicide. I will agree with this in principle, as whilst I believe that Byron does come to terms with classical theory via Longinus, I argue that he also makes use of Burke and Kant in order to fashion his own sublime.

For Melaney, 'The paradox of the Byronic sublime, which derives from the conflict between *mimesis* and *poesis*, heightens the difference between artistic representation and ethical consciousness. The Byronic sublime cannot resolve this conflict or pass over this

⁶⁴ William D. Melaney, 'Ambiguous Difference: Ethical Concern in Byron's *Manfred*', *New Literary History*, 36 (2005), p. 463.

⁶⁵ Melaney, 'Ambiguous Difference', p. 468.

difference'.⁶⁶ If *mimesis* is the imitation of the world, then it supposes that the Byronic *mimesis* includes the descriptions that Byron uses to represent actual people, places, or events in his poetry, whether they are the Alps, cities like Venice, Florence, and Rome, or even the seemingly encyclopaedic references in *Don Juan* that, I might add, read like an extension of Harold's travelogue. Byronic *poesis* is the act of creating the poem. I would agree with Melaney's comment that the paradox of conflict arises from the tension between Byron's desire to create art and his desire to represent scenes accurately in his poetry. I would, however, argue against Melaney by holding that Byron's poetic 'gift' is one where he can balance between the art and the depiction, especially in the final two cantos of *CHP* and, I would argue, also in *Don Juan*.

Another relevant essay is Harold Needler's "'She Walks in Beauty'" and the Theory of the Sublime'. Needler's argument is that Byron's usage of the sublime occurs as early as in June 1814, with the composition of 'She Walks in Beauty'. Here, according to Needler, 'Byron consistently approaches and represents the object of beauty with an indirection that locates that object's aesthetic power in the ambience it creates and the effects to which that ambience gives rise'.⁶⁷ Whilst the focus of the thesis begins with *CHP* canto III in Chapter One, I want to bring it to the reader's attention that Needler's article helps support my argument that Byron was clearly thinking of the sublime earlier than 1816.

Needler postulates that both Burkean and Kantian sublimes are found in 'She Walks in Beauty', and that they are seen through Byron's use of descriptive language as well as in references to the 'darkness' of hair and the contrast between 'night and day'. He also goes on to say that it is beauty that 'seems problematic from the poem's opening line, where it literally denotes an ambience that enfolds the motion of both night and the lady'.⁶⁸ So, like myself, Needler focuses on the role of words and language in how the sublime is conveyed. However, he fails to connect Longinus to Burke and Kant, because as I have already stated and will continue to argue, it is through language that the sublime is able to take hold in Byron's poetry.

⁶⁶ Melaney, 'Ambiguous Difference', p. 470.

⁶⁷ Howard Needler, "'She Walks in Beauty'" and the Theory of the Sublime', *The Byron Journal*, 38 (2010), pp. 19-20.

⁶⁸ Needler, "'She Walks in Beauty'" and the Theory of the Sublime', p. 20.

Instead of focusing on the role that language plays in Byron's sublime in her essay, "'Demolished Worlds': *Manfred* and Sublime (Un)burial', Erin Sheley chooses to examine 'the role of space in structuring both physical and psychological entombment in *Manfred*'.⁶⁹ By adding the psychological variable to the equation, Sheley offers readers a way to explore Burkean and Kantian sublimities with regards to the effects on the mind, especially within the notions of terror and awe, as well as with the spatial dimensions of those effects on the mind. In *Manfred*, 'Byron utilises physically vast natural spaces and phenomena to effect a counterintuitive sense of entombment: time after time he establishes sites of constriction, stasis and death both with and beyond visual spectacles of natural enormity'.⁷⁰ In examining Sheley's quotation within the frame of *Manfred*, one could argue that the natural space of the Alps creates a vastness that aids in Manfred's feelings of despair, so he looks down toward the valley floor below, envisioning his leap off the precipice of the Jungfrau, into oblivion, and a death that will entomb him in the natural world.

Sheley also points out that 'In addition to its concealed spaces of enclosure, Byron's sublime landscape suggests various kinds of suppression, frequently turning vast forces into stasis'.⁷¹ I contend that Sheley is only half correct in her assertion. I agree with her interpretation of the valley below the Jungfrau as being representative of a tomb and therefore sublime-like, because of the connection to the finality of death, as this valley can appear to be tomb-like and the sublimity of the perception of the natural grave reminds Manfred, and perhaps the reader, of death. However, where I disagree with Sheley is in the 'suppression' of the landscape, as I argue that one must look up toward the summit and beyond in order to imagine the immensity of the mountains, the heavens, and beyond into space, especially when juxtaposed with the seeming insignificance of Manfred or another individual. I would go even further and say that Byron understands the vastness above Manfred, and the time it allows for a contemplation of the sublime is a reason why he situates *Cain* in space.

Next, I come to Anthony Howe's recent monograph *Byron and the Forms of Thought*. Howe's study is 'in part a work of historical and intertextual scholarship' that

⁶⁹ Erin Sheley, "'Demolished Worlds': *Manfred* and Sublime (Un)burial', *The Byron Journal*, 40 (2012), p. 51.

⁷⁰ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 53.

⁷¹ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 54.

‘wants to argue that this approach is of especial importance in Byron’s case because of the part played by such thinking in the poet’s forms’.⁷² The book is a collection of six essays that are related to the aforementioned idea and divided into three sections focusing on various themes found in Byron’s poetry. First, the ‘philosophical’ section ‘considers Byron’s relation to philosophical scepticism’ and, rather than look at the poetry from a history of philosophy perspective, Howe chooses to examine Byron in light of Montaignean philosophy.⁷³ From here, he moves straight into an examination of *Cain* in the sceptical tradition.

Howe believes that *Cain* is ‘in many ways the poet’s most obviously “philosophical” literary work’.⁷⁴ By ‘philosophical’, Howe means that the work ‘is easier to read, that is, as a vehicle for its grounding polemical commitments than as a poetic shaping to the unargued contours of life’.⁷⁵ *Cain*, according to Howe’s assertion, is not a philosophical poem in the way that such works describe a systematic philosophy or school of thought, but rather it looks to Lucifer’s teachings to Cain as philosophical—that is, something that goes against traditional Judeo-Christian theology. In fact, as I will point out and elucidate in Chapter Five, Byron subtly employs Lucretian philosophy in *Cain*.

Regarding Byron’s philosophy, Emily Bernhard Jackson’s study *The Development of Byron’s Philosophy of Knowledge* ‘marks an important step in Byron’s formation of a theory of knowledge’.⁷⁶ In her text, Bernhard Jackson seeks to trace a singular line of thought that will constitute Byron’s epistemological thinking and philosophical belief. She intends to examine Byron’s ‘major’ works, including *CHP* (cantos I, II, and III), *The Giaour*, *Manfred*, and *Don Juan*. She is also acutely aware that she must focus on the poems and not on Byron himself, recognising that there may be a reason as to why a project like this has not been attempted before: Bernhard Jackson knows that there will be scholars sceptical of her work as well as her claims. I find her project to not only be ambitious but necessary in Byron studies, because it affords readers with yet another dimension through

⁷² Tony Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 5.

⁷³ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 43.

⁷⁶ Emily A. Bernhard Jackson, *The Development of Byron’s Philosophy of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), p. 3.

which to examine Byron's poetry. I will return to Bernhard Jackson when I examine *Manfred* and *Don Juan* in Chapters Two and Five, respectively.

Edited by Gavin Hopps, *Byron's Ghosts* is a collection of essays that 'are not governed by a single critical approach or sense of what is meant by the ghostly', but which aims 'to highlight the diverse forms of spectrality that feature in Byron's verse'.⁷⁷ The essay that is of most significance to this thesis is Philip Shaw's "'Twixt Life and Death": *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *Don Juan* and the Sublime'. Shaw's essay plans 'to explore the relation between emptiness, negation, and the sublime as presented by Byron in the closing cantos of *Don Juan*', but not before grounding his argument in the St. Peter's stanzas of *CHP* canto IV.⁷⁸ By beginning his argument with an analysis of the vastness of St. Peter's Basilica, two things happen: first and foremost, Shaw is able to afford his examination the means to set forth the significance of why the St. Peter's stanzas are necessary for a comparison of *Don Juan*, and secondly, when compared with Shelley's argument of the entombment seen in *Manfred*, readers will see the 'negative' qualities of death associated with nature versus the 'positive' qualities of life and human creation found in Rome. The analysis of *Manfred* in Chapter Two will expand upon this in greater deal, as will Chapter Three's exploration of the St. Peter's stanzas of *CHP* IV.

Whilst Byron's major middle-period works all denote the influences of varying degrees of Longinian, Burkean, and Kantian sublimes, it should be noted that, at the very least, he begins with an exposition of Longinus's influences. With regards to the structure of the thesis and outline of the chapters, rather than employ a theoretical approach, I will engage in close textual readings of select passages that exemplify aspects of what I will eventually call the 'Byronic sublime'. As readers will see, there is a definitive sublime, rooted in language, that is uniquely 'Byronic', and it begins with Byron's middle-period works, namely the poems written in exile, *CHP* cantos III and IV, and *Manfred*. What makes these three works distinctive is the fact that, in addition to being written in exile, they mark Byron's transition towards poetic maturity by examining a tension between

⁷⁷ Gavin Hopps, *Byron's Ghosts* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 18.

⁷⁸ Philip Shaw, "'Twixt Life and Death": *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, *Don Juan* and the Sublime' in *Byron's Ghosts*, ed. Gavin Hopps (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 147-164, (p. 147).

Harold's desire to live in the city and an experimentation with living amidst the natural world. In addition, we find in these works the perceived influences and rejections of Wordsworth ('Tintern Abbey'), Coleridge ('Hymn Above Chamouni'), and even Shelley ('Mont Blanc'), more so than in *Cain* and *Don Juan*.

In *CHP* canto III, Byron moves Harold well away from cosmopolitan living and places him in the Swiss Alps. In Chapter One, I plan to examine in detail the 'Alpine' stanzas, paying particular attention to how Longinus's theory of the sublime informs the representation of the relations between nature, language, and the self within canto III. Continuing chronologically, in Chapter Two I will look at *Manfred*, which is engaged with Coleridge's work, specifically 'Hymn: Before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni'. The influence of Coleridge's 'Hymn' has been overlooked in the extant scholarly literature, so in my explication, I will address the potential shortcomings of such a connection between the two poets, as well as exploring Manfred's perceived relationship between sublimity and religion, and finally Byron's two versions of the third and final act.

CHP IV is a 'bridge' between the alpine poems of the third canto and *Manfred*. This fourth canto moves away from the sublime of the natural world and, as I argue, shifts towards the human sublime, as will be explored in Chapter Three. As such, Byron continues Harold's journey through Italy, with main stops at Venice, Florence, and Rome, in which he scrutinises and complicates the meanings of the sublime. In each location, there is a different yet equally important progression, in that the Byronic sublime seems to become clearer in its focus and more complex in its theorising. When describing the Venetian stanzas, Harold looks to the elegant decay of the city as a form of the grotesque. In Florence, he discusses Renaissance art and claims that it is representative of the beautiful. Finally, upon his arrival in Rome, Harold makes the obligatory visit to St. Peter's Basilica, and it is here that he stands in awe of what will be the epitome of the human-created sublime.

Leaving Rome on such a high note, at the end of *CHP* IV and in my corresponding analysis in Chapter Three, Chapter Four moves towards the play *Cain*. As one of Byron's more 'mature' plays, I argue that *Cain* appears to be an extension and even an evolved version of *Manfred*. I go on to draw these connections and then look at the supernatural within the play, especially the moment in which Lucifer takes Cain into space. This affords

me the opportunity to explore once again the impact of Byron's classical education at Harrow and examine the Lucretian sublime, paying special attention to 'the swerve'.

In the final chapter, I look to *Don Juan* and choose to centre my attention on five crucial cantos. I commence with canto X, because it continues the discussion of the void from the previous chapter, before turning to a detailed analysis of how doubt and scepticism inform the development of the sublime in cantos XI and XII. Such doubt and scepticism allow Byron the chance to have an open mind, with which he can further entertain the notion of the sublime whilst moving through the poem. The fourteenth canto is the product of doubting and scepticism, because it focuses on the abyss. In fact, it almost appears that Byron needs to move through the doubting and sceptical stages of the sublime in order to bring the reader to the edge of the abyss. Finally, once the abyss and sublime are examined, I will be ready to address the final canto, in which Byron reconceptualises the sublime as he formulates his encounter with Aurora Raby and the concept of ideal beauty.

CHAPTER ONE:
A HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF *CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE*
CANTO III

He, many an evening, to his distant home
 In solitude returning saw the hills
 Grow larger in the darkness, all alone
 Beheld the stars come out above his head,
 And travelled through the wood, no comrade near
 To whom he might confess the things he saw.
 Wordsworth, 'The Pedlar' ll. 122-7⁷⁹

Introduction

CHP canto III and the other poems of 1816, including 'The Prisoner of Chillon', 'The Dream', 'Darkness', and 'Prometheus', mark the beginning of Byron's poetic transformation into his 'middle period'. While Byron continues Harold's travelogue, the third canto moves away from the recounting of Harold's travels through the Iberian Peninsula, on the Mediterranean Sea, and inside Greece, and comes to focus on himself whilst primarily in Switzerland. For example, through the first two cantos of his pilgrimage, the poet-narrator goes through various stages in his quest-towards-being, which facilitate Byron's movement towards the sublime and eventually the religious.⁸⁰

Returning to the role of language in poetry and its impact on the sublime, an analysis of verbs in the past tense may not levy the significance of immediacy, whereas verbs in the present tense move Byron to the 'now' moment. For example, if we examine stanzas 59-60, we see how the present tense verbs move Byron into the immediacy of a Rhine valley departure as an alpine entrance entices:

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! How long delighted
 The stranger fain would linger on his way!
 Thine is a scene alike where souls united
 Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;

⁷⁹ William Wordsworth, 'The Pedlar', *The Poems of William Wordsworth: Collected Reading Texts from the Cornell Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2014), p. 290.

⁸⁰ Alan Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation: Childe Harold, the Tales and the Quest for Comedy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 3.

[...]

Adieu to thee again! a vain adieu!

There can be no farewell to scene like thine;

The mind is coloured by thy every hue;

And if reluctantly the eyes resign

Their cherish'd gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!

'Tis with the thankful glance of parting praise; (CHP III. 59-60)

The poet-speaker's use of present tense verbs presents an immediacy and importance to the reader. Present-tense verb usage, such as 'can be', 'is', 'resign', and 'gaze', bring the reader to the forefront of the moments in which Byron situates Harold. If the poet used past tense verbs, such as 'could', 'did', 'resigned', and 'gazed', the immediacy and importance of the words would be lost on the reader, who may merely gloss over them. Instead, by encountering the present tense, readers are forced to situate themselves with the poet-narrator.

At this point, Harold departs the 'scene alone where souls united | Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray', a place where 'The mind is coloured by thy every hue; | And if reluctantly the eyes resign' (CHP III ll. 565-66; 574-75). These lines are related to the idea that suffering can be a part of the Burkean Sublime. According to Robert Doran, 'Burke focuses only on the bare idea of mixed pleasure: the removal of pain produces an emotional aftereffect, the residue of an overexcited state, which, relieved of the external cause that prompted it, lingers on as a somewhat pleasurable sensation'.⁸¹ For Byron, it is one's suffering that can lead to awe and possible terror. For Burke, the sublime is a mixed state of pleasure and pain, so suffering must be overcome; thus, when Byron composes the third canto, he masks himself in the role of the poet-narrator so that the reader cannot determine whether it is his suffering that leads to the sublime, or if it is that of the poet-narrator. The latter will need to undergo a thorough and complete transformation, in which he will call himself into question before he acknowledges his metamorphosis through the aiding of nature. After all, it is the mixture of pleasure and pain that the poet-narrator experiences that will be described in the third canto, and through the description he will be able to overcome the pain.

⁸¹ Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime*, p. 150.

In this chapter, I will look at the influences of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge on Byron, and how ‘Tintern Abbey’, ‘Mont Blanc’, ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’, and ‘Hymn at Sun-rise’ all influence Byron’s development and composition of the third canto of *CHP*. ‘Tintern Abbey’ will come to represent the role of nature on the individual by demonstrating a way to recall memories of the past. Both Shelley and Coleridge celebrate Mont Blanc as either an entity within itself destined to represent ‘the shift from superstition to philosophy’ or, in Coleridge’s case, a sublime creation of God.⁸² Byron sees Mont Blanc as something to be praised and feared, and it is through his continual interaction with the mountain that he will come to understand it as a symbol of God’s glory. Thus, Byron seems to agree with Coleridge’s theological view of the mountain. By understanding Mont Blanc as something to be praised and feared, like God’s glory, Byron is able to engage with an object used to represent the sublime. This will become more evident in *CHP* IV, as discussed in Chapter Three, when the poet-narrator arrives at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. As I work through Byron’s relationship with each of the poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge, I will postulate how and why his interaction with the sublime is key to the canto and the poetry to come.

Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, and the Role of Nature

We know that Shelley ‘used to dose’ Byron with Wordsworth to the point of ‘nausea’ and, if we look closely, there are striking similarities between the latter two, for which we have Shelley to thank.⁸³ While Wordsworth celebrates Nature in (pan)theistic understanding, Shelley does so in an antagonistic way for what appears to be one of two reasons: either Shelley wants to find his own voice as a poet among nature, or he is blatantly rejecting Wordsworthian pantheism in ‘Alastor’ and ‘Mont Blanc’. One should ask: ‘Where does Byron fit in the sphere of influence?’ I would argue that, not wanting to ally himself with Wordsworth or Shelley, Byron chooses an approach where he celebrates nature without the

⁸² Cian Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 101.

⁸³ In his Byron Foundation Lecture, Jerome McGann notes that Byron said this to Thomas Medwin, p. 11, see Jerome McGann, ‘Byron and Wordsworth’ (The Byron Centre for the Study of Literature and Social Change: Byron Foundation Lecture: 27 May 1998) <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/crlc/researchgroups/byron/resources/foundation-lectures.aspx>

pantheism of Wordsworth or the anti-religious sentiments of Shelley. Byron is philosophically and poetically caught in the middle: he is influenced by Wordsworth and yet under the watchful and supervisory eyes of Shelley.

We see the Byronic idea of the ‘tortured soul’ appear in the opening stanzas of *CHP* III. For example,

In my youth’s summer I did sing of One,
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
[...] in that Tale I find

The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears (*CHP* III. 3)

Harold is the ‘wandering outlaw of his own dark mind’ where, despite his tortured consciousness, his forthcoming experiences will manifest into something greater in the coming years of exile. Yet, if we examine language, we can see a deliberate difference in the meaning of the pronouns. For example, Byron’s use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ allows the reader to become acquainted with the subject of the pronoun, as well as the subjectivity of the moment being related in the poem. On the other hand, when Byron writes of ‘his’, in reference to Harold, the objectivity provides a distancing between the reader and the subject of the objective pronoun. Though the pronoun shifts, demonstrating a move inwards, the rapid transition from ‘his’ to ‘I’ allows the reader to be brought into the poet-narrator’s world. By using the poet-narrator in *CHP* canto III, Byron prevents readers from coming too close to the ‘authentic Byron’; instead, the assertion of the poet-narrator’s selfhood is just another mask for Byron to utilise. It is almost as if the ‘gloomy consciousness’, which pervades *CHP* I and II, continues into III. However, by the end of the third canto, Byron begins to move away from the gloomy consciousness in favour of a cautious optimism when he arrives in Venice, but not before Manfred’s tormented self has suffered at the hands of his memory.

Byron continues to wrestle with the mind and heart’s internalised dialogue, as he writes:

Since my young days of passion—joy, or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,

And both may jar: it may be, that in vain
 I would essay as I have sung to sing.
 Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling,
 So that it wean me from the weary dream
 Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
 Forgetfulness around me— (CHP III. 4)

The conditionals, ‘may jar’ and ‘may be’, in the fourth stanza, help cement the idea that there are several tensions present early in the canto. In contrast with the idea that nature is Wordsworth’s anchor in ‘Tintern Abbey’, I would argue that the ‘this’ to which the poet-narrator clings is the hope that he will overcome his nihilistic tendencies. If nature contains a redemptive quality for Wordsworth, then for Byron it represents the nihilistic psychology of the poet-narrator as he is faced with the guilt and grief of past sins. Thus, there is the ‘artistic’ tension between poet and character, and a ‘personal’ tension between Byron the creator and the poet-narrator as created. These tensions will remain prevalent throughout the first half of the canto, until the poet-narrator reaches Lake Lemman and the Alps.

During the next several stanzas, Byron struggles with the alter ego of his mind—Harold—and the constant tugging of his consciousness. At times Byron feels that there is ‘too much of this’ and that his ‘breast which fain no more would feel, | [...] but ne’er heal’ (CHP III. 8). The ‘this’ that Byron refers to both in stanza 4 and stanza 8 is the pain present at the moment of the stanzas’ composition. What appears to be perpetually pessimistic eventually gives way to the glimmer of optimism, when he is ‘chasing Time, | Yet with a nobler aim than in his Youth’s fond prime’ (CHP III. 11). From here, Byron seems slowly to recognise that he is different from other men in that he questions himself, and in this questioning he hopes to come to terms with who he is as a person.

Vincent Newey and Jerome McGann have tackled head-on the reading of *CHP* as an ‘existential quest’. In his essay ‘Authoring the Self: *Childe Harold* III and IV’, Newey argues that ‘The “I”, the subject writing, is literally “nothing”: being and life are not so much something “given” as something “gained” through imagination, thought and acts of formulation’.⁸⁴ If Newey is correct in his assertion, then the poet-narrator oscillates between a nihilistic voiding of the self and pseudo-religious forms of self-abnegation. This

⁸⁴ Newey, ‘Authoring the Self’, p. 149.

vacillation presents readers with a tension throughout the canto, until he slides directly into nihilism. This is part of the quest because it will not be until the fourth canto that Byron, having finally shed his alter ego, has gained the necessary experiences to move beyond the despair of nihilism and into the awareness of a self-consciousness that leads one to belonging. He finally feels as if he belongs ‘somewhere’, and this somewhere is Italy.

In his lecture ‘Byron and Wordsworth’, McGann states that ‘the third canto of *Childe Harold* [...] is a Byronic and not a Shelleyan—and least of all a Wordsworthian—exercise’. He goes on to say that it is ‘a dream sequence’ of ‘immediate experience rather than a recollective construction’.⁸⁵ McGann thus argues that the whole third canto is a uniquely Byronic recollection of past experiences that are presented as a dream sequence, much in the same way that Wordsworth denotes in ‘Tintern Abbey’. This is a notion that goes against Newey and Rawes, who hold that the third canto can be seen as an ‘emotional and psychological’ journey that will portray ‘a process of rejuvenation, spiritual growth, or deepening despondency’.⁸⁶

To an extent, I disagree with McGann. On the one hand, the whole of *CHP* is a Byronic work unique, separate, and different from his poetic precursors, while on the other, there are Wordsworthian and Shelleyan echoes that are clearly evident and experimental in the third canto. It is a pivotal canto because it is placed at the centre of Byron’s poetic output, not to mention that it marks the middle of the turbulence of 1816, prior to the composition of *Manfred*.

In his monograph *Landscapes of the Sublime*, Cian Duffy holds that ‘the Alpine stanzas of *Childe Harold* III also deploy a poetics of ascent, blurring the distinction between an actual and an imagined Alpine itinerary’.⁸⁷ I would argue that this is something that can be attributed to the influence of Wordsworth and Shelley; Byron needs to be conscious of their influences because those influences will provide a point of departure, enabling the poet to move away from his fellow Romantics and to come into his own as a poet of the sublime. This transformation will occur, in part, only through the recognition of his nihilistic tendencies, which are evident during the thunderstorm scene; it is the poet-

⁸⁵ McGann, ‘Byron and Wordsworth’, p. 12.

⁸⁶ Rawes, *Byron’s Poetic Experimentation*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Cian Duffy, *Landscapes of the Sublime 1700-1830: Classic Ground* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 63-4.

narrator's feelings of insignificance that afford him the opportunity to open himself to the experience of the sublime.

Byron and Nature

In stanza 62, Byron writes:

Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow!
All which expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

(*CHP* III. 62)

It is during his first views of the Alps that Byron recognises their sheer immensity, especially when compared with Wordsworth's mountains of the Lake District. Here we see several related features: this is not just Byron's first sighting of the Alps but, more importantly, this is where we begin to see the influence of Shelley and the summer of 1816 on the third canto. For now, however, we 'see' the Alps for the first time through Byron's eyes, and what we see is an individual who is impressed with the grandeur in front of him, something he has never before seen but that he will come to appreciate over the course of the second half of the canto.

Beginning with stanza 72, Byron is clearly under Shelley's critical eye in what is arguably the most important shift in Byron's poetic *oeuvre*: the ability to sound and look like Wordsworth. For example, take the following stanzas:

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me,
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature,

[...]

And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life:
 I look upon the peopled desert past,
 As on a place of agony and strife,
 Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,
 To act and suffer, but remount at last

[...]

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
 From what it hates in this degraded form,
 Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
 Existent happier in the fly and worm,—

[...]

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
 Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
 Is not the love of these deep in my heart
 With a pure passion?

(*CHP* III. 72-5)

These four stanzas afford readers the opportunity to speculate and debate as to the level of Wordsworthian influence on Byron. However, before I compare Byron's lines with those of Wordsworth, I would like to analyse briefly these four stanzas. Taking these four stanzas together, we can clearly see that the personal pronoun 'I' is foregrounded. This brings the reader closer to the experience that the poet-narrator is trying to convey. For example, he states 'I live', 'I become', and 'I can see', and this living, becoming, and seeing that he speaks of personalises the moment and establishes an instance of intimacy between the individual and the experience. By doing so, the reader becomes a kind of voyeur, not in the negative sense but rather as one who is actively able to participate in the communion between the speaker and Nature.

In stanza 73, Byron's poet-narrator continues the use of 'I' by stating that 'I am absorbed' and 'I look upon'. Again, there is an immediacy to which he presents the moment to the reader, because the moment is fleeting and it may not return. Before the end of the stanza, the speaker says 'I was cast | To act and suffer'. This is significant because it illustrates the transformation of past to present. 'Was' denotes the past, but readers are able

to understand the poet-narrator's 'remount at last', which shows that he has moved beyond himself and becomes an integral part of the natural world.

I believe that this is the subtle turning point in Byron's development and understanding of the sublime, because the poet-narrator is no longer separated from nature, but has become a part of it. Once this happens, it gives him the ability to become more open to the natural world and what it has to offer. Thus, the seed of the sublime has been planted into the (sub)consciousness of the poet-narrator; it will quickly germinate and take hold in his mind as he approaches the thunderstorm scene. However, before we can move forward, we must continue with an analysis of stanzas 74-75.

In these stanzas, Byron's poet-narrator has stopped using the 'I' pronoun in favour of more abstract nouns. Instead, he speaks in more broad, loosely philosophical ways. An example would be when he states that 'the Mind shall be free | From what it hates in this degraded form'. The moment that the poet-narrator is open to the idea of becoming a part of the natural world, there appears to be a 'release' of the subjective-individualised self and an infusion of the individual as an objective part of nature:

Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part
Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion?

I would argue that the ideas expressed in these lines are similar to the pantheistic ideas developed by Wordsworth in 'Tintern Abbey', and would argue further that this is where readers see a Byronic pantheism develop, which, according to Rawes, is 'the longed for feeling of inclusion of integration. [...] It is a feeling that seems to lie beyond the reach of speech'.⁸⁸ The individual exists both physically and consciously in the given location. For Wordsworth, this was clearly evident in 'Tintern Abbey', and for Byron it is evident, although perhaps not as clearly as Wordsworth, in his becoming a 'Portion of that around me' where 'the hum | Of human cities—torture—I can see | Nothing to loath in Nature'. Byron continues by being

absorbed, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desert part,

⁸⁸ Rawes, *Byron's Poetic Experimentation*, p. 71.

As on a place of agony and strife,
 Where, for some sin, to sorrow I was cast,
 To act and suffer

These lines echo the Wordsworthian influence, and are *not* Byronic plagiarisms. For example, looking back at 'Tintern Abbey', readers see

Though absent long,
 These forms of beauty have not been to me
 As in a landscape to a blind man's eye;
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
 And passing even into my purer mind
 With tranquil restoration⁸⁹

Wordsworth, already having become familiar with the power of the natural world, sees the time spent in nature as a release from the stresses of urban life, as well as the failings of the French Revolution. Nature has the power to restore the soul after such tumultuousness. Byron, too, learnt the effects of time spent out-of-doors, except nature helps alleviate the pains of a guilty conscience. For Byron, nature soothes the demons of the inner self, whereas for Wordsworth, the simplicity provides solace from events that are beyond one's control, namely support for a nation and a cause that placed him at odds with his country, as well as the fathering of an illegitimate daughter and his abandonment of the mother. Wordsworth becomes philosophical, while Byron understands the relationship between both the natural and human worlds as immediate and somewhat practical. For example, Wordsworth writes

In body, and becoming a living soul,
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things⁹⁰

⁸⁹ William Wordsworth, 'Tintern Abbey' in *William Wordsworth: The Oxford Authors*, ed. Stephen Gill (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), ll. 23-31, p. 132.

Now compare with Byron's lines:

And when, at length, the Mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm

Once Byron 'can see | Nothing to loathe in Nature', he becomes 'absorbed' by nature. Yet, there is anguish in the lines 'the Mind shall be all free | From what it hates', and this agony is the pain of leaving Ada. He realises that the pains and sufferings are the penance for past offences. Once Byron comes to terms with himself and 'lets go', he is able to accept the past. When he writes, 'And when, at length, the Mind shall be all free [...] Of me and of my Soul', the individuality of the previous two stanzas is lost and readers see the Wordsworthian influence. I believe that the above passage indicates one of two things: firstly, it could be that Byron emulates Wordsworth's guilt of abandonment, undergoing a similar personal transformation of his own. For Wordsworth, nature affords the Mind a sense of continuity from past to present to the future. Byron, on the other hand, merely wants to lose himself in nature so that he can be relieved of guilt and the burden of self-consciousness. Secondly, it could be a momentary engagement with the sublime in the line 'the Mind shall be all free'. Questions are raised, such as: 'From what?' or 'From whom shall the Mind be all free?' It is perhaps the guilty conscience that both Byron and Wordsworth want to escape, or it could be seen as the Mind's freedom to engage with the sublime.

If, however, the appreciation of nature is about to give way to Byron's experience, contemplation, and understanding of the sublime in Nature, then pantheistic 'teasing' shifts both the speaker and the reader back towards an observational mode when he stands on the shores of Lake Lemman, dwarfed by the pinnacles of the Alps:

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer Spring. (CHP III. 85)

⁹⁰ Wordsworth, 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 47-50, pp. 132-3.

It is the stillness of a mirror-like Leman that reflects the sheer immensity of the Alps, causing him to feel insignificant partly because he is about to undergo a transformation and partly because he stands in awe of the sublime mountains that look down upon his seemingly (in)significant being.

‘Thy soft murmuring’ of Leman’s waters gently eases his excited apprehensions, to the point where we find Byron’s moment of triumphal bliss in the form of tranquillity:

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
[...]
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: from the high host
Of stars, to the lull’d lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentrated in a life intense (CHP III. 89)

These lines demonstrate the tranquillity of nature, and stanza 90 illustrates the infusion into Byron’s mind. And just as the peaceful serenity has allowed Byron to calm himself:

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm. (CHP III. 90)

Here, on the shores of Lake Leman, we see Byron beginning to understand Wordsworth’s ideas of Nature. It is ‘In solitude’ that Byron feels ‘*least* alone’; there is a recognition of truth in nature as well as a purification of self. The ‘tone’, or ‘source of music’, that Byron speaks of is, I would argue, the harmony felt between the individual and the natural. Michael Cooke contends that ‘Byron and Wordsworth differ in their assertions of nature. Wordsworth tries to understand nature by becoming part of it; Byron merely “experiments” with it’.⁹¹ Through Byron’s ‘experiments’, we observe a reflection of the solitude back towards the stillness and silence of Leman, which ‘purifies’ the self and ‘makes known | Eternal harmony’, the harmoniousness of the moment, which pacifies consciousness into a

⁹¹ Michael G. Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle: On the Patterns and Philosophy of Byron’s Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 47.

relaxed and tranquil state. However, for Cooke, Byron's 'experiments' are largely seen as negative, because he either 'plays' or 'toys' with nature-worship and does not take the experience of nature seriously, especially when compared with Wordsworth who, as Cooke claims, sees nature as 'purposive and educating...to reveal the intrinsically spiritual quality of the universe'.⁹²

Byron does not 'experiment' with nature, as Cooke claims, but, rather, he observes and records his experiences. Upon a close reading of both poems, one will find striking similarities. For example, Shelley's lines 'Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame | Of lightning through the tempest' strongly echo Byron's 'Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! | ye! | [...] But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal?'⁹³ Here, the poets acknowledge the thunderstorms before them, choosing to focus on both the tempestuousness of the storm as well as the lightning that fascinates their imaginations. Not to be overlooked therefore is Shelley's influence on Byron. Of the former's 'major' 1816 poems, 'Alastor', 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', and 'Mont Blanc', it is the latter that reads most like the Alpine stanzas. 'Alastor' was written at the end of 1815 and prior to Byron and Shelley's meeting in Switzerland. The 'Hymn' is the first poem that would have been written under the helpful and supportive eye of Byron. Composition began on 22 June 1816, after the two had met, and contains what I call 'Shelleyan mysticism', in which the speaker invokes his youth as a kind of reflective exercise in self-discovery. Finally, 'Mont Blanc' is most like *CHP* III in that there is the physical description of an actual rather than imagined place. It is also a play on the imagination in nature, quite similar to *CHP* III stanzas 96-7.

Next, Shelley and Byron chose to focus on the topographical element: Consider Shelley's lines:

Dizzy ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trace sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively

⁹² Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, p. 48.

⁹³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Mont Blanc' in *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 121; Byron *CHP* III ll. 1, 6.

Now renders and receives fast influencings,
 Holding an unremitting interchange (‘Mont Blanc’ 34-9)

Now compare with Byron’s *CHP* III, stanza 62:

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
 The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
 Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
 And throned Eternity in icy halls
 Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
 The avalanche—the thunderbolts of snow!
 All that expands the spirit (CHP III. 62)

Shelley’s lines infuse both a topographical description and an allusion to the sublime and its workings on the mind. The ‘unremitting interchange’ can be seen, specifically, as the mind’s ability to not just interpret what it perceives, but looks to manifest the perceptions into ‘something more’ in the imagination. According to Duffy,

This apostrophe is not a Wordsworthian moment, not an instance of the egotistical sublime in which the mind redresses the anxiety of its defeat by re-Imagining the agency of that defeat in its own image. [...] There is a clear empirical dichotomy between the ‘mind’ and the ‘universe of things’; the mind’s conscious experience of the universe is an ‘unremitting interchange’, partly passive (sensation) and partly active (reflection).⁹⁴

‘Mont Blanc’ lines 34-39 reveal the moment when Shelley rejects Wordsworthian poetics in favour of the former’s own empirical philosophical leanings. Beneath the description of Mont Blanc as a topo-geographical entity is where Shelley seizes the opportunity to shift the interpretation from what the mountain represents in order to facilitate better his own sceptical thoughts that are both ‘sublime and strange’. Shelley’s mind ‘passively’ ‘renders’ to the moment that is captured in verse, and the result is that this ‘unremitting interchange’ is the interplay between the mind and the imagination, and one that is an expansion of Shelley’s interpretation of Platonic idealism, coupled with his understanding of ‘Rational

⁹⁴ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 115.

metaphysics'.⁹⁵

Byron, on the other hand, chooses to focus on his physical placement in the topographical setting in *CHP* canto III, stanza 75:

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

(*CHP* III. 75)

As he enters the alpine world for the first time, he must first come to terms with what must have been an unsettling and foreign feeling. As a result, he must gather his bearings before any deeper, more meaningful philosophical discussion or analysis can take place. It is the poet-narrator who will engage the natural world as a way to assuage the pains of guilt, but also revel in the shadows of Mont Blanc as he comes to understand the sublime. Therefore, the poet-narrator will take everything that he has learned from Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge, and fashion his own understanding of the natural world and how it connects with the sublime.

If we turn to lines 60-61 in 'Mont Blanc', 'Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky, | Mont Blanc appears, still, snowy, and serene', we can again compare Shelley's work with Byron's lines in stanza 62: 'Gather around these summits, as to show | How earth may pierce to heaven, yet leave vain man below' (8-9). It is quite evident that both poets have fallen under the other's influence in terms of the language used to convey descriptions. What is patently different is how Shelley chooses to concentrate on Mont Blanc as a symbol of the human mind as opposed to an expression of the divine, as we see in Coleridge. The question of human doubt is illustrative of Shelley's continuous curiosity

⁹⁵ Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 203.

that affords him the opportunities to reject the Wordsworthian influences and embark on his own notions of philosophy. For example, we see that ‘Far from a lament of past intensity, Shelley “celebrates” precisely the *change* in his relationship to the natural world: the shift from superstition to philosophy, the “cultivation” of the imagination or acquisition of “intellectual beauty”’.⁹⁶

Another Shelleyan poem that influences the latter stanzas of *CHP* is ‘Hymn on Intellectual Beauty’, which was composed during the summer of 1816 when the Shelleys and Byron were staying at Lake Geneva. While I choose not to elaborate on the platonic elements of the ‘Hymn’, I will, however, look to its influence on Byron. Cian Duffy holds that ‘The experience of “intellectual beauty” is the apprehension of the “truth of nature”’.⁹⁷ It was this apprehension of the truth of nature, that it is an ‘awful Power’ and the ‘Shadow of Beauty’ ‘from some sublime world’, to which Shelley refers. I believe that Shelley’s atheism has something to do with the impressions of images into the mind and that he demonstrates his understanding of David Hume’s scepticism. Duffy points out that ‘Hume—as we have seen—claims that the mind does not perceive phenomenal reality itself, but only *impressions* of that reality derived from the senses’.⁹⁸ By alluding to Hume’s scepticism, Shelley is able to:

focus on the mind’s reaction to the overwhelming sensory input from the ‘universe of things’ in the encounter with the natural sublime. [...] Shelley outlines the mind’s attempts to come to terms with the ‘awful scene’ by finding internal ideas appropriate to the overwhelming external influence.⁹⁹

Like Shelley, Byron engages with Humean scepticism as a way to tease out the notion that the Alps—and nature—are not necessarily modes of pantheistic expression, or symbolic of the human mind, but are emblematic of the solitude that the individual faces in the world. Just as each mountain stands apart from other peaks, Byron’s poet-narrator rises above the guilt that has tormented him for so long that he may gain an inner strength from it as he proceeds towards the discovery of the sublime. This will suit him well as he progresses

⁹⁶ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, pp. 104-105.

⁹⁷ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 101.

⁹⁸ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 65.

⁹⁹ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 116.

through the third canto.

Another (in)direct influence on the Alpine stanzas is Samuel Taylor Coleridge. During the summer of 1802, Coleridge had visited Chamonix, France, and the result was ‘Hymn: The Hour Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni’, which was published in *The Morning Post* on 11 September 1802. The poem is not entirely Coleridge’s own creation, but is rather an ‘expanded translation of Friederika Brun’s ‘Chamouni beym Sonnenaufgange’ that was published in 1795.¹⁰⁰ In Coleridge’s version, the poem is divided into four verse-paragraphs of the Wordsworthian style and celebrates the natural world of the French Alps through the glorification of God. I would contend that God’s ‘glory’, for Byron, is most clearly found in the man-made edifices of temples to God that existed in 1817 in Rome.

At the beginning of the second verse paragraph, Coleridge states:

Hand and voice,
Awake, awake! And thou, my heart, awake!
Awake, ye rocks! Ye forest pines, awake!
Green fields and icy cliffs, all join my hymn!¹⁰¹

The repetition of ‘awake’ and usage of commas immediately reminds one of the hyperbaton exhibited in *CHP* III, stanza 92, where Byron calls upon the elements of the natural world to aid in bringing forth the sublimity of the environment:

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light,
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,

¹⁰⁰ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 111.

¹⁰¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Hymn: Before Sun-Rise, in the Vale of Chamoni’ in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems*, ed. William Keach (New York: Penguin, 1997), pp. 323-5 (p. 324).

Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

(*CHP* III. 92)

If Coleridge's 'Hymn' is a celebration of the religious, then there is an infusion of piousness in the speaker's harkening of 'Awake'. It is almost as if the speaker is fervently calling for readers to 'awake' at the glories of God that are the Alps. And, of course, Mont Blanc, as seen from Chamonix, represents the epitome of the glory. While Byron, on the other hand, neglects to mention the glory of God, or sing His praises, he does sing of the personal excitement that comes with witnessing the magnificence of the power of nature. This marks a turning point in Byron's poetry, because it is here that he begins to transform the personal element of the poetry into something beyond itself—an opening towards the sublime.

In the final comparison between Coleridge and Byron, we look to the last two verse-paragraphs of the 'Hymn'. It is here that Coleridge calls upon the nature of the Chamonix valley to sing their praises of God, because it is He who has created their universe. For example:

Who made you glorious as the gates of heav'n
 [...]
 'God, God!' the torrents, like a shout of nations,
 Utter. The ice-plain bursts, and answers 'God!'
 'God!' sing the meadow-streams with gladsome voice,
 And pine-groves, with their soft and soul-like sound!
 [...]
 Utter forth 'God!' and fill the hills with praise!
 [...]
 Great hierarch, tell thou the silent sky,
 And tell the stars, and tell the rising sun,
 Earth with her thousand voices calls on God!

(ll. 52, 56-60, 66, 76-8)

In these lines, Coleridge's exclamations celebrate the glory of God. He praises God's plenteousness while, at the same time, he is so energised by his encounter with nature that he experiences an ecstatic exhilaration. For Coleridge, *ekstasis* brings one out of himself in

a moment of attaining the sublime. While it is Coleridge who knows himself and can afford a poem that rejoices in the glory of God, it is Byron who, despite being beset with his own inner demons and in the midst of the biggest personal crisis of his life, is able to compose lines like these that praise God's glory. As a result, he must stop and take stock of who he is while in the middle of the Alpine world. Some may find the natural world daunting, and Byron *might* have, yet we know that at the very least, he was open and receptive to it.

I would argue that the influence of Coleridge cannot be overlooked. Duffy mentions that even though 'there is no direct evidence that Shelley read the *Hymn* it has been suggested that he had access to an edition of *The Friend* while in Switzerland in 1816'.¹⁰² Duffy is acutely aware that 'Mont Blanc' echoes elements of the *Hymn* but he stops short of noting that there lies the possibility of a(n) (in)direct influence on Byron as well. I would contend that Byron's understanding of nature goes beyond influence, in that his journey was both an 'escape', as Alan Rawes points out, and a quest. Rawes is correct in his assertion that Byron was escaping from the rumours of his incestuous relationship with Augusta and the gossip of London society. Upon leaving England in April 1816, Byron was set upon the flight from those who know him and his supposed antics. He was not merely going on a second Grand Tour, but was going to travel through the Continent, visiting places and people who did not know him, where he would be able to adapt to his surroundings with little difficulty. Whether he realised it or not, Byron was literally escaping his past, and he was also on a quest to find himself amongst the 'ruins of paradise'. He not only 'escapes', as Rawes asserts, but embarked on a quest to discover himself. The movement of escape within a quest is dualistic in its actions, as it is both regressive and progressive. The regressive aspect lies in the desire for and eventual act of escape, whereas the progressive element is the yearning to go forward with the journey. The first two cantos provide the preparations for the self-imposed exile, giving Byron a 'sampling' of what to expect on his journeys.

Byron, the Alps, and the Sublime

In recent years, several Byron scholars, such as Rawes, Shaw, Paul Douglass, and Peter Cochran, have examined the extent of Wordsworth's influence on *CHP* III. While Rawes

¹⁰² Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 111.

holds that ‘the canto offers, as its ideal, an image of Wordsworthian communion with nature’, Shaw believes that ‘neither the realms of nature or of pure thought provide sufficient stability for the inquiring mind’. Douglass asserts that ‘The verbatim echo of Wordsworth’s “Intimations of Immortality” ode starkly illustrates Byron’s debt—or at least his close attention to Wordsworth’s exploration of nature as an experience’.¹⁰³ If we look once again to ‘Tintern Abbey’, we see:

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth (ll.105-08)

Compare these lines with Byron’s ‘Alpine Journal’ entry of 28 September, 1816: ‘I was disposed to be pleased—I am a lover of Nature—and an Admirer of Beauty’.¹⁰⁴ There is a direct allusion to Wordsworth, which suggests Shaw is correct in interpreting from this a kind of instability (perhaps even an insecurity), wherein Byron deems it necessary to rely heavily on Wordsworth for guidance. One must ask: ‘Is this reference to Wordsworth conscious or unconscious?’ If the reference is a conscious one, then perhaps Byron is not ready to publicly admit to Wordsworth’s influence. After all, the *Alpine Journal* was addressed to Augusta and meant for her eyes only, and not the eyes of the public. Or, if the reference is unconscious, then we can safely assume that Shelley’s dosing of Wordsworth during that fateful and most creative of summers goes well-beyond anything that we have recognised or are willing to acknowledge. Nevertheless, what remains is and will continue to be open to debate and interpretation.

The ‘middle third’ of the third canto (stanzas 92-101) exhibits the beginnings of Byron ‘finding himself’ through his own experiences of the sublime. It is specifically in these stanzas that Byron is not, by any stretch of the imagination, ready to accept Wordsworth’s philosophy, but instead demonstrates a willingness to see what the natural

¹⁰³ Alan Rawes, Philip Shaw, and Paul Douglass all provide distinct, yet relatable perspectives on the poetic relationship between Byron and Wordsworth. See: Alan Rawes, ‘1816-17: *Childe Harold* III and *Manfred*’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 118-32; Philip Shaw, ‘Wordsworth or Byron?’, *The Byron Journal*, 30.1 (2002), 38-50; Paul Douglass, ‘Paradise Decomposed: Byron’s Decadence and Wordsworthian Nature in “Childe Harold” III and IV’, *The Byron Journal*, 34.1 (2006), 9-17.

¹⁰⁴ Byron, ‘Alpine Journal’, ed. Peter Cochran.

<<http://www.newsteadabbeybyronsociety.org/works/downloads/alpine.pdf>>

world has to offer. I do not believe that Byron is so concerned with emulating Wordsworth, but rather I see the Alpine stanzas as representative of Byron's willingness to allow the natural world to soothe the personal demons of his soul. This leads to the first step in his transcendence in the Alps.

Byron sees that Wordsworth takes a more serious and philosophical perspective with regards to the role of nature: 'Nature, for Wordsworth, is not an "object" but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit, not something to be worshipped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself'.¹⁰⁵ The power of Nature's vastness takes hold of Byron, and he realises that Nature does not leave one alone. Rather, its silence causes the individual to contemplate and recognise that he is a part of something greater than himself, something so inclusive that he cannot possibly feel alone. The purification from the self is precisely that recognition.

The impression that the Alps leave upon Byron's imagination press themselves into his mind; for example:

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light,
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,

Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud! (*CHP* III. 92)

Geo-physically, he is underneath the Alps, an inferior placement in the hierarchy of the natural world. While the apexes are shrouded in the clouds and in 'mystery' of the natural world, the 'icy halls | Of cold sublimity' excite a kind of terrific notion about the forces of nature, like avalanches and the antagonism of Earth piercing the Heavens. A kind of 'awe-inspiring' moment occurs when Byron is confronted with the immensity of the Alps. Part of the power of the sublime is the moment when Byron absorbs the moment before him.

¹⁰⁵ Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way', in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 287-304 (p. 288).

This may include when the natural world is calm, silent, and at peace. This often brief moment can occur at any given time in the natural world, thereby aiding the recipient in his attainment of the sublime. When he apprehends the moments of awe in the mountains, there are feelings of excitement because he has never experienced anything like the sublime—or his version of the sublime—before.

It is not just the ‘Sky’ that has ‘changed’, as the repetition of ‘change’ in stanza 92 indicates Byron’s conscious change in attitude towards his final departure from England, which contained bittersweet feelings towards the new life of self-imposed exile, all of which is precipitated by Nature. Once again, returning to the Longinian sublime, ‘The combination of several figures often has an exceptionally powerful effect, when two or three combined cooperate, as it were, to contribute force, conviction, beauty’.¹⁰⁶ Taken separately, the figures within the Alps, like the changed Sky or the ‘night | And storm, and darkness’ that are ‘lovely in your strength’ would be just that: figures. However, when Byron puts together the ‘alpine scene amidst the thunderstorm’, readers begin to visualise how he can piece together the mountains, forest, thunder, and lightening in order to create, express, and relate a brief moment in time that ‘stands still’, is timeless, and captures the essence of the sublime.

Byron, for all intents and purposes, never ventured into the ‘wilds’ of nature in the way, say, which Wordsworth had. This new, first-hand experience of a life-changing encounter is another juxtaposition of Byron’s ‘inner-selves’. When he sees the Alps for the first time, he can do nothing but stand in suspended silence at their grandeur. It is this ‘awe’ that allows the beginnings of the sublime to make its presence known. Here, one can apply Burkean notions of the sublime to support this notion: ‘society gives...us no positive pleasure in the enjoyment; but absolute and entire *solitude* is as great a positive pain as can almost be conceived’.¹⁰⁷

Byron experiences the sublime and tries to apprehend and comprehend it, and it is precisely in this ‘understanding’ that he enters into the stanzas, and having never experienced it before, he is genuinely excited. According to Philip Shaw, ‘Sublimity, then, refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, to express a thought or

¹⁰⁶ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry*, p. 90.

sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for what lies beyond thought and language'.¹⁰⁸ The terror that is connected to the sublime is one that will elevate Byron beyond the urban environment, and it will be found in the use of language to convey the sublime moment. He is not speaking in the 'elevated language' that would constitute the sublime, but one of a more pantheistic nature where, metaphorically speaking, he is elevated above humanity and is connected to the unity of the universe through the visage of the Alps.

After his initial 'daze' at encountering the sublime, Byron will be jostled into trying to comprehend the physical enormity of the mountains because they are tangible, whereas the sublime is abstract and, arguably, unfathomable. While this struggle of comprehension occurs, he juxtaposes the impressive mountains' natural world to that of the inconsequential human world. He is joined with the animate and inanimate objects by his 'fleshy chain' that causes him to 'mingle— and not in vain'. He needs the chaos of the cities in order to provide for and nourish his unsettled and cosmopolitan mind. The end result is a poem that synthesises a myriad of poetic formulations that can be seen as chaotic, both poetically and naturally.

The excitement of this chaos is one of which Byron longs to see more:

And this is in the night:—Most glorious night!

Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be

A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—

A portion of the tempest and of thee! (CHP III. 93)

He is thrilled to witness more of the rawness of nature. There is a beautiful chaos that encircles him, and it can be argued that this chaos is emblematic of his life up to this point. Byron, being led into the darkness of the night, has yet to recognise and reconcile his ignorance with what nature offers the self and the soul. The natural world surrounds Byron; it engulfs him to the point where his curiosity fosters the germination of the inquisitiveness that sets him forth on his quest for growth and self-understanding. No doubt, this is what he is going to wrestle with in the coming months and years.

¹⁰⁸ Shaw, *The Sublime*, p. 3.

The ‘storm’ that Byron has described is merely a prelude to what he is going to depict. It is in the vicinity of Lake Lemman and in the shadows of the Alps that he stands amidst a terrible thunderstorm:

The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:

For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath fork'd
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation work'd,

There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurked. (CHP III. 95)

Here the storm builds over and around him and, as such, it begins to surround him. The multiple storms combine into one immense storm that has yet to reach its climax. All of the variables are coming together, building towards the culmination of chaos, which reaches its peak in the next stanza:

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.

(CHP III. 96)

Again, according to Shaw, ‘For the sublime to arise, and for it to be sustained, speech must appear natural and unmotivated’.¹⁰⁹ Here, Byron presents us with a brief moment of the Longinian sublime: the dashes in the first line indicate an unsustained fragmentation of entities that bring Byron to the sublime, and the fragmentation of omitted conjunctions bring about a sublime moment through the pauses that the dashes create when reading. And while the two notions seem to contradict one another, they are an example of Longinus’s use of ‘asyndeton’ which will, ultimately, add a kind of internal emphasis on the immediacy of the passage.

¹⁰⁹ Shaw, *The Sublime*, p. 26.

Byron is ‘teased’ by nature, as although this moment brings him to the forefront of the sublime, he cannot escape the splendour and magnificence of it, and so composes disjointed words that exhibit his inability to convey his thoughts and feelings. It is this transcendence of understanding that allows him to begin to see himself as possibly something more than insignificant in the natural world, as well as the first step on a religious journey. It is with the help of the natural world that Byron is able to enter the world of transcendence.

Robert Doran synthesises a Kantian inflection: ‘The concept of absolute elevation—superelevation—thus suggests a mixture of the theological and the rational: the sublime retains the same structure as properly religious experience insofar as both are a matter of the absolute’.¹¹⁰ Shaw’s analysis of the Kantian sublime is one that uniquely fits with Byron’s Alpine experience. Through transcendence, the individual sees nature in a seductive and alluring fashion because it masks his insecurities of self; thus, the poem, through its description and use of nature, provides the basis for a quest of the internalisation of Byron’s discoveries of the sublime.

It is the flashing of lightning and the crashing of thunder, coupled with the immensity of the Alps and the ideas of Wordsworth’s nature, that are the catalysts for Byron’s reflective thinking. However, what Byron arrives at is merely the transcendence of location in ‘Tintern Abbey’. Wordsworth’s transcendentalism was one that was learned, contemplated, and reflected upon over many years. While Wordsworth literally looks down on the seemingly finite River Wye valley in philosophical contemplation, it is Byron who looks up towards the vast openness of the mountains and beyond into the night sky. One could argue that Wordsworth bows in reverence to a nature that is formed and bounded, whereas Byron gazes up in child-like wonder and amazement at the formless and unbounded. Since the difference between Byron’s transcendence and Wordsworth’s transcendentalism lies within the parameters of contemplative reflection, Byron could not achieve the same level of self-understanding as Wordsworth. However, by the end of the third canto, he is at least moving towards an alternative level of self-knowledge that eschews Wordsworth’s pantheistic humanism for (quasi-)religious transcendence.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime*, p. 226.

¹¹¹ It should be noted that in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (1805), Book 6 (‘Cambridge and the Alps’) and Book 13 (‘Conclusion’) contain passages where Wordsworth illustrates his interest in mountain climbing and mountain gazing.

Once Byron's mind has been elevated, giving rise to the sublime, it is far superior to that of the degraded form of an inferior carnal life. He is able to detach himself from the chaos that is evident in the cities, and progress towards the simplicity of the natural world. Once Byron accomplishes this, he has achieved a provisional infusion with the sublimity of pantheism. Once imparted with the sublime, Byron's passion, caused by the sublime itself, gives rise to astonishment. It is in the soul that astonishment affects the sublime in its highest degree. Fear is the culmination of an apprehension of pain and death. Here, it should be noted that the etymology of astonishment stems from the Latin verb *attonitus*, meaning 'thunder-struck', and has been translated further as *étonnement* in French.

If one examines 'astonishment' more closely, then one can quite easily imagine the basis for the Latinate among the peaks of the Alps. Also, while Byron is 'thunder-struck' in the Alps, he 'heard an Avalanche fall, like thunder; saw Glacier-enormous. Storm came on, thunder, lightning, hail; all in perfection, and beautiful'.¹¹² During this storm, he temporarily experiences the sublime. The natural world has the ability to absolve one's misgivings, and provide a respite from the tempestuousness of the artificial world. To reiterate, for Shaw, the sublime:

describes a state of mind. [...] It marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what may lie beyond these limits. [...] Sublimity, then, refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this defeat, the mind gets a feeling for what lies beyond thought and language.¹¹³

There is no doubt that Byron has experienced the sublime in the Alpine stanzas, through the role of hyperbaton and asyndeton. In fact, he tries to understand and make sense of it, and as a result, his composition illustrates the struggles of comprehension and excitement. Having never experienced anything like it before, Byron is drawn into a deeper appreciation for nature. It is language that brings the poet, or the individual, to the sublime.

The Alpine stanzas mark, for the first time, the instance when and where Byron synthesises the culmination of elements of Longinian and Burkean versions of the sublime, coupled with the grounding in language. If we look back at the third canto of *CHP*, we see a

¹¹² *BLJ* 3: 225.

¹¹³ Shaw, *The Sublime*, p. 3.

dramatic shift away from the philosophical and theoretical analysis of nature. It is language that ‘speaks’ to both the poet and the reader, and through the act of speaking, the poet, using language as a ‘vehicle’, brings the experience to the reader so that he or she may participate in the experience. The end result, as we have seen, is Byron’s departure from Wordsworth and Shelley.

If stanza 96 illustrates exclamations of ‘Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings!’ under the blanket of ‘night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul / To make these felt and feeling’, then, in stanza 97, to the poet-narrator states:

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me, —could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.¹¹⁴

(*CHP* III. 97)

The openness that Byron presents is one that is embraced and then discarded because now, after having undergone the sublime experience of the thunderstorm, he inflicts ‘thoughts upon Expression’. These are the thoughts that express themselves in the ‘Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak’ and have been sought, and which move Byron away from Wordsworth and Shelley. For example, if we look back at the thunderstorm stanzas of *CHP* III, we find the speaker in such a terrified state of mind that he becomes enlivened and can hardly contain his excitement. While I have argued that stanzas 92-7 illustrate Longinian hyperbaton, they also display specific moments in time when it is the storm itself that invades the psyche of the speaker. This can be seen in: ‘let me be | A sharer in thy fierce and far delight- | A portion of the tempest and of thee!’

¹¹⁴ In ‘A Defence of Poetry’, Shelley states that ‘Poetry is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it’ (Shelley, *The Major Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 685).

Wordsworth, as we have seen, chooses to celebrate nature as an entity in itself. In Wordsworth's case, nature affords a respite from the tempestuousness of the present by holding memories of the past. The role of nature is to offer the individual a location where he or she will be able to recall memories and forget the pains of the present. For Shelley, who rejects nature's role as healer, nature is seen as a celebration of 'the broader political potency of "intellectual beauty"'.¹¹⁵ Contrary to Wordsworth and Shelley, it is as if Byron takes his understanding of the role of nature in a different way. For example, while Wordsworth looks to nature to ease the pains of the past and Shelley rejects Wordsworthian roles of nature in favour of something more sceptical, it is Byron's poet-narrator who both celebrates nature's ability to lessen the pains of past sins, but also sees it as something that is emblematic of God's glory, whilst remaining sceptical so that he can stay open to all possibilities of nature's role. For the poet-narrator, there is an active encounter with nature that praises the juxtaposition of the human and natural worlds by interpreting and understanding the language of nature for the reader.

The inner-struggle towards self-insight can be illustrated by closely examining the disjointedness of the middle half of the stanza:

My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak; (CHP III. 97)

His thoughts are based upon 'Expressions', not sensory experiences, and 'throw', rather violently, the four components that constitute the self into that '*one* Word'. Here, we see a deliberateness that cannot and should not be overlooked: the 'Soul' continues to exist after the temporal parts cease to function. Its immortality supersedes the 'heart', which feels, while the 'mind' tries to rationalise the 'passions' that, in turn, stem from 'feelings' either 'strong or weak'.

The mental struggle continues into line 5, where there is a slight, peaceful recognition which Byron wants to find and will be known, felt, and breathed into that 'one word':

¹¹⁵ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 105.

‘Lightning’. Byron fully intends to utilise the actual lightning with the enlightenment that he seeks to find. Yet despite his love of nature, Byron is too cosmopolitan and cannot bring himself to break away from the city in favour of the natural world. He is genuinely torn between following the ‘idealistic’ and metaphysical Wordsworth and Shelley into and through the mountains. He knows full well that the enlightenment will not happen in nature, as Wordsworth and Shelley profess, but instead chooses to descend from the peaks and, within a couple of weeks, he is in the depths of the gluttonous and uninhibited Venice.

The perceived ‘inner-turmoil’ of the soul is nothing more than the inevitable tension between its desire to dwell within language and continue on the quest. For the soul and the poet both realise that in order to complete the quest, there will be moments of inexplicable torment that will only be understood by and through the use of language. It is in language that both the quest and dwelling take place, and one could argue that it is the tension between kinesis and stasis that leads, in part, to the agonised sense of the poet’s self.

Byron, *CHP III*, and Religion

In the final segment, Byron’s theme is one that turns to the ultimate appeal towards God, before the dramatic ‘fall’ of Manfred. What subsequently emerges is a stanza that seems to point at Byron’s inclination to move away from Harold finally and towards Manfred, where:

He who hath loved not, here would learn that lore,
And make his heart a spirit; he who knows
That tender mystery, will love the more,
For this is Love’s recess, where vain men’s woes,
And the world’s waste, have driven him far from those,
For ‘tis his nature to advance or die;
He stands not still, but or decays, or grows
Into a boundless blessing, which may vie

With the immortal lights, in its eternity! (*CHP III*. 103)

It appears that Byron gives readers a stanza in which Harold, who has spent the summer months among the craggy outcrops of the Alps, is slowly being transformed by the mountains, from the ‘naïve Harold’ to the ‘dejected Manfred’. The shift from the softened tone of a God who is made available for His believers to one where the speaker has ‘loved

not' and made 'his heart a Spirit' 'where vain men's woes' 'He stands not still' demonstrates an uneasiness with which Harold sees the world, which causes his ultimate move from God to the nameless spirit of self.

Again, the poet-narrator looks towards the heavens for an answer: 'The clouds above me to the white Alps tend, | And I must pierce them' (*CHP* III. 109). Despite his idealised notions of joining the natural world, Byron, through Harold, must know that all hope is in vain, because immediately in the following stanza he says, 'Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee, | Full flashes on the soul the light of ages' (*CHP* III. 110). Byron looks beyond the Alps, possibly recognising that they do not hold the answer for which he is searching. He must wrestle with the possibility that God has abandoned him in his time of need: 'I stood and stand alone—remembered or forgot. | I have not loved the world, nor the world me' (*CHP* III. 112-113). The buttressing of these two lines together illustrates Harold saying his final 'goodbye' to the reader, in what can be argued are his last words before departing this world for the next. Then, as if trying to prolong his suffering, or his farewell, Harold continues:

I have not loved the world, nor the world me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful. (*CHP* III. 114)

These few lines represent, in my opinion, Harold's mindset as he is transformed into Manfred. One can imagine that these could very well be the same lines that Manfred will mutter before attempting suicide. One cannot help but feel sorry for the man who feels that the world has turned its back upon him, and that the only plausible option, in his mind at least, is to commit suicide. Byron realises that in order to mask his identity, he must move away from the autobiography and create a new identity. This character will become Manfred, potentially the quintessential Byronic hero.

Conclusion

While Shelley's poems 'The Hymn' and 'Mont Blanc' exhibit a more refined (and less raw) poetic expression of the sublime and pantheism, it is Byron who follows least in

Wordsworth's footsteps. For example, when we look at his thoughts expressed in 'Soul—heart—mind—passions—feelings—strong or weak', the whole of the Empiricist tradition comes to mind, from Locke and Hume to the ever-present Burke. Ultimately, for the Empiricists as well as Byron, thoughts stem from observations that are impressed into the mind by the senses, and thus Byron returns towards the reliability of sensory perceptions.

According to Duffy, 'Shelley's revision of the discourse on the sublime turned precisely upon a rejection of the kind of religious, anthropomorphic response to natural processes embodied in Coleridge's Hymn. Shelley follows Coleridge in recognising the "awful" material silence of the mountain'.¹¹⁶ Shelley takes the religious element out of Coleridge's *Hymn* and fashions his own atheistic poem that celebrates the rawness of the natural world. Byron, it will be argued, read this poem in the summer of 1816 and would create his own version of the Shelleyan sublime before he completed *Manfred*.

Of course, Wordsworth underwent sublime experiences at Tintern Abbey and in the Simplon Pass, but as he meditated upon those experiences, he became more philosophical, wanting to take time to question the experiences. Shelley, undoubtedly, had similar experiences near Mont Blanc and Chamonix, yet in his writings he is not concerned with emulating Wordsworth but, rather, rejects Wordsworthian superstition as sceptical philosophy. Byron, aside from Shelley's influence on Wordsworth, uses language to open up the possibilities of poetry and the sublime experience by bringing them to the forefront of the reader's consciousness, because it presents the reader with a new experience from which to move forward as an interpreter.

After two years of debauched living in Venice, Byron met the breath-taking Countess Teresa Guiccioli. It is in her biography of Byron that Guiccioli signals his change of attitude upon arrival at Lake Geneva:

There his heart expanded, there his soul melted into the immensity of nature. It seemed to him that peace and forgetfulness of human unkindness could be found beside that lovely lake. [...] He identified himself with the wonders of the skies- he passed beyond the mortal sphere and aspired to be united with the mysteries of the universe. His sleepless nights were changed to unutterable

¹¹⁶ Duffy, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Sublime*, p. 113.

delights in the midst of his solitude, where, he said, he was less alone than anywhere else, and where he wished to stay awake so as to contemplate the sublime war of the elements.¹¹⁷

And Byron, by his own hand, exclaims:

I was disposed to be pleased—I am a lover of Nature—and an Admirer of Beauty—I can bear fatigue—& welcome privation—and have seen some of the noblest views in the world. —But in all this—the recollections of bitterness—& more especially of recent & more home desolation—which must accompany me through life—have preyed upon me here—and neither the music of the Shepherd—the crashing of the Avalanche—nor the torrent—the mountain—the Glacier—the Forest—nor the Cloud—have for one moment—lightened the weight upon my heart—nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty & the power and the Glory—around—above—& beneath me.—I am past reproaches—and there is a time for all things—I am past the wish of vengeance—and I know of none like for what I have suffered—but the hour will come—when what I feel must be felt—& the—but enough.¹¹⁸

The inconsistency between the comments of Guiccioli and Byron, I think, lends credence to the idea that while the Alpine stanzas seem to Byron a respite from the tortures of mind and life, his suffering and penance have yet to be exercised. This will happen, invariably, in *Manfred*, CHP IV, and the later cantos of *Don Juan*, where Byron will struggle under the weight of sin and self-forgiveness. The openness of the Alps will catalyse a rawness exposed by bringing to light the memory of sin, and the tormented soul will grapple with itself as Manfred struggles to achieve the ultimate freedom from the harshness of the world.

¹¹⁷ Teresa Guiccioli, *La Vie de Lord Byron en Italie*, trans. Michael Rees (Newark: Delaware, 2005), p. 72.

¹¹⁸ *BLJ* 5:104-5.

CHAPTER TWO:

MANFRED, THE SUBLIME SELF, AND THE QUESTION OF RELIGION

Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, Byron utilises both punctuation and language in order to situate the poet-narrator within the natural world of *CHP* III. In contrast, *CHP* IV presents the internalisation of the poet-narrator as he experiences Italy and contemplates some of the world's greatest art. In between the writing of the cantos lies *Manfred*. Erin Sheley points out that 'Many critics of *Manfred* have focused on psychological interpretations of the play, and especially on the relationship between the protagonist's disrupted ego identity and the physical space of the poem'.¹¹⁹ I, on the other hand, tend to see the dramatic poem not as an autobiographical reflection of some sort of psychological problem, but rather as a demonstration of a tension between the externalisation of *CHP* III and the internalisation of *CHP* IV. What I mean by this is that similar to *CHP* III, readers will see how Manfred is separate from the natural world because of his conscience. As he begins to internalise the guilt that he feels and conveys throughout the play, he demonstrates Byron's move from the externalisation to the internalisation of self. This tension creates a pressure that ultimately leads to Manfred's expiration at the play's conclusion. By creating this pressure, it appears natural that Byron intentionally composes *Manfred* in between writing the last two cantos of *CHP*.

Anne K. Mellor sees *Manfred* in terms of romantic irony. For Mellor, 'Romantic irony grows out of philosophical skepticism and the social turbulence of the French Revolution and American War of Independence; it posits a universe founded in chaos and incomprehensibility rather than in a divinely ordained teleology'.¹²⁰ The scepticism endured by the individual is rooted in the chaos of the time; thus, it is entirely conceivable that that turmoil is then found within one's self. Manfred seems to be the quintessential character who embodies this 'self-chaos'. With this mindset, Mellor argues that 'Manfred bitterly rebels against the limitation of his own humanity'.¹²¹ While Sheley looks to a

¹¹⁹ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 51.

¹²⁰ Anne K. Mellor, *Romantic Irony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. vii.

¹²¹ Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 35.

psychoanalytic interpretation of the text, Mellor looks to differentiate irony with regards to the Romantic poets: 'Romantic irony is a way of thinking about the world that embraces change and process for their own sake'.¹²² She then goes on to offer a passing comment on Manfred's psychology: 'Manfred has embodied the ironist's consciousness of human finitude. And he has borne that consciousness with courage and dignity'.¹²³ Both Sheley and Mellor choose to examine Manfred's psychology, and while Sheley looks to a psychoanalytic interpretation of Manfred, Mellor uses his psychology as a way to demonstrate her notion of romantic irony.

Returning to Manfred and the sublime, William D. Melaney states that:

In truth, Byron's verse drama introduces a new sense of the sublime as a uniquely disruptive experience that threatens to collapse the difference between aesthetics and morality. [...] Byron's *Manfred*, however, demonstrates that sublime experience is a potential source of chaos to the degree that it contributes to psychic overdetermination, rather than to the possibility of moral wisdom.¹²⁴

Melaney's statement is key, because it suggests the idea that *Manfred* has the ability to shatter the distinctions between aesthetics and morality. Being a drama in verse, *Manfred* was unique in that aesthetically and contextually it challenged notions of whether it was a poem or a play, and it raised the issue of suicide's morality. In this regard, it is perfectly situated between *CHP* and *Cain*, because it follows the former and precedes the latter. In the reading of *Manfred* that follows, I will draw on Sheley and Melaney's arguments, placing them in opposition to those of Mellor, in order to facilitate my own assertion that Byron does not intend *Manfred* to be an ironic text, but rather aims to use the dramatic poem as a means to demonstrate the sublime.

Next, in his classic study *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, Michael O'Neill states that 'Language is Manfred's major weapon'.¹²⁵ O'Neill continues where Kant and Burke leave off and focuses exclusively on the role of language rather than on

¹²² Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 4.

¹²³ Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 37.

¹²⁴ Melaney, 'Ambiguous Difference', p. 463.

¹²⁵ Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 96.

punctuation. He is absolutely correct in his assertion, because as I will go on to argue, it is Byron's use of language that allows Manfred to internalise his thoughts and feelings, which establishes *Manfred* as a link between *CHP* III and IV.

Peter Graham argues that:

Manfred's syntax may not be grammatically broken... but dashes unjoin words and ideas that could, metrically and intellectually, flow continuously. Implicit in the pauses signaled by those dashes are dark, unvoiced thoughts—which might be expected of a morbidly negative man whose worldview seems to be 'give me oblivion or give me death'.¹²⁶

Here, Graham holds that Byron's dashes might not be as grammatically skewed as one might be inclined to suspect. They could be, in fact, the conveyance of textual effects in which the apparent disjointedness is employed as a way to illustrate Manfred's distracted and often preoccupied mind. If we couple this suggestion with O'Neill's idea that 'language is Manfred's major weapon', then we could argue that the dashes and disconnection help to demonstrate the struggle between Manfred's internalisation and externalisation of the mind; it is in the mind that the individual (and self-consciousness) struggles with the self.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter will be to examine a multitude of ideas that Byron engages with in the play. First, I will argue that *Manfred* is Byron's response to the 'dosing' of Wordsworth by Shelley, and thus the play is a synthesis of these two influences. As a result, I will then move into an assessment of the significance of Manfred's soliloquies and demonstrate how they help shape Manfred's character by specifically locating instances where punctuation and language play significant roles within the text. Third, I plan to evaluate the ending of the dramatic poem, where the question of whether or not Manfred commits suicide is raised. This third section will take into consideration the constant tension and juxtaposition between religion and philosophy, with a specific focus on nihilism. This will lead me to question whether Manfred's contemplation of suicide is ironic (and can be taken seriously), or if it is a means to the

¹²⁶ Peter Graham, 'Byron, Manfred, Negativity, and Freedom', in *Liberty and Poetic Licence: New Essays on Byron*, ed. Bernard Beatty, Tony Howe, and Charles E. Robinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 50-9 (p. 53).

sublime. And, finally, I shall comment upon the radical idea that Byron intends *Manfred* to be a tragicomedy while striving to attain/convey the sublime before he returns to *CHP*.

Manfred Climbs ‘Mont Blanc’ with Coleridge

In the previous chapter, I investigated the influences of Wordsworth and Shelley on Byron. In the present chapter I shall, by way of introduction to the complexities of *Manfred*, investigate the often understated importance of Coleridge’s influence on the poet. Writing on ‘Mont Blanc’, C. J. Duffy states that:

Following Harold Bloom, it has been customary to read the poem as a response to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Hymn: Before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni*. ... Although there is no direct evidence that Shelley read the *Hymn*, it has been suggested that he had access to an edition of *The Friend* while in Switzerland in 1816, and numerous verbal echoes imply familiarity.¹²⁷

If Shelley did not read the *Hymn*, then it is easy to assert that Byron would not have necessarily needed ‘Mont Blanc’ in order to fashion *Manfred*. While Byron saw a poetic comrade in Shelley, he may have disapproved of the latter’s staunch atheism because of his own Calvinist upbringing or his interest in Catholicism. Coleridge, on the other hand, was a Unitarian, dabbled in pantheism, and ultimately became an Anglican. When reading the *Hymn*, Byron sees Coleridge as a kindred spirit because he does not turn towards pantheism exclusively, and because he still acknowledges and celebrates the glory of God’s creation of the natural world.¹²⁸

Coleridge’s *Hymn* is pious and religious in tone and subject-matter, yet it is not overbearingly rigid in its discourse, instead demonstrating how ‘Coleridge reads the mountain ... as legitimating a Christian world view’ in which the natural sublime is exhibited.¹²⁹ Christopher Stokes’s *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime: From*

¹²⁷ C. J. Duffy, ‘Mont Blanc’s Revolutionary “Voice”: Shelley and Archibald Alison’, *BARS Bulletin and Review*, 17 (2000), 8-11 (p. 8).

¹²⁸ It should be noted that Ian Balfour believes that ‘And when Coleridge couldn’t see the sights or sites in person as the occasion for writing the poem, he simply borrowed, to put it kindly, from a German woman poet the basis for his “Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix”’. The woman poet to whom Balfour refers was Friederike Brun.

¹²⁹ Duffy, ‘Shelley and Archibald Alison’, p. 8.

Transcendence to Finitude, argues that the *Hymn* ‘is his most direct expression of the natural sublime’ and that ‘nature is a site of revelation where man receives knowledge of his own condition as a created being’.¹³⁰ One can argue that, as we will see throughout this chapter, Byron intends to use *Manfred* as ‘his most direct expression of the natural sublime’, and it is also in the Alps that Manfred, like Coleridge’s speaker, ‘receives knowledge of his own condition as a created being’.¹³¹ Placed between the final two cantos of *CHP*, *Manfred* illustrates a protagonist who rejects the healing and redemptive qualities of nature, only to rebel in the most extreme way—a turn towards nihilism and its ultimate embodiment, suicide. This experiment allows both creator and created, Byron and Manfred, respectively, to try and become a part of the natural world. When this endeavour fails, Manfred is left with no other choice but suicide as a way to escape from his despondency.

In the *Hymn*, Coleridge’s speaker describes Mont Blanc as:

thou, most awful Form!
 Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
 How silently! Around thee and above
 Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
 An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,
 As with a wedge! (ll. 5-10).

These six lines provide both readers and the speaker with a description that appears to be a play on ‘awful’ as something terrible and sublime. Mont Blanc itself, which ‘silently’ rises above ‘thy silent sea of pines’, is so high that it pierces the sky. Here, the sky would appear to the speaker as if to go on *ad infinitum*, but readers envision a mountain that is ‘substantial, black | An ebon mass’, which frames the speaker amidst the sky.

There are striking similarities between Coleridge and Byron, as both speakers look towards the summit in order to survey that which is before them. Their poetry looks *to* nature, indicating their respect of it, whereas Wordsworth and Shelley look *at* nature as if attempting to understand it and make it their own. It is Coleridge and Byron’s engagement *with* nature and their respect for its ‘otherness’, rather than merely describing it, which

¹³⁰ Christopher Stokes, *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime: From Transcendence to Finitude* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 111-112.

¹³¹ Stokes, *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime*, p. 111, 115.

enables their readers to join with the speakers in a moment of awe that connects the individual with the sublime. For Byron, this is clearly demonstrated in *CHP* III with the interplay between the individual and nature. What we shall see in *Manfred* is an expansion and more detailed projection of the individual and nature; Manfred will become the epitome of the individual's interaction within the natural world. Very briefly, Manfred differs from Harold in that he does not look upon nature, but rather becomes a part of nature by standing on a ledge on the Jungfrau. In fact, one could argue that his serious contemplation of suicide, by hurling himself down into the ravine below, would only join Manfred's body with the natural world and be the ultimate interaction with nature and thus echo the wish articulated in *CHP* III to become a part of the 'fleshy chain'.

Once the connection with nature is made, the speaker notes 'How silently! Around thee and above | Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black, | An ebon mass' (ll. 7-9). So, it is the silence that surrounds the speaker drawing him in towards the peak; and, as the daylight begins to wane, a 'dark, substantial, black' mass is made to contrast against the fading light of day, so that the individual recognises the hulking mountain and his insignificance within the natural world. From here,

methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity! (ll. 9-12).

It is this idea of being at home in the mountains that gives rise to the thought that the mountains are a 'crystal shrine' where the speaker can come to be close to God. It is in the mountains that the speaker is closest to God's creation. He does not need to try and place the mountain or the natural world within the contexts of philosophical reasoning, but rather merely accepts what it is: a representation of God's creation and His existence where 'entranced in prayer | I worshipped the Invisible alone' (ll. 15-16). By doing this, the speaker is able to frame Mont Blanc and the Chamonix valley within the setting of a church. If the valley is the nave, then the mountain is the altar, with its summit pointing directly towards God so that the individual can lift his head upwards and revel in the glory of God's creation.

Once the speaker is in the sanctuary of nature, he exclaims ‘Awake my soul!’ [...] Awake, my Heart, awake! | Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my Hymn’ (ll. 24, 27-28). In viewing these three lines, it strikes me that lines 24 and 27 beckon for the soul and heart to be awake, while line 28 requests that ‘all join my Hymn’. What comes to mind are two things: there is a notion that both the heart and soul—those which *feel* and, according to Judeo-Christian belief, will live on after death—must be awake and alert for the chorus of celebration.

As the poem progresses, the speaker questions God with respect to nature, asking the latter ‘Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven | Beneath the keen full moon?’ (ll. 54-55). It is here that Mont Blanc becomes the intermediary between the human world and the heavenly world. It is almost as if Coleridge sees the mountain as a guardian of its creator and that humankind must pass through it before it can meet God. Hence:

Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God. (ll. 82-85).

Here, the speaker concludes the *Hymn* with a message to be delivered to Nature from humankind by way of Mont Blanc. It is also implied that the message will eventually be conveyed to God.

If Coleridge’s *Hymn* is indeed the precursor to *Manfred*, then what exactly is the connection between these poems? Nora Meurs states that ‘Coleridge’s later crisis-poems explore the poles of ecstasy and despair, and centre on the problem of identity and a representation of the poet as a struggling prisoner of exile’.¹³² If this is indeed the case, then the *Hymn* does contain sublime qualities. Even though it is not a ‘later crisis-poem’, *per se*, it possesses the central topic of the ‘struggling prisoner of exile’ that is clearly found in Byron’s ‘summer of 1816’ poems, with the epitome of this being *Manfred*.

Byron sees Coleridge as a kind of intermediary who is able to guide him into the balance between both worlds. Itsuyo Higashinaka supports this claim by stating ‘Thus Byron expresses what the play *Manfred* is all about from the sublime point of view by

¹³² Nora Meurs, ‘Resisting the Silence: Coleridge’s Courtship of the Sublime’, *The Coleridge Bulletin*, 25 (2005), 42-47 (p. 43).

these two localities, the Alps and the other world'.¹³³ As I will argue further, I believe that a finer explication of Higashinaka's quotation is the idea that the Alps of *CHP* III and *Manfred* represent Higashinaka's 'Alps' and the external, or that which is outside of Harold and Manfred, whereas 'the other world' is the internal realm that is slowly coming into existence in *Manfred*.

This 'otherworldliness' is 'Byron's attention to his own "wretched identity" in the face of nature [which] lends credence to these readings, and such critiques offer psychological models for Byronic subjectivity that explain Byron's sceptical rendition of natural sublimity'.¹³⁴ One could supplement Byron's 'own "wretched identity"' and replace it with that of Manfred, and by doing so, Sheley's comment holds true in that it allows Byron's scepticism to afford the sublime's presence in *Manfred*. For Sheley, the sublime is evident when Manfred contemplates suicide; this is not because one's death could be taken to be sublime in that it is the ultimate and final termination of one's life, but rather it is a spatial sublime where Manfred is placed on a ledge on the Jungfrau. There is nothing above him, and the only thing below is the valley that acts as a kind of tomb, since this is where his body will lay, should he jump. Both the 'physically vast natural spaces' and the absolute finality of death are markers for the sublime.¹³⁵

If Coleridge intended the *Hymn* to be a kind of homage to Nature, while still retaining the piousness of prayer to God, then 'He thus regards prayer as the gateway to a participation in the sublime state of blessedness, or to the dissolution of self'.¹³⁶ The end result is two-fold: first, we see aspects of the *Hymn* that are evident in *Manfred*, and second, as previously stated, Byron takes Coleridge's notion of prayer as the way to sublime blessedness and turns it upside down with *Manfred*. Hence, we shall see that *Manfred* is Byron's tragicomic response to Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge, and as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter when he returns to *CHP* in the fourth canto.

¹³³ Higashinaka, 'Manfred and the Sublime', p. 67.

¹³⁴ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 52.

¹³⁵ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 53.

¹³⁶ Meurs, 'Resisting the Silence', p. 42.

Manfred, Soliloquies, and Suicide

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (*Hamlet* I.5.166)

The first soliloquy in *Manfred* is the prelude, which like most openings in a dramatic work provides the reader (or audience) with the setting and background information in order to frame the work with the contexts of the coming action. Manfred is alone at midnight, and his opening monologue is about how ‘The Lamp must be replenished’ (I.1.1). As I will go on to argue, it is the ‘Lamp’ of enlightenment that needs to be refilled so that it may burn brightly as he embarks on his quest of self-discovery. The self-exploration that Manfred seeks is one that helps to situate the play within the contexts and frameworks of *CHP* cantos III and IV.

Melaney holds that ‘The lamp that burns does not permit sleep but implies a vigil, and the eyes that turn inward merely coincide with the restfulness of unceasing life’, and further that ‘Manfred functions on the most obvious level as a symbol of divided consciousness’.¹³⁷ Manfred cannot sleep precisely because he is preoccupied with contemplating the worth of his life. Whilst he is engrossed in pensive thought, he weighs his options regarding life’s meaning. It is then no wonder that Byron invokes Hamlet’s lines to Horatio, as the former has had the seeds of self-doubt already planted in his mind. Thus, Manfred is a kind of ‘Byronic Hamlet’ in this sense. Also, while one could argue that the lamp symbolises a vigil (as Melaney points out), it also comes to represent the enlightenment of life’s meaning that Manfred seeks. Unlike Hamlet, Manfred will need the guidance of those with whom he comes into contact, in order to help facilitate his meaning. Clearly, Manfred is an individual caught between a divided consciousness, but also a sense of divided self-worth.

If *CHP* III focuses on the external relationship between the individual and nature, with the redemptive and healing qualities of the natural world on the individual, then the purpose of *CHP* IV is to concentrate on the uniquely human experience of existence under the watchful eye of God. Manfred, written between the final two *CHP* cantos, demonstrates the often tragic, all-to-dramatic element of the human experience. As a result, ‘in my heart |

¹³⁷ Melaney, ‘Ambiguous Difference’, pp. 466, 463.

There is a vigil – and these eyes but close | To look within' (I.1.5-7). And, in order to do so successfully, Manfred 'plays' on our compassion by evoking our sympathies.

Manfred continues to set the scene:

To look within...

the form of breathing men.

[...]

Sorrow is knowledge: ...

[...]

The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.

Philosophy and science, ...

the wisdom of the world,

I have essayed, and in my mind there is

A power to make these subject to itself— (I.1.5-6, 10, 11-16).

The introspection of the heart and mind lead Manfred to realise his sins, sorrows, and guilt. Coupled with the aforementioned negative qualities, Byron helps to guide Manfred through the tortured recesses of his mind, so that he ultimately becomes despondent over his actions and comes to believe that his only escape from his personal hell is to throw himself off the summit of the Jungfrau. For Manfred, suicide is the only viable option because it offers him the chance to alleviate his pain. The 'escape from life through death' is something that Manfred will continue to struggle with during the course of his interactions with the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot, later in the play.

In one desperate attempt at self-reconciliation, Manfred calls upon the 'Spirits of earth and air' (I.1.41) in order to help facilitate the easing of 'The burning wreck of a demolish'd world- | A wandering hell in the eternal space- | By the strong curse which is upon my soul' (I.1.45-147). These three lines are crucial for our understanding of Manfred, as well as Byron's later development as a writer. For example, it appears as if Manfred sees himself in purely undesirable terms of total self-destruction that contain no possibility of escape from the empty space of his mind. The conscious-self wanders aimlessly in a hopelessly induced trance-like state as well as with the intent of finding meaning. The end result is one in which Manfred feels that there is a 'strong curse' upon his soul. Here,

Manfred can be seen as a precursor to Cain in that they both feel that their fates have been predestined by a higher being.

The next soliloquy is arguably the most important. It comes at the beginning of Act I, scene 2, lines 1-56 and 65-81. In Byron's 'stage directions', Manfred is to be seen on the Jungfrau, alone on a cliff in the morning. Byron does not delineate as to whether Manfred is situated on the Jungfrau's slopes or on her summit. For the sake of argument, I will postulate that he is standing on the summit, and my reasons will be outlined and explained later.

In the opening lines, Manfred's soliloquy can be dissected into five sections. In the first, Manfred believes that the Spirits have abandoned him:

I lean no more on super-human aid,
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulph'd in darkness,
It is not of my search. (I.2.4-7).

Little do the Spirits know or even care, but their (in)actions have caused Manfred to feel forsaken and neglected in his time of need. As a result, Manfred finds himself buried within the recesses of nihilistic hopelessness. He calls upon nature in what reads like his final farewell, as it is only here to which he can turn since he feels that the Spirits have cheated him. Manfred's only option is to try and connect with the natural world. When this, too, fails him, as it fails Childe Harold in *CHP* III, he comes to realise that suicide is his only viable option for both forgetfulness and escape. Unfortunately for Manfred, once he throws himself from the Jungfrau, there is no return.

Clearly, what we have before us is an individual who feels as if he has been spurned by the Spirits, and the trust he once had for them is now gone. Nearly at his wits' end, Manfred turns his back on the 'Superhuman' and instead invokes nature to abet his need for forgiveness:

– My Mother Earth!
And thou fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,
That openest over all, and unto all

Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.
 And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
 I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
 Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
 In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
 A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
 My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
 To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause? (I.2.7-19)

The 'fresh breaking Day' indicates the new dawn that is both 'beautiful' yet cannot be loved. The 'bright eye of the universe' | That openest over all' shows not just the birth of a new day, but how the sun seems to release the earth from the grip of night. Above Manfred, the night surrenders to the power of the 'fresh breaking Day', and it is on the 'crags! upon whose extreme edge | I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath | Behold the tall pines dwindled [...] | In dizziness of distance'.

This description echoes the sublime natural world of *CHP* III. Manfred stands at the brink of the physical world and, at the same time, he is also on the edge of nihilism, peering into its bleak nothingness:

In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
 A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
 My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
 To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause? (I.2.16-19)

Further contemplation demonstrates a tension between the desire to commit suicide and the willingness to commit suicide:

I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
 I see the peril—yet do not recede;
 And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
 [...]

and to be

My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
 To justify my deeds unto myself—

The last infirmity of evil.¹³⁸ (I.2.20-22, 26-29)

There is a mind-body tension that prevents Manfred from recklessly ending his life prematurely. The ebbing and flowing of both pressure and apprehension are cause for momentary reflection that, ultimately, lead to the hesitancy to commit suicide; thus, Manfred does not want to go through with such an irreversible action, at least for the time being. In addition to feeling the impulse, but not plunging and seeing the peril, Manfred's 'brain reels' despite the firmness of his footing. The use of the coordinating conjunction 'and' in line 26 joins Manfred's indecisiveness with an incredibly powerful, but overlooked passage (lines 27-29).

The disjointedness of the lines, exacerbated by Byron's use of dashes, active verbs, and the personal pronoun 'I', brings a 'humanness' to Manfred's plight and suffering. Byron allows readers to feel Manfred's pain through the interruptions of thought. Jonathon Shears's essay 'Byron's Aposiopesis' situates the lines perfectly: '*Aposiopesis*, which is the sudden breaking off or interruption of a character or narrator, is one of the foremost idiosyncratic features of reading a drama or narrative poem by Byron'.¹³⁹ If Byron does indeed have aposiopesis in mind, then Manfred's thoughts are interrupted by his own (in)ability to feel and not plunge, or to see and not recede; his brain reels, but his foot is firm, and he has 'ceased | To justify my deeds unto myself'. Clearly Manfred is torn between what he thinks and how he feels. The pain that Manfred suffers from is evident and, upon close reading, readers are drawn into his plight.

Shears maintains that:

We are aware, if not always consciously, of the gaps or dashes that signify altered intentions and apparent deletions and serve to contribute to the distinctive feeling of reading a poem by Byron rather than by another Romantic poet. The dashes could be considered as a theatrical feature because they help to suggest ongoing time and the potential for the action to venture into unanticipated territory. They are another part of Byron's way of

¹³⁸ There is a link here with *Don Juan* XIV, 4-6, where there are echoes to Hamlet – 'A sleep without dreams' – as well as reflection of *Manfred* in lines such as: 'You look down o'er the precipice [...] you can't gaze a minute | Without an awful wish to plunge within it. [...] To plunge with all your fears – but where? You know not | And that's the reason why you do – or do not'.

¹³⁹ Shears, 'Byron's Aposiopesis', p. 183.

continually presenting himself as though he were present, if only to our mind's eye.¹⁴⁰

I think that Shears is correct in his assertion about the significance of Byron's dashes. As a work of art, *Manfred* has evolved from *CHP* III in that the verbal structure of the poetic dialogue is not convoluted with dashes, but rather the vast majority of the dashes come at the end of the lines. Utilising the dash in this particular way allows the 'dramatic poem' to have a more theatrical 'feel' to the poetic structure. Thus, Byron is able to have the best of both worlds—poetic and dramatic—through his composition of *Manfred*, and prepares the reader for the return to Harold's journey in *CHP* IV.

Curiously, when I see 'Soul's Sepulchre', I immediately think of Christ. However, to comment that Manfred is synonymous with Christ would be erroneous. Rather, there is a connection between Manfred and Christ in that both ultimately die for different reasons. If Christ is the Prophet of Christianity, then does that make Manfred the prophet of the nihilistic despondency of the Byronic hero? I would argue that it does. Of course, the other way to examine Manfred and Christ is to compare them. While both men die, only Christ is martyred for what he believes and for what he is: a prophet, saviour, and symbol of hope, and redemption. He dies for his sense of obligation to others, so that they may be forgiven. Manfred, on the other hand, is not martyred or murdered for what he is or what he claims to be, but instead contemplates suicide, which can be interpreted as the ultimate perversion of one's life. Suicide, it could be argued in this light, is the epitome of a selfish action, and one the church views as a sin. Whilst Christ's death is at the hands of others, Manfred's is by his own.

One could continue the comparisons between Manfred and Christ, arguing that Manfred's soul is trapped like Christ's body in the sepulchre; however, a more pertinent interpretation is one in which Manfred is telling the Chamois Hunter that he feels his soul and body are entombed and imprisoned by his dejection and serious contemplation of suicide.

In the beginning of Act II, the Chamois Hunter starts by telling Manfred:

Thy mind and body are alike unfit
[...]

¹⁴⁰ Shears, 'Byron's Aposiopesis', p. 186.

When thou art better, I will be thy guide—(II.1.2, 4)

The Chamois Hunter has taken care of Manfred's well-being so that he can recover from his ordeal. Here, by inviting Manfred to partake in 'an ancient vintage', the Chamois Hunter is welcoming him to join in with what could be perceived as a kind of secular communion. The symbolism of communion is surely not lost on contemporary readers. One could argue that it is the communion of hope that is the goal of the Chamois Hunter. If this is the case, then Byron could be using the Chamois Hunter as the priest of nature. Therefore, when he offers Manfred the secular sacrament he does so by using the 'blood' of the natural world, as the grapes gave their lives so that Manfred could drink from the bottle and experience closeness with his fellow man and unity with the natural world.

At the end of scene 1, the Chamois Hunter acts as a monk in the mountains. As he has now taken in a stray member of the flock of humanity, he states:

Heaven give thee rest!
And penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee. (II.1.88-90)

Manfred interrupts the Hunter's genuine concerns:

I need them not,
But can endure thy pity. I depart—
'Tis time— farewell!—Here's gold, and thanks for thee—
No words—it is thy due. —Follow me not—
I know my path—the mountains peril's past: —
And once again I charge thee, follow not. (II.1. 90-95)

Manfred's rejection of the Chamois Hunter's offering of prayers is, arguably, the first time that one of Byron's major characters recognises and then declines the saving graces of religion; it marks the moment that Manfred can be seen as Cain's predecessor. As we shall see in the subsequent chapters, this will mark a significant moment in Byron's personal and religious development. If Manfred is a reflection of Byron himself, then it can be no surprise that underneath Manfred's 'exterior' is a poet-creator who is struggling to come to terms with Judeo-Christian dogma, while at the same time rejecting his own Calvinistic upbringing. Of course, Byron has Manfred essentially buy the Chamois Hunter off with

gold for all of his troubles before the scene ends, and readers are encouraged to think nothing else of the matter. However,

I plunged deep,
 But, like an ebbing wave, it dashe'd me back
 Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
 I plunged amidst mankind—Forgetfulness
 I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
 And that I have to learn—my sciences,
 My long pursued and super-human art,
 Is mortal here— I dwell in my despair—
 And live— and live for ever. (II.2. 144-152)

Once again, the externalisation and internalisation of language's impact on Manfred is clearly evident. There are two moments of plunging: 'I plunged deep' and 'I plunged amidst mankind—Forgetfulness'. Within these examples, it appears that Manfred is moving through the externalisation of humankind and into the internalisation of the self's despair. Once he thrusts himself through Mankind and forgetfulness, by way of the pronouns 'I' and 'my', he comes out ready 'to learn—my sciences, | My long pursued and super-human art, [...] I dwell in my despair, | And live, and live for ever'. By examining these few but important lines, readers come to see that Manfred does not just move from the external to the internal, but tries to hold onto his 'Sciences', which would allow something of the tangible for Manfred to grasp onto as he dwells or lives within his despair, forever. This despondency carries with it the realisation that if he is living in despair, then by all accounts, he is nihilistic and is a clear perversion of the immortality afforded to the devout Christian soul.

For Shears, 'As a reader unable to see a performance, however, the aposiopesis still functions on a secondary level because we are able to imagine the character's figure, facial expressions and voice'.¹⁴¹ By this account, we are able to read between the interjections to understand, sympathise, and perhaps even empathise with Manfred. In this sense, we see and feel an individual whose soul is tortured and unable to free himself from the pains of the past and present. As a result, Manfred feels completely alone and separated from the

¹⁴¹ Shears, 'Byron's Aposiopesis', p. 185.

rest of the world. As a result, Manfred is ‘plunged deep’ into the darkest recesses of his own mind, where he finds that his suicidal thoughts and desires, through his absolute ‘Forgetfulness’, place him at odds with the rest of humanity. The universe no longer makes any sense, and so he resignedly accepts his mortality in that the Fates have conspired against his wishes and leave him feeling abandoned by all hope, forced to ‘dwell’ reluctantly in his despair.

Just when we thought that Manfred’s plight into hopelessness could go no further, we find a short confession given to the Destinies:

I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation. (IV.3.39-42)

These deceptively simple four lines illustrate more internalising through the ‘fullness of humiliation’, as Manfred has been brought to his knees in despair. He pleads with anyone or anything that will listen to his story of emotional pain and suffering, so much so that he has knelt before the desolation of his soul. It is almost as if, here, Manfred is nothing but the former ‘shell’ of himself. Here, there is nothing left for him to do, because he has already done everything in his power to absolve himself from his sins. Unfortunately, the problem for Manfred is that he cannot accept forgiveness.

Manfred’s ‘Torn Identity’: The Two Versions of Act III and the Question of the Sublime

Just as Shelley composed his poetry under the auspices of Wordsworthian pantheism, Byron, having spent the summer months in the company of Shelley (and, to an extent, Wordsworth), arrived in Venice in early November. On his own after Hobhouse departed for England, Byron was left with his thoughts, ideas, imagination, and questions for the monks of Isola San Lazzaro degli Armeni. In early 1817, Byron began writing *Manfred*. During his time in Rome, at the end of April 1817, he came to realise that the current state of the third act was insufficient and needed revision, and so he set to work feverishly revising Act III, and by 5 May sent the completed *Manfred* to John Murray. What emerges from his time spent in Rome is not merely the jovial curiosities of another tourist but,

rather, a dramatic re-working of the internal structure of the third act. Proof of this hypothesis is in the fact that Byron created two versions of Act III. The first version was written between February and April 1817, and its third act offers a blatant attack on the Abbott. It is my understanding that following his time spent on San Lazzaro, Byron developed a new-found respect for the Church—the Catholic Church in particular—which becomes evident in the revised Act III.

In his essay ‘Genres of the Sublime: Byronic Tragedy, *Manfred*, and “The Alpine Journal” in the Light of Some European Contemporaries’, Ian Balfour states that ‘in Byron the primary locus of the sublime is in tragedy or, perhaps more precisely, something very close to tragedy’.¹⁴² With regards to the tragic element, I would argue that Balfour is correct in his assertion that *Manfred* is something close to the ‘quasi-tragedy’. Byron spends two-thirds of the ‘dramatic poem’ building his argument concerning Manfred’s plight and descent into near madness. However, what Byron is really doing, I believe, is indicative of Aristotle’s notion of pathos.

According to Aristotle, ‘Suffering is an action of a destructive or painful description, such as the deaths that take place in the open [and not behind the scenes], agonies of pain, wounds, and so on’.¹⁴³ Through the use of pathos, Manfred’s suffering is humanised, allowing readers to sympathise with his pain through Byron’s ability to draw the reader into the poem by appealing to the sympathy of our emotions. We are brought into Manfred’s world, forced to confront his sins, longing for forgiveness, and forgetfulness, and as a result the ‘drama’ that we undergo with Manfred has nothing to do with a stage, *per se*, but rather with the mixed emotions we encounter when witnessing Manfred’s metaphysical journey. Thus, the journey that Manfred guides us through is the ramparts, cliffs, and towering peaks of the Swiss Alps that increase the feelings of foreignness, desolation, and loneliness.¹⁴⁴ Through *Manfred*, Byron advocates a ‘spiritual’ salvation by means of the natural sublime.

Again, Balfour states that ‘Typically in the sublime, one is at least temporarily overwhelmed, cast out of oneself, disoriented, in-comprehending, astonished, or

¹⁴² Balfour, ‘Genres of the Sublime’, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴³ Aristotle, *The Poetics* (New York: WW Norton, 1982), p. 56.

¹⁴⁴ Shelley, ‘Demolished Worlds’, p. 54.

figuratively dead'.¹⁴⁵ While Balfour's description illustrates Manfred quite well, I would contend that we can take his argument even further and apply it directly to the readers. It should be noted that one of the more remarkable elements of dramatic texts, especially those of the Greek tragedians like Sophocles and Aeschylus, is that when they are performed on the stage, they (*vis-à-vis* the chorus) have the ability to lure the audience into the play's action. Thus, the audience becomes an indirectly participating member of the conflict. Byron turns dramatic aesthetics upside-down by eliciting Classical Greek poetics of tragedy, but instead of the audience proper being brought into the play's action, it is the reader of *Manfred* who is brought to the forefront.

By bringing readers into the middle of the text through its action, one could make the claim that Byron has catharsis in mind. Mitsuhiro Tahara declares that 'In Byron's case, he tries to achieve catharsis by idealizing Astarte (a projected image of Augusta) and torturing Manfred (a projected image of himself)'.¹⁴⁶ Here, I believe that Tahara is only half correct. If he were to examine the 'whole picture', then he would see that Manfred not only undergoes a cathartic expunging of sin, as he states, but also that readers do too, as they discover themselves aligning with Manfred's predicament.

In the first (original) version, after the Abbot of St. Maurice and Manfred exchange pleasantries, the Abbot expresses his concern for Manfred's well-being because 'Rumours strange | And of unholy nature are abroad, | And busy with thy name' (III.1.9-11). Manfred, seemingly unmoved by the Abbot's trepidation, allows him to continue. The Abbot now levels charges of conversing 'with things | Which are forbidden to the search of man, | ... | Which walk in the valley of the Shade of Death' (III.1.14-15, 18). Manfred appears to be indifferent towards the Abbot's queries, worries, and fears for his soul. When the Abbot realises Manfred's apathy towards his genuine and sincere concerns, he begins to plead:

I come to save, and not destroy—
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there is still time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to heaven.

¹⁴⁵ Balfour, 'Genres of the Sublime', p. 20.

¹⁴⁶ Mitsuhiro Tahara, 'Byron's Consciousness of Incestuous Sin in *Manfred* and Its Symbolical Meaning', *Memoirs of the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences*, 13 (1988), pp. 123-43 (p. 133).

(III.1.47-51)

Manfred, unmoved by the Abbot's pleas, retorts:

I hear thee. This is my reply; whate'er
 I may have been, or am, doth rest between
 Heaven and myself. —I shall not choose a mortal
 To be my mediator. (III.1. 52-5)

The tension between the Abbot, who symbolises the external by looking inwards, and Manfred, who symbolises the external trying to look inwards, allows for two important things to happen: first, this dialogue sets up the unwillingness of both men to budge in their positions which, inevitably, drives the wedge of discord further between them; and second, it foreshadows Manfred's disrespectfully verbal attack against the Abbot.

In the deleted lines, the Abbot and Manfred share an overtly antagonistic tone. There is the continued interrupting of the speech of the other in what appears to be raised voices. The Abbot calls Manfred a 'headstrong wretch', while the latter chastises the 'most reverend Father' (ll. 37, 41). The Abbot gives Manfred an ultimatum of 'till tomorrow to repent' and tells him to 'Expect no mercy; I have warned thee' (ll. 46, 50). Here, representing the authority of the Church, the Abbot simply warns Manfred to repent, whereas the latter misreads the former's concerns and sees them merely as threats. Manfred dismisses the Abbot, who comes off as a dupe that no one will take seriously, and as a result, his arguments give way to the impassioned nonsense that Manfred ignores.

The revised third act is noticeably longer than its previous version, and evidences a development of the characters into more complex, three-dimensional beings. For example, Manfred's servants are not merely 'placeholders', but become more engaged with Manfred and the Abbot throughout the final act. There seems to be a genuine concern by the servants for their master's well-being, in addition to a 'softer' approach by the Abbot.

The Abbot, whose purpose is to provide salvation for the souls of those with whom he comes into contact, by way of internalisation, is not going to be discouraged, but remains optimistic for Manfred's salvation:

For this will pass away, and be succeeded
 By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
 With calm assurance to that blessed place,

Which all who seek may win, whatever be
 Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
 And the commencement of atonement is
 The sense of its necessity. —Say on—
 And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
 And all we can absolve thee, shall be pardon'd. (III.1. 79-87)

The Abbot maintains a degree of faith in Manfred that the latter cannot behold in himself, reassuring Manfred that it does not matter how badly he has sinned or what the sins are, but as long as he repents he shall be forgiven. In Joan Blythe's essay 'Byron, Milton, and Psalms: Sublime Wrath, Poetic Justice', the idea that 'The poet implores God's mercy for himself' demonstrates that it is not the poet who calls upon God's mercy, but rather the Abbot who tries to intercede on Manfred's behalf, hoping to save his soul from nihilistic self-destruction.¹⁴⁷

With a failed sense of self, Manfred's 'Nature' is his quintessentially existential dilemma. He is not the educator and supplier of enlightenment to humanity, but the committer of sins so grievous that they cannot be spoken. He does not want to 'Lie' about his sins by denying them, so he faces them in his moment of honesty and, as a consequence, he alienates and isolates himself from society and humanity. He is tortured by his guilt and eternal, lonely, existential thoughts. He is alone, and must finally come to terms with his isolation. This wretched despondency 'dwells', is 'barren', and is 'deadly' because it pushes Manfred to the brink of despair. In due course, this bleak existence forces Manfred to become conscious of his pending death, and, of which, the Abbot is conscious

Overwhelmed by the depressing self-analysis, the Abbot is left speechless:

Alas!

I'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
 From me and from my calling; yet so young,
 I still would— (III.1.135-138)

But before he can continue, Manfred interrupts the Abbot:

Look upon me! for even of all these things

¹⁴⁷ Joan Blythe, 'Byron, Milton, and Psalms: Sublime Wrath, Poetic Justice', in *Revue de l'Université de Montcon, Byron and the Romantic Sublime*, ed. Paul Curtis (Montcon: University of Montcon Press, 2005), pp. 233-49 (p. 237).

Have I partaken; and of all these things,
 One were enough; then wonder not that I
 Am what I am, but that I ever was,
 Or, having been, that I am still on earth. (III.1. 149-153)

The repetition of ‘Look [up]on me!’ should tell us that Manfred pleads with the Abbot to look him in the eye. In what appears to be a moment of desperation, Manfred explains his existential crisis to the Abbot who seems to find it difficult to comprehend; thus, the Abbot is ashamed because he comes to realize that neither he nor his prayers will be able to save Manfred from himself.

With the admission of the loss of hope, Manfred bids adieu to the Abbot:

Old Man! I do respect
 Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
 Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain;
 [...]—and so—farewell. (III.1.154-156; 159)

This could be the most ‘existential’ section of the entire text. Yes, there is Manfred’s ‘existential-crisis’ of despair that ultimately leads him to his admittance of respect for the Abbot and his belief-system, but in the end it forces his hand and leads to his questionable death at the end of the play.

The opening of Act III, scene 4, which is also the climax of the play, begins with a lengthy soliloquy by Manfred. The first six lines are a call upon nature:

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
 Of the snow-shining mountains. —Beautiful!
 I linger yet with Nature, for the night
 Hath been to me a more familiar face
 Than that of man; and in her starry shade
 Of dim and solitary loveliness, (III.4.1-6)

And coupled with the following lines (7-14) evoke the ruinous decay of humanity:

I learn’d the language of another world.
 I do remember me, that in my youth,
 When I was wandering, —upon such a night

I stood within the Colosseum's wall,
 'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
 The trees which grew along the broken arches
 Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
 Shone through the rents of ruin; (III.4. 7-14)

These lines clearly demonstrate Manfred's continued conflict between the internal sense of self with that of his external surroundings. The lines anticipate the Colosseum stanzas in *CHP* IV, and Manfred's reflection denotes an internalisation of ideas and experiences, thereby becoming a part of that which he experiences. He is transformed as he addresses both himself and the audience in an interfusion of the natural and human worlds.

For example, in Act III Manfred states that:

And dwell the tuneless birds of night; amidst
 A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,
 And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
 Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth; —
 But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands, A noble wreck in ruinous
 perfection! (III. 4. 22-27)

Again, we find the interdependency of the natural and human worlds, with Manfred a part of both. In these moments, the 'grove [...] springs through levelled battlements', 'twines its roots with the imperial hearths', and 'Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth'. Manfred experiences not just the interplay between the two worlds, but the natural world's continued superiority over the human world. As a result, 'the gladiator's bloody Circus stands, | A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!' In search of himself, Manfred appears to wander through the remnants of ancient Rome, from the Forum to the Palatine Hill and back to the Colosseum. He has moved from projecting himself onto Nature to becoming immersed into that which surrounds him—the fall and decay of a once almighty, powerful, and glorious empire. Like his Roman ancestors before him, Manfred is succumbing to the passage of time—and guilt. Once he dies, he will fade into memory, only to be forgotten. Even though he is referring to the Colosseum, there is nobility and perfection—clearly positive attributes—that are projected back onto Manfred and his 'ruinous' psyche.

There is a tension between the words and phrases that Byron uses in order to convey the sublime moment, and it is reinforced through Byron's application of the Longinian sublime. These 'descriptive touches'¹⁴⁸ help demonstrate Byron's encounter with language that afford him to toggle between opposites in order to fully demonstrate the sublime. For example, 'The trees which grew along the broken arches' illustrate the duality of the growth of life with that of the decay of the broken arches; also, we can see a similarity with 'A grove which springs through levelled battlements' and 'ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth; | But the gladiator's bloody Circus stands – | A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!'. The grove sprouts and flourishes through battlements which have levelled or destroyed the immediate surrounding; the ivy usurps the laurel from growing, whilst the bloody Circus still stands amongst its destruction by time, and it comes to represent ruinous perfection. By switching between the opposites, Byron is able to use language as a way to get in-between words and phrases in order to create an image or images in which the reader must realign their placement in the scene and their meanings.

I believe that Byron intends there to be a kind of double meaning of description between Manfred's physical location and his self-esteem. We see this most poignantly at the end of the work:

Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old! –
[...]

'Twas such a night!

'Tis strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight

(III.4.35-38, 41-43)

Manfred is so acutely aware of the existentiality of the ‘rugged desolation’ of his life that all he can do is accept the fate bestowed upon him. He comes to terms with the fortune of destiny to which his acceptance leads him, ‘Leaving that beautiful which still was so, | And making that which was not’ (ll. 36-7). All at once the night comes to an end, and as dawn

¹⁴⁸ O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem*, p. 94.

begins to break on another day, Manfred ends his discourse just before the Abbot enters the tower: ‘’Twas such a night! | ’Tis stranger that I recall it at this time | But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight’ (ll. 41-3). As Michael Cooke points out, ‘Untouched by the world he is leaving, Manfred is also untouched by the underworld he dares to enter’.¹⁴⁹ It is this inability to transcend either arena that affords Manfred the opportunity to see both introspectively and outside himself, where he is contained in a kind of ‘spatial limbo’ against the world. Thus, Byron is suspended in thought, which allows him to stop and meditate on what he has just witnessed. Robert Gleckner, too, sees how Manfred’s ‘mind merely feeds itself with further evidence of its own inability to sustain its flight. The heart, on the other hand, is the agent of man’s happiness, the key to the gates of paradise’.¹⁵⁰

When the Abbot reappears, after Manfred’s speech, there is a humbled tone in the former’s voice, as he solicits ‘a second grace for this approach’ (III.4.46). He hopes not to offend Manfred ‘with words or prayers’ because he is genuinely concerned for that ‘noble spirit which hath wandered’ (III.4.51-2). Manfred continues to push the Abbot away, slighting him with a total rejection of forgiveness and religion:

Thou know’st me not;
My days are numbered, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or ’twill be dangerous—Away! (III.4.53-5)

Again, Manfred dismisses the Abbot as having ‘no cause’ and demands that he ‘retire’. By rejecting religion, Manfred is dismissing the aid of the Abbot and the salvation of the Church, attempting instead to survive on his own. This clearly demonstrates Byron’s willingness to use Manfred as a kind of sacrificial hero who is left to look inwards for deliverance from his own faults, rather than accept help from the Church. This would position Manfred in the broad category of an ‘everyman’, representative of the human condition, rather than looking to him as an individual who needs the counsel of an intermediary in order to facilitate his deliverance.

In her essay ‘Byron and the Noonday Demons’, Mary Hurst argues:

In *Manfred*, nothingness and emptiness preclude any apparent activity of the soul – a condition which stands in stark contrast to that of the comparative

¹⁴⁹ Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁰ Robert F. Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 252.

fullness of the Hunter and Abbot's souls, even though these seem lesser spirits than Manfred himself.¹⁵¹

Here, Hurst supports my interpretation of the externalisation and internalisation of Manfred and his engagement with the sublime. The nihilistic emptiness that Manfred feels is rooted in his questionable self-worth. The externalisations are the moments when the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot seek to save Manfred from the despondent void of nothingness. On the one hand, Manfred's continued rejection could stem from a mental breakdown in which suicide seems to him to be the only plausible escape. However, both the Hunter and Abbot, being connected to the natural and human worlds, respectively, seek to save Manfred from the rash error in judgment that will most certainly cost him his life. Manfred's near-sightedness, from the perspective of his potential saviours, allows him to retract within his mind. Hurst also believes that 'An empty soul *per se* creates its opposite notion – that of a soul open to the reception of spiritual renewal from outside'.¹⁵² While it may appear that an empty soul would be a kind of *tabula rasa* for Manfred, this is not the case. Manfred, in such a state of despair, confronts his emptiness with the hope of surmounting the hopelessness, but fails.

At the climax of the play, we find Manfred and the Abbot in a heated exchange. Manfred continues to struggle with the daemons whilst the Abbot hopelessly looks on.

Back to thy hell!

Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;

Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know: (III. 4. 124-6)

In these three lines, we find that Manfred is internalising the torment to the point that it erupts against the Abbot, the Spirits, and himself. He feels and knows that after his death the hold of guilt will no longer torture his consciousness. He continues:

What I have done is done; I bear within

A torture which could nothing gain from thine:

The mind which is immortal makes itself

Requital for its good or evil thoughts—

¹⁵¹ Mary Hurst, 'Byron and the Noonday Demons', in *Byron's Ghosts: The Spectral, The Spiritual and the Supernatural*, ed. Gavin Hopps (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 83-96 (p. 93).

¹⁵² Hurst, 'Byron and the Noonday Demons', p. 93.

Is its own origin of ill and end— (III. 4. 127-31)

These five lines clearly illustrate an anguished and agonised Manfred who, in the previous lines, demonstrated the external projection of suffering, yet who now looks inward towards the internalisation of the self. Line 27 contains the personal pronoun ‘I’ twice, as well as ‘done’ twice. It is as if the transition between lines 124-6 begins with ‘What I have done is done’. The em dash is Manfred’s quick pause, allowing for an instant moment of reflection, before he admits to himself and those around him (the Abbot and the readers) that he ‘bear(s) within | A torture which could gain nothing from thine’. Manfred’s constant interruptions create a continued disjointedness that forces a stuttering of the lines and a fragmentation of the thoughts that he is trying to convey. The ‘mental drama’ that occurs is exacerbated by Manfred’s inability to control the smooth flow of his thoughts, which demonstrates that he is a somewhat mentally tortured individual.

Again, Byron’s momentary pause before the shift away from the subjective-self to when he turns to ‘The mind’ being ‘immortal’ and ‘makes itself | Requit for its good or evil thoughts— | Is its own origin and ill and end’, establishes the notion that the mind is external from Manfred and humanity. But here, curiously, Byron lets it be a part of Manfred’s internalisation of the self. As he comes to terms with his existence and his self-consciousness, Manfred realises that there is no control over the Mind, a realisation that confounds him as he tries to comprehend the guilt that he still feels. Looking to the Abbot, he rejects the salvation of the Church one last time:

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

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

But was my own destroyer, and will be

My own hereafter. [...]

The hand of death is on me— but not yours! –

[...]

Old man! ’tis not so difficult to die. (III. 4. 137-41, 151)

The repetition of ‘thou’, ‘not’, and ‘me’ signifies a division between the Spirits (or external world), the Abbot, and Manfred. The latter resists the idea of external temptation, yet is able to separate himself from those inducements by assuming responsibility for his actions. In line 139, it is clear that Manfred accepts accountability (‘But was my own

destroyer'), as well as noting that going beyond this means that his choices will lead to his ultimate destruction. The act of acceptance demonstrates the internalised, personal nihilism that Manfred faces, and it is this nihilism that he will eventually overcome through death. In the final line of the play, Manfred tells the Abbot that 'tis not so difficult to die', and then he expires.

According to Samuel Chew, 'Manfred is a solitary, partly by inclination, partly by consciousness of superiority to his fellow-man ... partly by the weight of crimes and grief'.¹⁵³ Gleckner holds that 'the quality of Manfred's dying is thus the measure of the life intense the poet has created in him, and, through him, in himself; it is further evidence that only the poet can sustain himself in such a world'.¹⁵⁴ It is the guilt and the grief that chains Manfred to the rock of despair and exhausts him to the point of death. By accepting the responsibility of his own actions, Manfred is able to move forward towards death. Once he accepts that fate, his guilt is alleviated, and he is able to cast off the Spirits and the Abbot. I would argue that it might have been Byron's intention to represent the Spirits not as supernatural beings, but as the daemons of thought and tortured consciousness. Prior to this instance, if Manfred is unable to leave the Spirits, then he is unable to escape the anguish and suffering of his guilty conscience. Therefore, it does not matter if he ascends the Jungfrau or descends it, and it does not matter if he accepts the Abbot's mercy and compassion or rejects it, because trying to escape the culpability is impossible. Once Manfred comes to terms with the sins and guilt that are his and his alone, then he is able to break the shackles of existential despair and die, with some degree of ease.

Conclusion

In this most problematic yet fascinating of Byronic texts, the question 'To what degree is the sublime evoked?' must be asked. In *Manfred*, Byron's sustained use of dashes for rhetorical significance, rather than grammatical reasons, continues to allow the reader to support the ideas of hyperbaton, and aposiopesis being used in the poem. Being that *Manfred* is a closet drama or poetical drama, we are able to extend the notions of what it

¹⁵³ Samuel C. Chew, *The Dramas of Lord Byron: A Critical Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1915), p. 66.

¹⁵⁴ Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, p. 265.

stands for in works of drama and apply those same ideas to *Manfred*.¹⁵⁵ As we will see in the following chapters, *Manfred* marks a transition for Byron in that he will no longer rely so heavily on punctuation in order to convey the sublime. Instead, he will transition towards examining the meanings of words and phrases within the text as a way to bring the reader to the sublime. This is why Michael O'Neill's idea of the internalisation and externalisation of language as a way to bring the reader into Manfred's self-consciousness is so important.

This takes me to my second point: the relevance of bringing Manfred and the Abbot to the forefront of the discussion of Byronic explorations of the sublime. As we have seen, the third act is fraught with an assortment of ideas that need to be carefully teased out. On the one hand, symbolically, 'The mountains are emblems of Manfred's isolation', while on the other hand they come to symbolise Manfred's engagement with the sublime.¹⁵⁶ Whilst Peter Manning sees the mountains from a psychoanalytical perspective, I would argue that they are emblematic of the sublime. So if they represent Manfred's isolation, then it is clear that Manfred, being trapped arguably by his own culpability, cannot escape from the 'mountain' of guilt for his sins.

Alan Rawes holds that 'in the time left to him we see a radical change in Manfred. [...] Manfred begins to recognise that memory is not only capable of imposing intensely painful recollections on him, but also capable of offering him consoling, comforting, and revitalising memories'.¹⁵⁷ I agree with Rawes's assertion that the mountains stand for something more than Manfred's isolation. Rawes seems to think that the mountains offer a change in Manfred's demeanour in that they allow him the opportunity to reject the pains of past sins and afford him the prospect of overcoming his guilt whilst being able to understand himself a little more. I would go even further than Rawes by stating that the mountains provide Manfred with the catalyst for engaging with the sublime. Yes, memories can harbour painful recollections, and yes, they can also offer consolation and comfort, which is important. However, memories will help bring the individual to the sublime,

¹⁵⁵ Shears (p. 183) notes that in addition to *Manfred*, *aposiopesis* occurs mainly in *Lara*, *Sardanapalus*, and *Don Juan*.

¹⁵⁶ Peter J. Manning, *Byron and His Fictions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ Rawes, '1816-17: *Childe Harold* III and *Manfred*', p. 127.

regardless of whether they are supplementing positive or negative moments. Yet memories are only one variable in the sublime's equation, as topography helps too.

Erin Sheley believes that the mountains and valleys of the Alps provide Manfred with the topographical setting of the sublime, coupled with the idea of entombment as presented by the valleys. As she points out, 'Byron's sublime landscape suggests various kinds of suppression, frequently turning vast forces into stasis'.¹⁵⁸ Sheley elaborates on the Byronic sublime as being associated with the static landscape. In *Manfred*, such a landscape refers to the mountains and nothing else, and yet after Byron completed *Manfred* and returned to *CHP*, there is an extension of the idea of the static landscape to the Italian cities. This is precisely how Byron begins *CHP* canto IV, by bringing the reader into Venice, before moving onwards to Florence and Rome and choosing to focus on their decay and ruins.

I would argue that Manfred is able to transcend his feelings of nothingness in nature into something more, something beyond himself. At first, this is seen at the beginning of Act III scene iv, when Manfred begins to question and reject the Spirits. Once this happens, he is freed from the supernatural and, it can be argued, is ready to receive the blessings of the Abbot. Much in the same way that the 'seeds' of self-discovery are planted in Harold through Nature's guidance, Manfred moves to the next phase where those seeds are to be germinated.

When Manfred is finally able to forgive himself, he becomes open to the possibilities of a life without the Promethean chains of contrition around his neck. Instead, he looks and moves forward to the dawn of new possibilities, where readers get the sense of 'a sublime man' emerging:

as one who has a strong self-will, believing in his own principles, not yielding easily to others and having a high opinion of human dignity. He is a heroic and fearsome man, defying peril and despising death. He makes himself familiar with supernatural beings. [...] His strong self-will and loyalty to his own credo are shown in his refusal to seek any help from the Church.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Sheley, 'Demolished Worlds', p. 54.

¹⁵⁹ Higashinaka, 'Manfred and the Sublime', p. 70.

His suffering demonstrates that he no longer needs the guidance of the church. Rather, as long as he is able to forgive himself, then Manfred is able to accept his fate. Anne Mellor does not share my optimism, however, and instead offers this rather bleak interpretation: 'Manfred is obsessed with the pessimistic elements of philosophical irony, the skeptic's insistence upon the limits of human consciousness and power'.¹⁶⁰ In making this claim, Mellor fails to see that whilst irony *may* play a minor role in *Manfred*, it was Byron's intention to illustrate an individual so tormented that his only escape from nihilism is to commit suicide. Byron's decision to keep Manfred from committing suicide is not ironic, nor is it detrimental to the reader's perception of Manfred, but rather it affords Byron the opportunity to continue on his quest to engage with the sublime in his poetry, and *Manfred* is no exception. If *Manfred* is taken to be an ironic text, as Mellor believes it to be, then the search for the sublime becomes lost behind irony, and the importance of the sublime in the poem is neglected.

Byron moves away from Longinus and Horace in *CHP* IV, as he begins to look at the sublime through the lens of Italian Renaissance and Baroque art. It is no wonder, then, as Melaney sums up, that 'The Byronic sublime is therefore unlike the sublime in classical poetics and modern aesthetics theory, since it is linked to a disruptive event that is suffered rather than accomplished, endured in silence rather than expressible in verbal terms'.¹⁶¹ Having spent the better part of two major poems with the poet-narrator in the Alps, it would seem necessary for Byron to move the topography away from the mountains and into the city. As a result, one could argue, along with Melaney, that both *CHP* III and *Manfred* are needed in order for Byron to experiment with the sublime in all its forms before he is able to move forward into the 'human construct' of *CHP* IV, the Lucretian sublime in *Cain*, and the sublimity of religion in the Aurora Raby stanzas of *Don Juan*.

¹⁶⁰ Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 35.

¹⁶¹ Melaney, 'Ambiguous Difference', p. 468.

CHAPTER 3

BYRON, ITALY, AND THE SUBLIMITY OF HUMANITY

‘Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience’ –Francis Bacon¹⁶²

Introduction

On 5 October 1816, Byron and John Cam Hobhouse left their lodgings at Villa Diodati, along the shore of Lake Geneva. They decided to travel south, much to Byron’s excitement, following Wordsworth’s and Napoleon’s routes up the Rhône River valley, over the Alps at Simplon Pass, as they headed into northern Italy. Their first major stop was Milan, where they arrived on 12 October and spent three weeks, going to the ballet, the opera, and dining with the Milanese elite. Bored and unimpressed with Milan, Byron and Hobhouse left on 3 November, stopping in Verona three days later. Following further stops in Vicenza and Padua, Byron insisted on immediately continuing to Venice, arriving on 10 November. Here, Byron would stay for the next two and a half years, only leaving to visit Florence and Rome in the spring of 1817.

Fascinated with the Italian peninsula, Byron, according to Paul Stock, ‘identifies places, historical events, traditions, and texts which traverse state and cultural boundaries, even while they reside in a particular locale’.¹⁶³ This has been clearly evident through the first three cantos of *CHP*, and the fourth canto develops the notion of a topographical poetics. As a result, Byron devotes his longest canto to a celebration of Italy while focusing ‘on the high civilization of the Renaissance and of Rome’.¹⁶⁴ Byron’s approach to the sublime has been overlooked by recent scholars, yet one merely needs to turn towards the first stanza of Canto IV in order to see the enthusiasm with which Byron engages with the sublime.

The writer and art critic John Ruskin wrote the three-volume study on Venetian architecture *Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) as a follow-up to his immensely popular five-volume tome *Modern Painters* (1843-1860). In the first volume of *Stones of Venice*,

¹⁶² *The Essays of Francis Bacon*, ed. Mary Augusta Scott (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), p. 293.

¹⁶³ Paul Stock, *The Shelley-Byron Circle and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 67.

¹⁶⁴ Drummond Bone, ‘Childe Harold IV, Don Juan and Beppo’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, ed. Drummond Bone (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151-70 (p. 151).

subtitled 'The Foundations', Ruskin traces the history of Venetian architecture from the mixture of Byzantine and Roman models that constitute the Byzantine influence; the second volume, 'The Sea-stories', examines the Gothic influence; and the third volume, 'The Fall', surveys Renaissance period architecture. It is the third volume that is of interest to us.

In 'The Fall' Ruskin pays particularly close attention to the grotesque features of Venetian Gothic architecture, relating 'various aspects of political satire, unreal fantasy, and the horror of the unknown'.¹⁶⁵ In addition, according to Edwards and Graulund, 'For Ruskin, grotesque is distortion, delineating the gap between imagined possibility and reality. [...] Yet for Ruskin, grotesque aesthetics are not necessarily signs of degeneration or decadence. They can also be used as cultural critique'.¹⁶⁶ I am most interested in the idea that the grotesque presents the differences between imagined possibility and reality. With this in mind, I believe that we can better understand the ways in which the sublime comes to fruition through the grotesque in Venice, and this will be demonstrated in the following pages which analyse the Venetian stanzas of *CHP IV*.

A more recent study of the grotesque is found in Jean H. Hagstrum's book *Eros and Vision: The Restoration to Romanticism*. Here, she argues that 'The grotesque can be a psychological and social condition'.¹⁶⁷ Thus, offering a differing perspective from Ruskin, Hagstrum's notion of the grotesque is applicable to the grotesque consciousness of the Venetian stanzas. I believe that through his understanding of the grotesque, one can easily demonstrate the connection to the sublime and illustrate a way forward towards *Cain* and *Don Juan*.

The social grotesque, according to Hagstrum, is divided into three subdivisions:

[the] grotesque of passionate individualism that attacks the order of a good society that must be bound by principles of honor and loyalty; the grotesque of ridiculous folly, which is exposed by a fashionable society in which a sublimely bungling fool cannot operate; and the grotesque hypocrisy

¹⁶⁵ Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, *Grotesque* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.16.

¹⁶⁶ Edwards and Graulund, *Grotesque*, p.17.

¹⁶⁷ Jean H. Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision: Restoration to Romanticism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 98.

produced by a nominally Christian society that in actuality is fiercely commercial and aggressively imperialistic.¹⁶⁸

As I will argue, I believe that the grotesque of passionate individualism is what exemplifies the poet-narrator in the fourth canto of *CHP*. Whilst I do not believe that the grotesque of ridiculous folly is applicable, I contend that grotesque hypocrisy is clearly evident in both the Venetian and Roman stanzas.¹⁶⁹ Thus, I will examine the first and last subdivisions of the social grotesque as postulated by Hagstrum, and show how, why, and in what ways they are relevant to my discussion of Byron's sublime in the fourth canto.

Venice: The 'Greenest Isle' of Byron's Imagination

I loved her from my boyhood. (*CHP* IV. 18)

The visitor will be convinced that

There are other and better things

Even in this life. – Byron

(on a memorial plaque at the Armenian monastery on San Lazzaro)

Looking at *CHP* IV's 'Venetian stanzas', Byron personifies Venice as 'Rising with her tiara of proud towers | ... | In purple was she robed'.¹⁷⁰ The once regal city has given way to the faded glories of days past, whilst holding onto the 'Beauty' that 'still is here'.¹⁷¹ Seeing Venice as the 'Queen of the Adriatic', Byron perceives that it holds onto its former splendour, as even though it is past its glory, there is an understated elegance present. By referring to the city as the 'Queen of the Adriatic', Byron has placed it on a metaphorical pedestal in an almost goddess-like notion of perfection that is hard to replicate. With Venice being in such a state of ruinous decay, it is emblematic of the glorious, but also of the grotesque. The latter does not have to be a negative quality, but can instead be something wonderful, magnificent, and breath-taking. For Ruskin,

¹⁶⁸ Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁹ I would argue that the grotesque of ridiculous folly could be seen in *Beppo*. Although beyond the scope and relevance of this thesis, I believe that this is an idea worth exploring at another time.

¹⁷⁰ *CHP* IV 2.

¹⁷¹ *CHP* IV 3.

The reader is always to keep in mind that if the objects of horror in which the terrible grotesque finds its materials were contemplated in their true light, and with the entire energy of the soul, they would cease to be grotesque, and become altogether sublime; and that therefore it is some shortening of power, or the will, of contemplation, and some consequent distortion of the terrible image in which the grotesque consists.¹⁷²

In examining this passage, we can liken various elements of terror and terribleness as stemming from Burke's sublime; however, with Ruskin, the terrible sublime goes beyond the mental capacity of the individual and becomes distorted. Through this distortion, I believe, is where the grotesque is rooted. Ruskin wants the grotesque to be planted in the architecture; Hagstrum places it inside the mind; for Byron, it is both.

Since he stands in Venice, Byron is immersed into the kaleidoscope that is Venetian life. He notes that 'In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more' (l. 19). The gondolier's reference to Tasso recalls a time of Venetian grandeur rather than decay, where these troubadours of the canals beckon like sirens luring their passengers ever deeper into the mystique of Venice's past: 'The revel of the earth—the masque of Italy! [...] But unto us she hath a spell beyond | Her name in story' (ll. 27-9). It is as if the poet-narrator weaves himself into Venice's magical texture of history, lore, and enigma. The enjambment of 'beyond | Her' conveys a sense of reaching into infinity and, as James Hill notes, 'becomes a particularly rich symbol for the play of Byron's imagination, which, as it traces out the possibilities inherent in the city as symbol, will finally transform it into a metaphor for the uncontrollable process of thought'.¹⁷³ The spell that Venice has cast upon its guests draws them inwards and downwards, 'from the physical city to the mental city' from which there is no escape.¹⁷⁴ The poet-narrator, too, falls under its enchantment like some poor, lost soul searching for himself. It is this blending of the once magnificent and now ruinous decay that helps give way to the sublime as found in Venice and the Venetian stanzas. On the one hand there is the palace and all of its illustriousness, and on the other there is the prison with its tortured memories inciting a flood of despondency.

¹⁷² John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice: The Fall* (George Allen: Sunnyside, 1886), p.150.

¹⁷³ James L. Hill, 'Experiments in the Narrative of Consciousness: Byron, Wordsworth, and Childe Harold Cantos 3 and 4', *ELH* 53.1 (1986), 121-40 (p. 133).

¹⁷⁴ Hill, 'Experiments in the Narrative of Consciousness', p. 134.

Nevertheless, it does not take long for the poet-narrator to move beyond the despondency in Venice and become inspired, introspective, and all at once philosophical:

The beings of the mind are not clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And a more beloved existence
[...]

And with a fresher growth replenishing the void. (*CHP* IV. 5)

Newey states that ‘Places are for Byron always both something in themselves and a testing-ground for the imagination: here his own imagination moves confidently, finding plenitude in vacancy itself, being touched by the glory of a decayed past’.¹⁷⁵ It is the imagination of the void that brings Byron into the mental or psychological sphere of Venice. Whilst physically in Venice, he also delves into the city through the use of his imagination. Thus, the poet-narrator is able to move confidently through ‘the glory of a decayed past’ as he allows his imagination to run wild as history inspires the mind’s eye and his fancy is set free.

Alan Rawes qualifies Newey’s optimism: ‘The Byronic hero belongs to a world of emotional devastation and void replenished only by the poisonous vitality of remorse’.¹⁷⁶ Clearly, Hagstrum’s psychological grotesque can be found in what Rawes sees as ‘devastation’ to be replaced by remorse. The Byronic hero (here, the poet-narrator) is in a state of dejection and must continue to suffer the pains of degradation until he is truly remorseful of his sins. He can ask for forgiveness and be granted that forgiveness for which he seeks, and once the transgressions have been assuaged, he will be able to move forward with a clear conscience and a clear mind. With the clarity of mind, the poet-narrator is able to experience the decayed grotesque in all its glory in Venice. The city, being constructed on top of tens of millions of wood pilings in the lagoon, appears to float on the surface of the water, having come into existence effortlessly. Upon closer examination one sees that the buildings are no longer pristine, but rather are decomposing and being literally swallowed by the sea; or, as Ruskin would hold, it is the architecture that crumbles before

¹⁷⁵ Newey, ‘Authoring the Self: *Childe Harold* III and IV’, p. 166.

¹⁷⁶ Rawes, *Byron’s Poetic Experimentation*, p. 117.

one's eyes, making it both terrible and terrific in that it strikes awe in the psyche of the perceiver.

This brings us to Hagstrum's idea that ideal beauty is 'an idea of perfection formed in the imagination', and that it is correlated with the grotesque through visual representation.¹⁷⁷ Here we find the notion that ideal beauty arises from the grotesque, much in the same way that Venice seems to arise from the sea. I would argue that ideal beauty is created in the imagination and projected to the mind; thus, that which one sees is merely a projection of the object that is idealised within the mind. Again, as Hagstrum elucidates, 'The grotesque may in fact be the fruit of a union that brought together an imaginative energy that pushed upward toward the sublime'.¹⁷⁸ In a literal sense, this is when the grotesque helps to bring the individual's eyes upward towards architecture that is sublime. As we saw earlier in Chapter One, the sublime can bring an individual upwards, whether it is towards a summit as we saw in the Alps, or in the proper usage of language and punctuation (see Chapter Two). The point is, however, that the sublime continues to bring the individual to a higher place, evidenced when the poet-narrator takes his leave of Venice and moves towards Rome.

Robert Gleckner seems to stand somewhere between Newey and Rawes when he notes that

The poetic "I" has now taken over completely, and if it is, as Byron says, his own voice that we hear, we must listen to it as the voice of Byron the poet, not that of Byron the man or legend.¹⁷⁹

Gleckner seems to focus on the subjective 'I' of the poetic voice rather than on any extraneous 'selves'. The most important aspect of *CHP* canto IV is that there is not the blurring of Byron's other selves, as we have seen in the previous three cantos, but rather the one self—Byron's poetic 'I'—that has been born from its previous incarnations and is now ready to experience that which lies ahead. And if we examine all three critics' ideas in relation to one another, then we can surmise that the void is intended to be something positive. It allows for an opening that enables the glories of the decayed past to be brought

¹⁷⁷ Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁸ Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision*, p. 120.

¹⁷⁹ Gleckner, *Byron and the Ruins of Paradise*, p. 267.

to light and seen under the lens of forgiveness and freedom. Here, once all is permitted, the poetic ‘I’—the subjective self—is psychologically ready to move forward and continue on his quest to obtain the sublime.

In stanza 18, the poet-narrator exclaims: ‘I lov’d her from my boyhood— she to me | Was as a fair city of the heart’ (ll. 154-155). These two lines are not merely stating fact, but are preparing the reader for what is to come: the ‘Venetian Sublime’, not in the sense that a fresco by Titan or Tintoretto or Andrea Palladio’s San Giorgio Maggiore is both Venetian and sublime as it rises from across the bacino, but rather the ways in which Byron primes the reader towards the sublime. This is not the natural sublime that Byron presents in Canto III, but something altogether different from what he has experienced and elucidated before in *CHP*. In stanza 19, he reflects on the meaning of that which stands before him:

I can repeople with the past—and of
 The present there is still for eye and thought,
 And meditation chastened down, enough;
 And more, it may be, than I hoped or sought;
 And of the happiest moments which were wrought
 Within the web of my existence, some
 From thee, fair Venice! have their colours caught:
 There are some feelings Time cannot benumb,
 Nor Torture shake, or mine would now be cold and dumb.

(*CHP* IV. 19)

Here, reflection on the past and the present prepares for the future. As the present eye wanders upwards, seeking the sublime, it is meditation that will refocus and calm the poet-narrator’s mind. He will meditate on what he has witnessed: in the past it was the natural sublime of the Alps, but now it is the present, and standing before the poet-narrator is the decay of human constructs as they are devoured by the sea. The recognition that is ‘Meditation’ will lead to the ‘happiest moments’ of his existence. Fair Venice is what ‘Time cannot benumb’, and there is the realisation of an open-mindedness to the grotesque state of mind and onto the sublime.

Finally, the encounter of the sublime via the grotesque enables Byron to come to his conclusion regarding the Venetian sublime:

And how and why we know not, nor can trace
Home to its cloud this lightning of the mind,
But feel the shock renew'd [...]
[...]
But my soul wanders; I demand it back
To meditate amongst decay, and stand
A ruin amidst ruins; there to track
Fall'n states and buried greatness, o'er a land
Which *was* the mightiest in its old command,
And *is* the loveliest, and must ever be
The master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand,
Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
The beautiful, the brave—the lords of earth and sea.

(CHP IV. 24-25)

In lines 208-10, the poet-narrator acknowledges that we know not and cannot know 'this lightning of the mind, | But feel the shock renew'd'. This 'lightning of the mind' would appear to be inspiration. Perhaps it is the sublime that has been transformed into inspiration, and thus into a kind of divine providence that empowers the narrator. Or, it could be divine inspiration, instilling a sense of wonder and accomplishment in the narrator-poet.

The 'soul wanders' and he demands it back 'To meditate amongst decay, and stand | A ruin amidst ruins'. Here, while looking at Venice—both from afar and up close—the poet-narrator begins to see that the grotesque is 'the framework of the baroque' and that by 'transferring the grotesque to the human plane where reason and will could subdue it, opened up enormous possibilities where for realistic, social, psychological, and moral art'.¹⁸⁰ Thus, it is the grotesque architecture that gives rise to the baroque, so that if Venice is representative of grotesque and Rome is emblematic of the baroque, then one can draw the logical conclusion that Byron's trajectory in the fourth canto fits as the poet-narrator

¹⁸⁰ Hagstrum, *Eros and Vision*, p. 119.

moves from descriptions of Venice to descriptions of Rome, where stanzas on the baroque masterpiece, St. Peter's Basilica, will come to define the sublime in uniquely human terms through the construct of the basilica itself and the initial presentation of the religious sublime.

Before leaving Venice, though, one must ask what would cause the poet-narrator to become so reflective. Surely these thoughts are not the products of the Alps several months before, and if so, then what caused them? Drummond Bone seems to think that 'Though Venice was for Byron an archetype of the dual nature of civilization in its social structures...it is here also physically an image both of continuity and of decay, the power and the limitation of human artefacts'.¹⁸¹ I contend that it is not the ruinous decay of a once mighty republic that is the cause for introspection, but rather it is the idea that Venice is a city quite unlike any other. It was, at one time, the most powerful maritime republic in the world, albeit physically small. It was a city not grounded on *terra firma*, instead appearing to 'float' on the lagoon on which it was built. As a place of duality, Venice could be incredibly pious on the one hand, but on the other hedonistic, especially during Carnivale. I think that Byron came to realise the constant tension between what Venice was perceived to be and what it actually was, as evidenced in his Venetian stanzas. However, if we look beyond the tension, we see Venetian lines that demonstrate Byron's ability to perceive the sublime in what appears to be decay and ruin, which seem to fit with Byron's enthusiasm for antithesis.

Rome: Where the Sublime Unites God and Man

May he, who will, his recollections rake
And quote in classic raptures, and awake
The hills with Latian echoes; I abhor'd
Too much, to conquer for the poet's sake,
The drill'd dull lesson, forced down word by word
In my repugnant youth, with pleasure to record. (*CHP IV. 75*)

¹⁸¹ Bone, 'Childe Harold IV, Don Juan and Beppo', pp. 151-52.

The meditative poet-narrator moves from Venice to Florence, and then directly to Rome, having spent his time introspectively musing on the sublime. Having previously viewed the sublime as something wholly unique to the natural world, the poet-narrator's arrival in Venice leads his thoughts on the sublime to slowly give way. Then, he goes to Venice where his thoughts on the sublime slowly give way to the creative spirit of humanity, where there seems to be the inimitable unification of the natural beauty of the Venetian lagoon with that of the architectural and artistic wonders of the former Venetian Republic. As a result, when he arrives in Rome, the poet-narrator is forced to rethink his ideas of the sublime, only this time within the constructs of human creations. Thus, he begins a sharper turn in his theory of the sublime where, perhaps, its definition is not entirely natural.

Upon entering Rome, the poet-narrator exclaims: 'Oh, Rome! my country! city of the soul!'¹⁸² From there, he leads his readers through the city walls and into the depths of a city that stands on the foundation of ruin. In *CHP IV*, readers are presented with a dialectic where one city leads into the other. For example, when the Venetian stanzas mention the Doge's Palace and state prison on one hand, it is not a dualism that Byron seeks to illustrate, choosing instead to focus on the dialectic in which one locale transforms into the other. The Doge's Palace is eventually, by way of the Bridge of Sighs, connected to the state prison. Much in the same way that Venice has its own dialectic, we can examine the dialectic between Venice and Rome.

On the one hand, Venice is seen and described as being in a perpetual state of ruinous decay, and this sense of continuity represents the 'present'. Rome, on the other hand, whose foundations are over 2,000 years old, is in a ruined state that has, for the most part, stopped decaying. The Forum, Palatine Hill, and the Coliseum are all in a state of ruin. Even the foundation of the Vatican is built on top of the ruins of ancient Rome and the bones of the early Christian martyrs, including the most important—St. Peter. What Byron does is present readers with the dialectic of Venice and its present decay, and by showing Rome's ruined past, two things occur: first, there is the juxtaposition of the present against the past, and second, there is a contrast between Venice's present state and that of Rome. It is almost as if Byron is preparing the reader and the Venetians for a glimpse into its not-too-distant future. It demonstrates the decay of the once great Venetian

¹⁸² *CHP IV*. 78.

Empire, which spread its arms across the Mediterranean world, and is contrasted with the former Roman Empire, which also enveloped all of the Mediterranean and beyond, as the consciousness of ruin. Once he leaves Florence, Byron is mentally prepared to confront the monuments of Rome, and as Kostadinova states, ‘Consciousness thereby merges actuality and mental projections, past and present, time and eternity, reconfiguring succession into simultaneity, blurring subjectivity and objectivity. Existence becomes an eruption of irreducibly multiple oneness’.¹⁸³

Stanza 78 marks the beginning of nearly 90 stanzas that are devoted strictly to Rome and its environs and history. As we see, Rawes has surmised that ‘In the final version, the poet’s turn to Rome can be explained in almost narrative terms. Nature suddenly ceases to inspire the poet, who turns to Rome for an alternative source of poetic inspiration’.¹⁸⁴ When the poet-narrator arrives at the Coliseum, he asks readers to

Yet let us ponder boldly—’tis a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought—our last and only place
Of refuge; this, at least, shall still be mine:
Though from our birth the faculty divine
Is chain’d and tortured— (*CHP* IV. 127)

It appears that the poet-narrator is appealing to the faculties of thought and reason as a way to envision and place oneself at and in the Coliseum, just as Manfred did on that moonlit night. In her book *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature*, Janice Hewlett Koelb argues that the Coliseum stanzas in *CHP* IV are ‘an expansion of *Manfred*’s Coliseum soliloquy’.¹⁸⁵ Koelb raises an interesting point about the continuation and expansion of *Manfred*, yet neglects to note that the *Manfred* lines were revised and rewritten once Byron returned to Venice *after* he visited Rome. Therefore, if we read the Coliseum lines within the parameters of Koelb’s thinking, then we should read *CHP* IV first, then the revised third act from *Manfred*. The problem with this mode of interpretive

¹⁸³ Vitana Kostadinova, ‘Byronic Ambivalence in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* IV’, *ByronJournal*, 35.1 (2007), 11-18 (pp. 17).

¹⁸⁴ Rawes, *Byron’s Poetic Experimentation*, p. 131.

¹⁸⁵ Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 156.

thought is that it would denote a major break in the analysis of *CHP* IV, especially before Byron writes about the Pantheon and St. Peter's. The solution, when examining the Coliseum stanzas, is to look at *CHP* IV by itself, examining the natural flow of the stanzas from the Coliseum to the Pantheon and on to St. Peter's, and then look at *Manfred* by itself as well, accepting it as a revised work. Thus, by looking at the progression of the Coliseum stanzas from *Manfred* to *CHP* IV, there appears to be another dialectic from one text to the other, as two separate texts that happen to treat the same subject, albeit in a slightly different way.

In his essay 'Byron and the Coliseum: The Art of Recycling', Robert Dingley examines the multifaceted purpose of the Coliseum:

The Arena had, in its time, played many parts. The Roman theatre of cruelty has been fortified in the Middle Ages; it has served in the Renaissance as a setting for necromantic experiment by Benvenuto Cellini; it had been dedicated in the eighteenth century as a Christian church, and it had become, by Byron's time, the object of archaeological research by the *savants* who accompanied Napoleon's armies.¹⁸⁶

Of course, the multi-layered purposes that the Coliseum served can lead to the suffering that both *Manfred* and the poet-narrator in *CHP* IV imagine to have existed within its walls. And when Byron first sees the arena, it is near midnight and illuminated by the light of Rome and the moonlight. One cannot help but think of how this uniquely and appropriately gothic setting would stir the poet's imagination. In addition, there can be little doubt that such a supernatural and eerie setting would facilitate and spur the despondency and inner daemons of *Manfred*'s soul.

It is a melting of these two characters that gives rise to the melancholic *Manfred* of the revised third act, which I touched upon in the previous chapter. However, this forlorn *Manfred* has had ample time to reflect upon the meaning and significance of such an imposing and historically significant endeavour of human ingenuity, and can be seen as an extension of the contemplative poet-narrator.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Dingley, 'Byron and the Coliseum: The Art of Recycling', *The Byron Journal*, 33.1 (2005), 25-35 (p. 34).

Upon his arrival in Rome, the poet-narrator immediately goes to the Coliseum, the Forum, and Palatine Hill, where he meditates upon the multifaceted layers of meaning within the ivy-covered walls of the Coliseum. Surviving nearly two thousand years, the building symbolises the ingenuity and originality of human thought and comes to represent the timeline of human history. Like the Doge's Palace and state prison in Venice, it comes to embody the duality of evil and goodness. During the height of the Roman Empire, it was used as a human slaughterhouse under the guise of gladiatorial entertainment, and as Dingley points out, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Pope Benedict XIV transformed it into a Catholic church. There is something quite ironic about the triumph of Christianity over the pagan thirst for blood, in that the Coliseum was transformed from being a 'house of death' for so many Christians to the place of worship for their descendants hundreds of years later. Arguably more so than Venice and Florence, the Coliseum's multipurpose use over the centuries comes to represent the transformation of the sublime through a duality of functions. Further, it stoically stands amidst and apart from the ruins of ancient Rome.

During the Roman Empire, the Pantheon was built and used as a pagan house of worship. When the Empire embraced Christianity as the state religion, the building was transformed into a church used by Christians. Like the Coliseum, it has endured a duality of identities. While there are only two Pantheon stanzas, Byron returns to a mastery of the Longinian sublime:

Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime—
 Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods,
 From Jove to Jesus—spared and blest by time;
 Looking tranquillity, while falls or nods
 Arch, empire, each thing round thee, and man plods
 His way through thorns to ashes—glorious dome!
 Shalt thou not last? Time's scythe and tyrants' rods
 Shiver upon thee—sanctuary and home
 Of art and piety—Pantheon!—pride of Rome! (*CHP* IV. 146)

The two Pantheon stanzas are rich in detail, sublime analysis, and poetic structure. Looking at the latter, they can be examined either together or individually. If they are studied

together, then we see a wonderful example of how the poet-narrator uses one stanza to lay a foundation of ideas and pave the way for a more theoretical stanza that initiates reflective questioning and thinking by the reader. If they are explored individually, then it is not difficult to see that the detail and sublime notions that appear in stanza 146 lead directly into the ideas mentioned in stanza 147. Once this happens, readers are provided with two separate and distinct stanzas that can easily be joined together to provide the reader with a holistic notion of the significance of what the Pantheon has come to symbolise and represent for the poet.

As previously mentioned, stanza 146 is a fine example of the Longinian sublime. In the first line, the Pantheon is described in five words: ‘Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime’. In returning to Longinian poetics, we see that once again the ‘Sublime comes from language that grips the reader, the marvellous, with its power to amaze’.¹⁸⁷ By gripping the reader, language actively engages the reader with the text. The foregrounding allows for an encounter with the language of the text, so the reader is brought forth to join, connect, and interact actively with the text.

Through language, there is an active engagement with both the spiritual and human worlds, and just as we saw in the third canto, the language is disjointed. However, after more than ten months, the poet-narrator is more comfortable with the language of the sublime, so this time the attempt to describe the awe-inspiring effect of the Pantheon is deliberate and not accidental. And since there is no inner-struggle with the self, the opening five words help to create a foundation from which to build up the Pantheon and the sublime. Therefore, just like we saw in *CHP* III through the foregrounding of the sublime that was brought about by the mastery of hyperbaton and asyndeton, a new experience is conveyed to both the poet and the reader.

In turning to lines 2-4, the simplicity of severe, austere, and erect sublimity of human ingenuity constructs a ‘Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods’, from the Roman ‘Jove to Jesus’, which looks tranquil due to its being ‘spared and blest by time’. Now, the ‘glorious dome’ that stands through nature’s destruction of time and the human demolisher of tyrants has become ‘sanctuary and home | Of art and piety’ and survived as the ‘pride of Rome!’ There is an excitement in the Pantheon lines, but it is a more refined excitement

¹⁸⁷ Longinus, *On the Sublime*, p. 144.

than the raw exhilaration and enthusiasm that Byron exhibited in the Alps the previous summer.

Readers are afforded the opportunity to engage with the Pantheon, contemplating its multitude of uses over the centuries, like the Coliseum. Byron then moves us into stanza 147, which complements the previous one. This sublime work of human and religious construct has endured to become a ‘Relic of nobler days, and noblest arts! | Despoiled yet perfect!’ Its circle, with the very notion of being a perfect shape, is ‘A holiness appealing to all hearts’ and is a ‘model’ of ‘art’ that encloses ‘Glory’. Is the ‘Glory’ that the Pantheon holds the glory of humanity, or the glory of God? Even though Byron does not supply an answer, I believe that the ‘Glory’ to which he refers is actually the ‘Genius’ that ‘may repose | Their eyes on honoured forms’. Certainly, if we see the Pantheon as a religious shrine, then it is the Glory of God to which he alludes; however, if it is the Model of Art then the ‘Genius’ is humanity’s genius, since art is a human construct. Since the ‘Genius’ is seen in absolute terms, then it is only natural to conclude that the genius of humanity is really an extension of God. When we arrive at St. Peter’s, we see how the sublime is God’s genius extended to humankind. From humankind arrives the genius to create, which is derived from the sublime, which in turn is an extension of God.

Stanza 153 mentions the other shrines of Christendom, but nothing—initially—compares to the dome of St. Peter’s. And, as the poet-narrator approaches the Vatican, the first thing he observes is the dome. Stanza 153 becomes a kind of prelude to the physical description and underlying philosophical theme that will remain prevalent in the following stanzas. Thus, it is not until he arrives at St. Peter’s Basilica that he comes to terms with the splendour and grandeur that is:

...the vast and wondrous dome,
 [...]
 Christ’s mighty shrine above his martyr’s tomb!
 I have beheld the Ephesian’s miracle—
 [...]
 I have beheld Sophia’s bright roofs swell (*CHP* IV. 153)

The deployment of sublime words such as ‘vast’, ‘wondrous’, ‘mighty’, and ‘miracle’ signals a turn in Byron’s mind, one that moves away from his preoccupation with the Alps

to reverence of the basilica. One could argue that the use of ‘vast’, ‘wondrous’, and ‘mighty’ repeat in a finer tone the sentiments and expressions first used in the Alps. St. Peter’s has come to represent the sacred, but given it is a human construct, it also symbolises the ‘Human Sublime’. If the Alps are indicative of the Natural Sublime, and St. Peter’s is an artificial construct, given the language that is used to describe it, then it must be the Human Sublime in honour of the divine. It is through the poet-narrator’s understanding and intellectual capacity that he is able to become receptive to Christianity; thus, he will (sub)consciously become more open and willing to accept its tenets.

In a letter Byron wrote on 9 April 1817, about one month prior to stepping foot inside St. Peter’s nave, he indicates the strength of his religious feeling: ‘when I turn thirty—I will turn devout—I feel a great vocation that way in Catholic churches— & when I hear the Organ’.¹⁸⁸ While one could argue that Byron is being ironic, it can be no surprise that he might have had religious inclinations for two reasons. First, his mother was a devout Calvinist and forced upon him the teachings of the Protestant Reformer Calvin, and thus Byron’s interest in Catholicism could be seen as retaliation, despite her passing nearly six years prior. And second, after having spent the last six months in Venice, the plethora of Venetian churches was something that Byron could have come to appreciate. On the one hand, the Venetians were pious Catholics, while on the other they demonstrated at times an exercise of libidinousness that certainly would not have offended Byron. As Mary Hurst points out, ‘Byron was drawn to Catholicism because of its openness to contraries—contraries such as seriousness and levity’.¹⁸⁹ What Byron would find appealing in Catholicism, and that was not evident in Presbyterian or Calvinist schools of thought, was that he could choose not to be reverent; and in the other, he could choose to do the opposite. Regardless, however, Byron still entered St. Peter’s Basilica, and this experience brought the final stanzas of the fourth canto to fruition.

Once he becomes accustomed to the splendour of St. Peter’s, Byron is able to reflect philosophically upon the magnitude of that which is before him:

But thou, [...]

Standest alone—with nothing like to thee—

¹⁸⁸ Letter to John Murray, 9 April 1817. *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 208.

¹⁸⁹ Mary Hurst, ‘Byron’s Catholic Confessions’, *The Byron Journal*, 40.1 (2012), 29-40 (p. 29).

Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.

[...]

Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty all are aisled

In this eternal ark of worship undefiled. (*CHP* IV. 154)

Here, while in a state of contemplation, he recognises the significance and importance of St. Peter's for humanity—not just for theists or even Catholics. The basilica itself, as well as that which it symbolises, represents the epitome of salvation and self-governance in a way that the Alps were incapable of doing for the poet-narrator. Indeed, this is significant because while in awe of the sheer magnificence of the establishment of Christendom, he allows himself to receive the sublimity of the basilica.

In lines 1385-6, Byron says 'Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty all are aisled | In this eternal ark of worship undefiled'. The placement of these two lines is both necessary and fundamental to the overall structure of the Roman stanzas. Nowhere else do we find such an obvious and transparent use of sublime language and punctuation in order to bring the reader into the physical space of St. Peter's and to the glory that is the sublimity which it represents.

As Alan Rawes has argued, 'In the St. Peter's sequence, Byron does not describe a shrine that is in decay but claims to encounter one that is capable of drawing the viewer to the threshold of Christian faith'.¹⁹⁰ The basilica is a representation of the sublime in itself, in all its perfection. The building's magnificence draws the observer to gaze upward towards the top of the dome and further towards the heavens, before it ushers the individual inside. Taken together, these moments assist in the experience of the sublime at St. Peter's. If stanza 154 provides the reader with the components of the sublime, then it is stanza 155 that affords readers the epitome of Byron's 'philosophical' thoughts on St. Peter's:

Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
 And why? it is not lessened; but thy mind,
 Expanded by the genius of the spot,
 Has grown colossal, and can only find
 A fit abode wherein appear enshrined

¹⁹⁰ Alan Rawes, 'Byron's Poetic Inspiration' in *Romanticism and Religion from William Cowper to Wallace Stevens*, ed. Gavin Hopps and Jane Stabler (Abington: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 121-36 (p. 131).

Thy hopes of Immortality; and thou
 Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
 See thy God face to face, as thou dost now

His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by his brow. (*CHP* IV. 155)

While he tells the reader to ‘Enter’, Byron also indicates that he pauses for just a moment as signified by the placement of the colon that can also be a way of inviting the reader to contemplate what is about to be seen. Now, as the reader crosses the threshold and enters the nave, he is struck by the ‘Grandeur’ that is St. Peter’s, but also the grandeur that ‘overwhelms thee not’.¹⁹¹ The beginning of an increase of anticipation is built in this line not by the insertion of ‘lessened’, but by the delay before the terminal ‘thy Mind’.

Anthony Howe examines stanza 155 from the point of view that ‘Consciousness is instead “Expanded” in what sounds a more gradual and guided process. The mind may become “colossal”, but it is not fearfully overrun or translated out of itself’.¹⁹² While I initially agree with Howe’s position, I would argue that Byron’s intent is to move the reader and Harold forward by bringing them into St. Peter’s as a way to experience the sublime. In doing so, Byron brings the reader out of the natural world and its relation to the sublime, and he avoids being wholly dependent upon language to convey the sublime. Instead, what we begin to see in the fourth canto is Byron’s ability to transcend time and place by moving through Rome, both geographically and historically. Once Byron accomplishes this, he will be able to guide the poet-narrator and the reader into St. Peter’s, where the sublime will be found.

In his essay ‘Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent’, John Milbank holds that the sublime is concerned with ‘the elevation of the individual above himself’ and not an emptying into the abyss.¹⁹³ Thus, the question raised is: where does this place the notion of beauty within the parameters of the sublime? Through the enlargement of the mind into a colossal expanse, Byron, the poet-narrator, and the reader are able to become open to the

¹⁹¹ It can be noted that there is a structural similarity with Wordsworth’s disappointment at having crossed the Alps and not experienced the sublime, in Book 6 of *The Prelude*.

¹⁹² Anthony Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 112.

¹⁹³ John Milbank, ‘Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent’ in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. Regina Schwartz (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 211-34 (p. 212).

mind's perception of the sublime. As sacred to over one billion Catholics, there is nowhere else where this is more pertinent or more important than at St. Peter's, because as the spiritual home of Catholicism, the basilica is where individuals come to be closer to God.

Returning once again to Anne Mellor:

Entering St. Peter's, he participates in the sublime process of mental and emotional growth that is Byron's paradigm for the abundant chaos of life. [...] Yet Byron shows us too how this traditional experience of the sublime can lead directly to philosophical irony: paradoxically, the recognition of the potential infinity of the human mind entails an intensified awareness of its present limitations.¹⁹⁴

While I agree with Mellor's first claim regarding the participation in the (sublime) process of mental and emotional growth once Byron enters St. Peter's, I cannot support her second claim that this 'traditional experience' leads directly to philosophical irony. Stating that there is a direct correlation between entering St. Peter's and the sublime's transference to irony completely undermines the importance of the sublime on the individual, let alone its significance on the development of the individual. I understand that Mellor is attempting to demonstrate that when a person enters St. Peter's, the irony is that whilst one believes that there will be a sublime experience, instead there is this conscious realisation that one's mind is limited. When looking at the Byronic sublime, the human mind's limitations on comprehension were best exhibited in the Alps. Now, when the individual steps inside St. Peter's, he does not recognise the limitations of the mind, but instead is able to appreciate, embrace, and celebrate what the human mind has created. I would even contend that when the individual enters the basilica, there is a moment of Burkean awe as he gazes in wonder and astonishment at the magnitude of the building and tries to comprehend the size and scope of humanity's ability to create works honouring God. Thus, I disagree with Mellor's conclusion that the poet-narrator's moment is indicative of irony, as her idea undermines the importance of the church on the individual. The dome, by expanding the mind, provides an intimation of what it will be like to see God directly.

Unlike Mellor, Gavin Hopps holds that 'Byron's description of human nature as paradoxically both fallen beneath and elevated above itself therefore makes sense from a

¹⁹⁴ Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 33.

theological perspective'.¹⁹⁵ Here, the individual seeking spiritual guidance enters into God's domain as a fallen sinner, but leaves forgiven and elevated above himself. If his sins are his chains that bind him down, then forgiveness breaks the shackles and St. Peter's lifts the spirit upwards, (en)lightened by the forgiveness of God. Hopps's idea is one that continues my notion that the poet-narrator sees both God's glory and the glory of humankind as a way to reproach one's sins and come closer to both God and the sublime, but cannot comprehend it. By doing so, the individual rejects Mellor's claim and continues with the quest towards the sublime.

The next clause in stanza 155 shows readers that even within something that has grown so enormous, it is still possible to find 'A fit Abode wherein appear enshrined | Thy hopes of Immortality'. After 'Immortality', the semi-colon denotes yet another pause in which Byron calls upon the reader, or perhaps himself. As he looks to the future, the comma provides a break that holds and indirectly questions 'If you are worthy...', so defined by the Catholic church, then you shall be saved and 'See thy God face to face'. The repeated use of commas builds up the suspense of salvation and what Byron is deliberately trying to say. The stanza concludes with the clause, 'See thy God face to face, as thou dost now | His Holy of Holies'. Thus, the ultimate goal of one's life, according to the speaker, is to meet God face to face, but this would require salvation. As a result, we come to God through the sublimity of St. Peter's by way of a human creation and divine inspiration.

The poet-narrator sees the culmination of his metamorphosis at St. Peter's at the end of his pilgrimage:

Thou movest—but increasing with the advance,
Like climbing some great Alp, which still doth rise,
Deceived by its gigantic elegance;
Vastness which grows— but grows to harmonize—
All musical in its immensities;
Rich marbles— richer painting—shrines where flame
The lamps of gold—and haughty dome which vies
In air with Earth's chief structures, though their flame

Sits on the firm-set ground—and this the clouds must claim (*CHP* IV. 156)

¹⁹⁵ Hopps, 'Byron and the Trespassing of Ontology', p. 69.

St. Peter's is compared to the Alps, yet because of Byron's phrasing, it gives the impression that the basilica is 'bigger and better' than the natural world. As Rawes points out, 'Nature suddenly ceases to inspire the poet, who turns to Rome for an alternative source of poetic inspiration'.¹⁹⁶ I doubt that Byron is explicitly claiming that the human world is superior to the natural world, but rather that we catch a glimpse of him while he is still awe-struck. He is not speechless, but filled with the seemingly profound and appropriate expressions that, after his initial pause upon first entering the basilica, are purely poetic. Charles Robinson notes, 'According to Byron in *Childe Harold IV*, Art could idealize and immortalize human existence, thereby providing man a "refuge," but at the same time Art made man even more aware of his mortal limitations'.¹⁹⁷ For example, the church is continuing to rise towards God, yet it retains its 'gigantic elegance' while its vastness continues to grow and it remains harmonious. It is filled with a richness that is likened to gold, and in the opinion of the speaker it is 'Earth's chief structure', an observation that the 'clouds must claim'.

The final three stanzas that are related to St. Peter's bring the reader into a post-sublime explanation of the role of art:

... so here condense thy soul
To more immediate objects, and control
Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
In mighty graduations, part by part,

The glory which at once upon thee did not dart. (*CHP IV*. 157)

The mind is able to listen to the heart and better understand and explain 'The Glory which at once upon thee did not dart'. The 'glory' that Byron speaks of can be any number of entities: it could be the glory of God, the glory of art, or even the glory of faith. It becomes the 'feeling most intense' that 'Outstrips our faint expression' (l. 1416, 1417). In short, it is the glory of God, and it acts as a prelude to the final St. Peter's stanza, 159, where Byron states: 'Then pause, and be enlightened' (l. 1423). Here we see the poet-narrator wait a brief moment, and then with his clever use of a comma, indicative of further reflection, he

¹⁹⁶ Rawes, 'Byron's Poetic Inspiration', p. 131.

¹⁹⁷ Charles E. Robinson, *Byron and Shelley: The Snake and Eagle Wreathed in Fight* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 71.

becomes slightly pensive. From this point of reflection, Byron is able to move towards enlightenment—one of the many objectives of the sublime. He goes on to discuss how artists and their art are able to transcend time, but ultimately it is ‘The fountain of sublimity’ that ‘displays | Its depth, and thence may draw the mind of man | Its golden sands, and learn what great conceptions can’ (*CHP* IV. 1429-31).

What Byron describes is the transcendence of the self in a human-made creation. Here, in the presence of God, Harold comes face-to-face with the sublime, which acts as a catalyst for experience of the transformation of transcendence, and this is important because it has never occurred before. Thus, as he walks into the nave of St. Peter’s, the individual is immediately struck by the awe of the sublime, and upon entering further inside the Basilica itself, feels a more profound recognition of the sublime, as the self transcends itself with time. Here, the ruinous decay of Rome is made more tolerable since it is the homage to God that endures. Arguably, Byron realises for the first time that there is an entity greater than himself, one that will guide him in his later poetry, especially the religious-themed poems of *Cain* and ‘Heaven and Earth’.

Conclusion

CHP IV clearly demonstrates a ‘Byronic idealism’ that Robinson believes ‘disturbed Shelley in *Childe Harold* IV as well as in *Manfred*’, and ‘was Byron’s rejection of metaphysical ideals’.¹⁹⁸ I believe that the rejection of metaphysics affords the poet-narrator the ability to suspend belief, and through this clarity the individual is prepared to confront the sublime.

Up to this point, we have seen how language and punctuation enable sublime descriptions, observing how the arrangement of words and ideas impress upon the mind and convey moments that are sublime and unique to the individual experiencing them. We have also seen how human constructs have connected the artist and the viewer with both the sublime of the humanity and divine inspiration. Newey argues that ‘Byron characteristically wanders into truth in Canto IV: here a psychological truth that deconstructs the claims of Art to be a reflective or mirroring of some extra-personal

¹⁹⁸ Robinson, *Byron and Shelley*, p. 72.

spiritual Truth'.¹⁹⁹ This psychological truth that Newey references is what Robinson notes as 'neither Art nor Nature could redeem man from his fallen state, the only viable alternative in *Childe Harold IV* was Promethean pride'.²⁰⁰ The psychological truth is one that is clearly evident in each of the major sections of the fourth canto. In Venice, it is how Byron comes to terms with the grotesqueness of memories fuelled by geography, whereas in Rome it is the truth that human creations can be divinely inspired and lead the perceiver to the sublime. For Robinson, specifically, the 'Promethean pride' will give rise to Byron's continued inquiry and investigation of religion in *Cain* and *Don Juan*. For the poet-narrator coming to terms with his sense of self, the natural world must be replaced by a human world of creation—both material goods and the world of religion that will work together and bring about a transposition of the self. Ironically, his quest comes to an end not in the Alps but instead at the Vatican, where he is delivered and emerges at St. Peter's Basilica. I would argue that this is not the end of the pilgrimage, *per se*, but rather the beginning of Byron's attempt at understanding the sublime in religious terms. He will continue on his journey in *Cain*, where he will examine the individual, religion, and their interconnectedness towards oneness with the sublime.

For Byron, St. Peter's is not merely the 'key' to God or to Heaven, but it is the 'key' to making sense of his life. It answered the queries and clarified the ambiguous answers that he had to confront, especially over the last year of his life. The edifice is the embodiment of the Vatican, and has come to symbolise Catholicism. It sits at the crossroads of God and the human spirit, of God and the human inspiration to create a shrine worthy of God, and it represents the very best of humankind. It is here that Byron's quest to find and understand himself has come to an end. According to Gavin Hopps:

Part of what makes the poet's vision of engraced nature so compelling is its gradual harmonizing evolution, which anticipates the 'piecemeal' epiphany of St. Peter's (IV, 155-58) and suggestively awakens a transcendent dimension in a variety of elements, involving a range of senses, on the way to its climactic apprehension of 'the great whole' (IV, 157).²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Newey, 'Authoring the Self: *Childe Harold* III and IV', p. 167.

²⁰⁰ Robinson, *Byron and Shelley*, p. 76.

²⁰¹ Hopps, 'Byron and the Trespassing of Ontology', p. 59.

Up to this point in his life, Byron has been searching for something unbeknownst to him, and now he has discovered not just the sublimity of nature, but the sublimity of humanity's creations as a way to bring the individual closer to God. The human sublime will help Byron transition into his late-period poetry.

Kostadinova holds that 'While the speaker of *Childe Harold* III idealises nature, in Canto IV he is alienated from it and turns instead to the inventive achievements of human beings'.²⁰² Not to contradict Kostadinova entirely, I would argue that by juxtaposing Canto III with Canto IV, Byron is trying to say that nature has nothing more to teach. In Canto III, we saw that the natural sublime is rooted in terror and, to a lesser degree, awe. However, in Canto IV, Byron moves beyond the Wordsworthian-Shelleyan idealism and gives readers the sublime humanism of art. To prove this notion, Byron employs the art and architecture of Italy in order to bring himself and the reader to awe.

²⁰² Kostadinova, 'Byronic Ambivalence', p. 13.

CHAPTER FOUR

BYRON AND THE SUBLIME IN *CAIN*

‘Besides, when I turn thirty—I will turn devout—I feel a great vocation that way in Catholic churches— & when I hear the Organ’. (Byron to Murray, 9 April, 1817)

Introduction: Byron’s Notions of Religion

When Byron was a young child, his mother, Catherine, employed the pious Presbyterian nursemaid Agnes Gray to look after him. After a few weeks, Agnes brought her sister May (Mary) to the Byron home, and it was at this time that the Gray sisters initiated a kind of evangelical salvation of Byron’s soul. Agnes began quoting Old Testament scripture as a way to frighten and indoctrinate the young lord into submission to Presbyterian theology, as well as to save his soul from eternal damnation, whilst her sister sexually molested him in the name of religion.

This experience of abuse, coupled with the doctrinal austerity of Catherine’s Calvinism, arguably had a lasting and negative impact on Byron. The profound effect of the Gray sisters’ pernicious brand of Presbyterianism is that it forced the young Byron to perceive religion almost exclusively in terms of damnation and guilt. Byron could have possibly seen himself as a kind of ‘fallen angel’ and, as a result may well have felt despondent. This possible despondency would have been rooted in the fact that Byron could have been told and learned that his condition of suffering was both inescapable and a result of his sinfulness and predetermined nature in the universe.²⁰³

Years later, however, and upon arrival in Venice, Byron took note of his lover Margarita Cogni’s religious devotion, and observed how Italian Catholics in general had a uniquely different perspective of religion to that of the English.²⁰⁴ Therefore, it should be no surprise that Byron would come to have a seemingly complex view of religion, its role, and its impacts on the individual.

²⁰³ Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Portrait* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1979.), p. 20. See also Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1957), vol. 1., p. 139.

²⁰⁴ Mary Hurst, ‘Byron’s Catholic Confessions’, *The Byron Journal*, 40.1 (2012), 29-40 (p. 29).

As we saw in the previous chapter, by the time Byron had settled in Venice, his mind was an assortment of differing views on the metaphysical. As time progressed, and he began to feel more comfortable in his surroundings, he became more open to religious experience. According to Mary Hurst, 'Byron sees that religion is real to Margarita even if it is not noticeably repressive of illicit sexual behaviour in the manner in which, for example, Presbyterianism might be'.²⁰⁵ As opposed to the liberalness of Catholicism's separation of the 'individual life' from the 'religious life', Calvinism sought to wed the two together, keeping the two as part of one inclusive life. Therefore, Byron's actions could be counted against his heavenly salvation, whereas with Catholicism there would be the separation of earthly sins through heavenly forgiveness. There was not the immediate damnation of the individual in Catholicism as there was in Calvinism. Again, Hurst points out that:

Catholics may appear to disengage religion from morality, yet, paradoxically, in comparison with Protestants, they are in some senses stricter. [...] But, at the same time, as Byron observes, they are more lax than Protestants. Carnival dramatically manifests this paradox.²⁰⁶

Thus, it was with this newfound curiosity that Byron moved forward and explored his own religious beliefs while keeping his notions of the sublime firmly in mind.

Recent Scholarship

Cain was published with *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari* on 19 December 1821, and it marks the beginning of what I will call Byron's 'late phase', which would be dominated by his *magnum opus*, *Don Juan*. Sometimes cast into the shadows and forgotten amidst the clamour of *Don Juan* scholarship is the study of Byron's late plays. In recent years, there has been a shift in the focus of research regarding Byron's plays, most notably *Cain*, with a wide array of opinions on Byron's intentions and goals.

Stephen L. Goldstein holds that 'Byron was obsessed with human nature's nothingness', and that *Cain* 'shows that man is unexceptional because he is insignificant

²⁰⁵ Hurst, 'Byron's Catholic Confessions', p. 29.

²⁰⁶ Hurst, 'Byron's Catholic Confessions', p. 30.

both in space and, more importantly, in time'.²⁰⁷ I agree with Goldstein's first assertion to an extent, but completely disagree with the second, as I shall argue later in this chapter. Returning to the first assertion, I see that Byron is concerned with the supposed nothingness of human nature, yet I disagree with Goldstein on two points in this respect: first, I think that 'obsessed' is too strong of a word here, and contend that Byron's concern with the nothingness of human nature derives from a profound wish to discover the nature and significance of the self. I would argue further that this is precisely the underlying significance of Harold's pilgrimage that has been carried over from the past. Second, if Byron was so 'obsessed' then would he not have been so devoted to the nothingness, as Goldstein seems to profess? Although Byron's poetry exhibits certain 'philosophical' moments (this is one way in which he clearly differs from Wordsworth and Shelley—Romanticism's 'philosopher poets'), he was not a philosopher, and his is not an organised belief in any one specific religion.²⁰⁸

Paul Cantor states that 'Cain's story shows more radically than Adam's that the human condition is one of exile and alienation'.²⁰⁹ I agree, as my main argument is that Cain needs to be exiled and alienated in order to continue on his journey to acquire knowledge. While Cain is not a Prometheus, *per se*, he does exhibit several Promethean qualities that should endear him to humanity. Society turns its back on Cain because he does not fall in line with the rest of humanity by being obedient. He rebels to continue on his quest, despite society's ostracising of such rebels and their actions.

Wolf Hirst's argument is the one that is closest to my own line of thinking, in that:

Symbolically, the victory of human love over knowledge might be seen as the triumph of divine love, Cain's choice of reason over love as renunciation of God, and Abel's Christ-like forgiveness combined with Adah's

²⁰⁷ Stephen L. Goldstein, 'Byron's "Cain" and the Painites', *Studies in Romanticism*, 14.4 (1975), 391-410 (p. 402).

²⁰⁸ For a more complete understanding of Byron's thinking towards philosophy, see Emily Bernhard Jackson, *The Development of Byron's Philosophy of Knowledge: Certain in Uncertainty* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

²⁰⁹ Paul A. Cantor, 'Byron's "Cain": A Romantic Version of the Fall', *The Kenyon Review*, 2.3 (1980), 50-71 (p. 52).

passionate consistency as the persistent watchfulness of providence despite man's repudiation.²¹⁰

Hirst's claim, coupled with that of Cantor's Promethean Cain, leads readers to see that the abandonment of divine love gives way to reason. And it is this reason that Cain will use to justify his quest for knowledge and his life's purpose.

Anthony Howe's recent book *Byron and the Forms of Thought* examines Byron as a poet who experiments with various schools of thought.²¹¹ This imbedding of philosophical ideas within his poetry is something that has been elucidated throughout this thesis. For the purpose of this chapter, I will survey and consider what Howe has to say with regards to *Cain*. While Howe argues that there is evidence of Pyrrhonian scepticism in Byron's early poetry, I look to Howe in my argument that *Cain* could be the most 'philosophical' poem in Byron's *oeuvre*.

In her 2018 essay, Mirka Horová examines the extent to which Byron uses Lucretius in his poetry, primarily focusing on framing her ideas within the broader context of Regency poetics.²¹² Although she does mention the Lucretian appearance in *Cain*, she does not go into in-depth analysis of Byron's utilisation of Epicurean philosophy in his poetry.²¹³

Finally, in the introduction to his edition of *Cain*, Peter Cochran holds that '*Cain* is, to speak in modern cinema terms, a "prequel" to *Manfred*: its protagonist stands at the start of his quest for universal knowledge, which Manfred has (so his play asserts) mastered'.²¹⁴ I contend that Cochran is only half-correct in his assertion, since Cain is indeed 'at the start of his quest for universal knowledge'. However, unlike Cochran, I reject the notion that *Cain* is the prequel to the somewhat confusing and epistemologically inchoate *Manfred*, and it is from this perspective that I begin my own journey of Canaanite discovery.

²¹⁰ Wolf Z. Hirst, 'Byron's Lapse into Orthodoxy: An Unorthodox Reading of *Cain*' in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 253-72 (pp. 257-258).

²¹¹ Anthony Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

²¹² Mirka Horová, "'Hurl'd First Out of and Then Back Again to Chaos": Byron's Lucretian Regency', in *Essays on Byron: In Honour of Dr. Peter Cochran: Breaking the Mould*, ed. Malcolm Kelsall, Peter Graham, and Mirka Horová (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2018).

²¹³ I will address specific issues with Horová's essay later in this chapter.

²¹⁴ Peter Cochran, *Byron and Italy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p. 2.

If Cochran is correct in his claim, then this would mean that Cain goes forth on his journey to discover the Tree of Knowledge. His quest would then lead him to the Alps, where he would assume Manfred's identity and eventually succumb to his inability to complete the mission. Yet if we reverse Cochran's claim and hold that it is Manfred who gives rise to Cain, then we can argue that the latter is the more evolved character. Manfred is mentally and physically exhausted by his quest, and is arguably unable to see past himself, and as such he dies. Cain, on the other hand, introspectively examines himself and embraces his fated nothingness as he moves forward, away from Adam, Eve, and Zillah, and goes off on his excursion to seek the Tree of Knowledge as a rebel-in-training, with Adah and Enoch in tow. As it will be discussed further, Byron situates *Cain* as a way to broaden and develop the Manfred character/motif in an evolutionary manner.

Cain: The Tragic Rebel-Hero

One of the most intriguing points about Cain is that he is a morally ambiguous and psychologically complex character, one who is far more advanced in his sense of self than Manfred. For Goldstein, he is the epitome of nothingness, and Cantor sees him as the prototypical rebel. These two assertions of Cain's individuality bring to light the multifaceted intricacies and complexities that shape his character.

According to Harold Bloom, 'For Byron, Cain is the first Romantic', and 'The tragedy of Cain is that he cannot accomplish his spiritual awakening without developing an intensity of consciousness which he is ill-prepared to sustain. His imaginativeness flowers into murderousness, as it will later in the terrible protagonists of Dostoevsky'.²¹⁵ If we agree with Bloom, then we may advance a causal link from Cain's 'spiritual awakening' to his desire to go forth into the universe and seek the Tree of Knowledge. However, Bloom argues that the development of his 'imaginativeness' blossoms 'into murderousness', and gives rise to 'the terrible protagonists of Dostoevsky'. I see Bloom's line of thinking in one of two ways: first, if we accept his statement *verbatim*, then Cain becomes the forefather to several generations of protagonists whose fates are doomed before they are even born and come into existence. However, if we take a less fatalistic view of Cain, then we can argue

²¹⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 25.

Unlike the typical anti-hero, Cain is not despondent, dejected, and willing to do anything to overcome his negative condition, but rather chooses to give his life meaning. While he can be seen as the forefather of Dostoevsky's villain-protagonists, there is so much more to understand about the complexity of his being. For example, referring back to Cantor, 'If Albert Camus was right to refer to modern revolutionaries as "the sons of Cain," Byron's drama can help to reveal the profound link between Romanticism and the world of the twentieth century'.²¹⁷ Thus, what differentiates Cain as a Romantic hero from those who come after is that he represents and understands the human condition, and this is seen in his act of blatant rebellion.

Anne Mellor argues that 'Cain, like Manfred, is a tragic figure. He is obsessed with the consciousness of death, with man's finitude and mortality'.²¹⁸ I believe that Cain, in many respects, is a more complex individual than Manfred. I think that Mellor is correct in her notion that Cain is a tragic figure, although I disagree with her claim that he is 'obsessed with the consciousness of death'. While Cain could be seen as obsessed because he follows in the footsteps of Manfred, instead he is more concerned with 'man's finitude' because he would argue that the existence of God prevents individuality and one's understanding of the sublime. In order to engage with the sublime, Cain must first rebel against God in order to afford himself the chance to confront the sublime. Of course, as we will see, Lucifer understands this and sees Cain as a kind of rebellious protégé who will continue the rebellion on Earth.

Cain is not convinced by Adam's notion that individuals should merely accept their fate and place their trust in God. From the outset of the play, Cain questions his position and it is this questioning that leads him to rebellion. While Lucifer advances this rebellion, the ideas of mutiny are already present in Cain's mind. As a tragic rebel hero, he is already alienated from the rest of humanity. This alienation could be due to the fact that Cain, unlike his family, chooses to think for himself rather than idly accept his fate.

As rational animals, it is not so instinctive to accept the blind tenets (like those of Adam), but rather to use our logical capabilities to challenge our exile and alienation (which stem from acceptance). Cain will not accede quietly, but goes forth on his quest for

²¹⁷ Cantor, 'Byron's "Cain"', p. 51.

²¹⁸ Mellor, *Romantic Irony*, p. 39.

truth and to find the Tree of Knowledge, because as he suspects ‘you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free’ (John 8:32). And, because of his rationality, Cain chooses not to follow God’s will blindly, but to rebel, follow Lucifer, and chart his own path. It is his rebellion that will ultimately lead him to the Tree of Knowledge, which combined with the Truth can be interpreted, I argue, with what Byron intends to be the sublime. I will address this claim later in the chapter.

Both Bloom and Cantor see Cain as a prototypical rebel who will influence later nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. Arguably, Cain's tragic qualities are those that demonstrate his willingness to embark on the quest for knowledge knowing full well that he may not find it and that death is inevitable. Like all individuals who choose life over death, Cain must find that which makes his life meaningful. Also, in choosing life over death, Cain becomes a rebel who dissents against the absurdity of existence through his desire to exist and strive for meaning.

His rebellion is a revolt against the complacency of his situation in the universe. For example,

CAIN: Why do I exist?
 Why art *thou* wretched? why are all things so?
 [...]
 To produce destruction
 [...]
 that must arose from out
 Its deadly opposite. (2.2. 279-80, 282, 288-9)

If Lucifer, who incites Cain into rebellion, is correct and God creates the world out of nothingness, then Cain must rebel against the emptiness and fill its void with meaning. The rebellious act will be the quest for the Tree of Knowledge. According to Cantor, ‘The deeds of Cain...are examples of what Albert Camus has called metaphysical rebellion, a rebellion against what is perceived as the absurdity of human existence’.²¹⁹

For critics like Goldstein, Cantor, Hirst, and myself, Cain is not the dejected, despondent pseudo-Manfred that Cochran implies. Rather, he is a psychologically and philosophically complex individual who bridges the complexities of Manfred by

²¹⁹ Cantor, 'Byron's "Cain"', p. 59.

foreshadowing the rebelliousness of twentieth-century literature. As a result, when Cain first comes to realise that there is a definite difference in God's acceptance of his offering of fruits and vegetables compared with Abel's offering of animal flesh, he feels jaded and insecure. One could argue that the notions of insecurity stem from Cain's recognition of Adam and Eve's human failings in the Garden of Eden. And rather than be subject to the degradation of grovelling for forgiveness like his parents, or appeasing the apparent God of Love with offerings of flesh like Abel, Cain contemplates the seemingly meaningless existence and rebels against it. He becomes the more-evolved Manfred character, yet instead of death, he rebels against that which he knows he does not want to become, and thus he grows into his own sense of self.

Goldstein's argument is one in which Cain recognises the nothingness of human nature. However, he chooses to rebel against his perceived nihilism because the actual act of the rebellion, or even the conscious decision to rebel, forces the notion of a willed meaningfulness of one's life. Cain's first step is to judge whether or not life is worth living. By meeting, facing, and encountering the absurd head on, Cain must choose whether or not his life is worth living, ultimately deciding to live:

CAIN: I live,
 But live to die:
 [...] yet all invincible
 Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
 Despise myself, yet cannot overcome—
 And so I live. (1.1.109-10, 112-15)

It is at this precise moment that Cain becomes a tragic hero, because of his conscious decision to confront the absurdity of existence and death, and move forward in search of the meaning of human existence. This moment of decision is cause for doubt – 'why do I quake?' (1.1.82) – because Cain understands the momentousness of the decision as one in which he will stand out and apart from the rest of his family. The rejection of complacency within God's ordered universe affords Cain the first moments of rebellion and the quest for meaning in what appears to be a nihilistic world. Howe goes on to argue that 'Cain's

choice is not simply between obedience and rebellion, but between knowledge and the world knowledge fails to contain'.²²⁰

In Act One, when Lucifer first meets Cain, the former admits to two crucial statements regarding their placement in the universe. The first is that neither are happy, and the second is that God is an 'Omnipotent', 'Indefinite, indissoluble tyrant' (1.1.138, 153). Here, Lucifer appeals to Cain's pathos in two distinct ways: there is the question of happiness, forcing Cain to examine introspectively his own discontent, and then there is the appeal to an *ad hominem* attack on God's character, thereby drawing out God's tyranny and connecting it with Cain's unhappiness.

By feeding into Cain's own insecurities and queries, Lucifer forces the rebellion:

CAIN: Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum
 In visions through my thought: I never could
 Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.

[...]

 I feel the weight
 Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look
 Around a world where I seem nothing, with
 Thoughts which arise within me, as if they
 Could master all things:—but I thought alone
 This misery was *mine*. (1.1.167-9, 174-9)

This feeling of isolation, after witnessing his arduous labours and offering go underappreciated compared with those of Abel, only compounds Cain's inferiority complex. And when Lucifer admits that he, too, feels a sense of loneliness, Cain seizes the chance to justify the moment of his decision to rebel: 'never till / Now met I aught to sympathize with me' (1.1.189-90). Cain subconsciously knows that he is to rebel against his earthly and Heavenly parents, and carry on the quest for knowledge and freedom by enlisting the help of Lucifer. Thus, Byron presents his readers with a new kind of rebel—the rebel hero.

²²⁰ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 55.

In an entry to his Ravenna Journal dated 28 January 1821, Byron loosely philosophises thoughts that can be indirectly attributed to overarching ideas in his head concerning the fate of Cain:

Why, at the very height of desire and human pleasure, – worldly, social, amorous, ambitious, or even avaricious, – does there mingle a certain sense of doubt and sorrow – a fear of what is to come – a doubt of what is – a retrospect to the past, leading to a prognostication of the future? [...] I know not, except that on a pinnacle we are most susceptible of giddiness, and that we never fear falling except from a precipice – the higher, the more awful, and the more sublime; and, therefore, I am not sure that Fear is not a pleasurable sensation; at least, *Hope is*; and *what Hope* is there without a deep leaven of Fear? And what sensation is so delightful as Hope? And, if it were not for Hope, where would the Future be? – in hell. It is useless to say *where* the Present is, for most of us know; and as for the Past, *what* predominates in memory? – *Hope baffled*. Ergo, in all human affairs, it is Hope – Hope – Hope.²²¹

Where Manfred grows despondent over his inability to complete the quest, Cain has the foresight—and the fortitude—to push onwards and upwards. It is as if he knows that he must not suffer like Manfred, but rather should rebel against the predetermined fate of his family in order to provide some hope for humanity.

Following on from *Manfred*, the first act of *Cain* seems to undergo a shift in Byron's tone and subject matter. Next, we are introduced to Adah, Cain's twin sister and wife, who provides the cautious voice of *religious* reason against the backdrop of Cain's *humanistic* reason. In this sense, Adah comes to question Lucifer's intentions for Cain's rebellion in addition to reminding the latter of his duty to their parents and to God. She also employs her own pathos-centred argument when she states 'Born of the same sole womb [...] did we not love each other [...]? And as I love thee, my Cain! go not / Forth with this Spirit; he is not of ours' (1.1.371-2, 375-6). When Lucifer tries to justify his past sins, Adah is unmoved, but Cain decides – tragically but also somewhat heroically – that he

²²¹ Marchand, *BLJ* 8, p. 37.

must follow Lucifer into the abyss of space. This occurs at the beginning of Act II, and it is the void of space that strongly echoes the Atomic philosophy of Lucretius. In Act II, Cain's amazement with space seems to echo Lucretius's treatise *On the Nature of Things*, especially when it concerns two of Lucretius's most important ideas: *ex nihilo nihil fit* and the atomic 'swerve'.

***Ex nihilo nihil fit* and the 'swerve'**

In Book I of his philosophical treatise *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*), Lucretius examines the notion '*Ex nihilo nihil fit*' (Out of nothing comes nothing) with regards to nature:

And so this darkness and terror of the mind
Shall not by the sun's rays, by the bright lances of daylight
Be scattered, but by Nature and her law.
Whose fundamental axiom is this:
Nothing comes supernaturally from nothing.²²² (Bk I, 146-50)

It is here, in this nothingness, that the mind can play tricks on itself, or that it can *occupare momento* (seize the moment). If the moment is seized by the individual, then:

But once we've seen that nothing is made from nothing,
We'll find our path and see straight through to what
We search for: we shall know that things alone can come
To be—and in what manner—without gods.²²³ (Bk. I, 155-58)

In examining these two passages within the context of *Cain*, it is hard not to wonder if Byron had Lucretius's philosophy in mind. One cannot help but perceive Cain's journey into the darkness of space, whilst Lucifer is his guide, and when he begins to question his placement in the universe, it is Lucifer's guidance that steers Cain into the awareness that

²²² Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. translated by Anthony M. Esolen (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 29.

²²³ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, p. 29.

there is something (not necessarily the Divine) greater than himself. Lucifer knows that he must continue to accompany Cain on his journey of self-discovery, so that the latter might avenge the former's disfavour for his rebellious actions against God.

Howe postulates that 'Vision and prophecy for Lucifer are not objects for serious moral consideration; they are, rather, opportunities for some pointed Byronic mischief'.²²⁴ Here I completely disagree with Howe, because if we are to believe his position, then it would diminish the idea that Byron's purpose in writing *Cain* is to explore the idea of free will and the quest to obtain the sublime. Following Milton's Lucifer, who rebels against God's tyranny, Cain can see that his existence is not wholly dependent upon the gods. This affords him the chance to be the master of his own destiny, and choose the path of existence. Thus, this shall bring Cain into Book II, where Lucretius discusses the 'swerve' of the atomic elements.

According to Lucretius's theory, the 'atoms are carried straight down through the void' where 'they swerve a little' (Bk II, ll. 218, 220).²²⁵ The perpetual motion of the atoms can be seen, in metaphorical terms, as individuals like Cain who are on a journey of self-discovery. The 'Collisions that might give rise to the motions of life, / Falls far out of the way of truth and reason' (Bk II, ll. 229-30).²²⁶ Symbolically speaking, the collisions could represent the ebb and flow of mental tension. For example, Cain is unsure if he should rebel against God, or whether he should obey and follow the example of his family. This indecision and constant questioning creates a collision of ideas and indecisiveness in Cain's mind, and Lucifer receives the opportunity to show Cain the limitless possibilities that rebellion can bring, especially when knowledge of truth and reason is found.

In relation to *Don Juan*, Clara Tuite holds that the 'formal and philosophical principle of [the text] is underpinned by the materialist Epicurean philosophy...Byron's cosmological tropology of atoms, dust, and ruins derives from Lucretius, with its emphasis on the fragmentary and random'.²²⁷ In addition to this clear Lucretian influence in *Don Juan*, I argue that it is found earlier in Byron's *oeuvre*, as we see in *Cain*. I believe that by

²²⁴ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 62.

²²⁵ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, p. 63.

²²⁶ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, p. 63.

²²⁷ Clara Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 185-186.

experimenting with Lucretius's atomism, Byron is able to create a character in Cain who rebels against predestination by thinking for himself. By doing so, Cain is unlike any of Byron's previous characters, and thus paves the way for Juan's confrontation with Aurora Raby and the sublime.

With the publication of *Cain*, Byron affords his readers a character who, like most individuals, has wondered who they are and considered their placement in the universe. Thus, Cain becomes the emblem of humanity's endless questioning of existential problems. Cochran states that 'Lucretius' atomist philosophy, which has no space for immortality, plays a bigger part in Byron's antithetical thinking than has been seen'.²²⁸ And Horová claims that 'Both Byron's and Lucretius' poetic and intellectual levity are a source of pleasure (if often contested) and do not by any means preclude serious thought'.²²⁹ Again, I would contend that Cochran alludes to the idea that it is not Byron's intent to discuss his thoughts on immortality in *Cain*, but rather it is his way of preparing the reader for all that *Don Juan* has to offer. I will, however, respectfully disagree with Horová in that it is clearly Byron's intent that *Cain* will contain 'serious thought'. If it did not, then there would be no possible way that Lucretian atomism would illustrate the potentiality of sublime discourse.

Returning to Lucretius:

Then, if all motions are forever linked,
[...]
Swerving together to follow the mind's desire;
So you see motion first created in
The heart, proceeding from the mind and will,
Passing on through the limbs and the whole body.²³⁰

(Bk II, ll. 252, 269-72)

If we apply Lucretius's lines to a reading of Cain, then it appears that Cain's relationship with Lucifer is 'forever linked' with the fabric of the universe as two atoms 'swerving

²²⁸ Peter Cochran, 'Introduction', *Byron and Latin Culture: Selected Proceedings of the 37th International Byron Society Conference* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013), p. 72.

²²⁹ Horová, 'Byron's Lucretian Regency', p.123.

²³⁰ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, p. 64.

together' in order to sort through 'the mind's desire'. And it seems as if Cain's 'mind and will' have already decided that the body will rebel against the conformity of God's wishes and the likes of humanity. True to his atomic 'roots', Cain willingly rebels and, as a result, he seems to embody the freedom of an apparently nihilistic existence. If the rest of humanity follows the order of the universe, then one could argue that their purpose is to remain in line, continuing with the notion that the universe is a uniformly perfect entity. However, when individuals like Cain come along, they rebel against the predestined existence of a higher order and present a disruption in the framework of the universe. Thus, Cain does not merely represent the rebellious nature of the nonconformist individual, but he also symbolises the seemingly unsystematic and misfortune of the rebellion's effect on the order of the universe. And, as we shall see, the sublime found in *Cain* is an amalgam of two of Cain's journeys: the internal, which embeds itself in the mind, and the external, which is to be found in his quest for truth.

Cain and the Lucretian Sublime

In what is arguably the most important act of the play, Act II provides a glimpse into Byron's use of the Lucretian sublime with regards to the development of the play's dramatic and philosophical structure. It is almost instinctive that Byron should choose Lucretius's atomic philosophy to compliment his use of Longinus. According to classics scholar James I. Porter, 'Both as a philosopher and poet, Lucretius is naturally interested in the same kinds of sweeping topics that engage Longinus—nature, the soul and language'.²³¹ If Longinus is representative of the Epicurean school of thought, then Lucretius's division and understanding of the universe as comprised of atoms would be the cornerstone of Pre-Socratic Atomic philosophy. Again, Porter states that:

Atomism lends itself particularly well to the sublime, in at least two ways: through the glimpses of the void, which in their radical negation of all that is and that has sense, unsettle conventional frames of reference and threaten to annihilate phenomenological meaning; and in the collision and confusion of

²³¹ James I. Porter, 'Lucretius and the Sublime', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 167-84 (p. 168).

the two immeasurable scales of the micro-and macro-levels, whereby the infinitesimally small can appear infinitely and forbiddingly large.²³²

The Lucretian void is a vast and empty nothingness where negation reigns supreme, and it is where Lucifer first takes Cain on their journey through the universe. Yet while the void appears to be pure emptiness, it does contain atoms.

Early in the second act, Cain beholds the ‘Abyss of Space’, finding it so incredibly ‘beautiful’ that he wishes to ‘die, as atoms die’ so that he may become a part of that beauty. A few lines later, Cain refers to the atoms as ‘beautiful in their own sphere’ and comments on ‘the mysteries of Death’.²³³ It can be argued that Cain’s fascination with death stems from his being descended from Manfred, for if the latter contemplates death out of despair or necessity, then Cain wants to see death out of curiosity. Byron’s visit to St. Peter’s Basilica perhaps changed his attitude towards death and God, as there is always the possibility that a genuine and sincere curiosity was planted and grew in his mind.

In scene ii, Lucifer takes Cain into Hades, so that it might be juxtaposed with the void of Space. Once in the depths of Hades, Cain remarks that these extra-terrestrial worlds are ‘silent’, ‘vast’, and ‘dim’, and have ‘huge brilliant luminous orbs’ that populate the ‘all unimaginable Heaven’.²³⁴ In what can be perceived as a derivation from Epicurean philosophy, according to David Norbrook, ‘The poet, following Epicurus, is bringing light out of the darkness, but this light reveals odd darkneses of vacuum under the superficial brightness of things’.²³⁵ The void is all at once empty, yet full of the atomic orbs that are (in)visible to the naked eye, but that seem to have an ordered chaos to their existence. Cain, taking note of such transformations, comments that:

By a most crushing and inexorable
Destruction and disorder of the elements,
Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos
Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,

²³² Porter, ‘Lucretius and the Sublime’, p. 168.

²³³ Byron, *Cain*, 2.1. 113, 128, 140.

²³⁴ Byron, *Cain*, 2.2. 1, 3, 6.

²³⁵ David Norbrook, ‘Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and the Lucretian Sublime’, in *The Art of the Sublime*, ed. Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/david-norbrook-milton-lucy-hutchinson-and-the-lucretiansublime-r1138669>).

Though rare in time, are frequent in Eternity.—
Pass on, and gaze upon the past. (2.2. 80-5)

It is the unfamiliarity of chaos that enables it to appear as a negative attribute rather than the (dis)orderly workings of the universe. The chaotic and seemingly random flights of the atoms would be problematic for any mortal's comprehension, but instead they function as microbes that bring glimpses of the universe to the perceiver.

In her essay 'The Sublime Plurality of Worlds: Lucretius in the Eighteenth Century', Anne Janowitz elucidates on Lucretius's 'cosmic sublime' by quoting Joseph Addison:

When we survey the whole Earth at once, and the several Planets that lie within its Neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleasing Astonishment, to see so many Worlds hanging one above another, and sliding around their Axles in such an amazing Pomp and Solemnity. If, after this, we contemplate those wide Fields of Ether, that reach in height as far from Saturn to the fixt Stars, and run abroad almost to an Infinitude, our Imagination finds its Capacity filled with so immense a Prospect, and puts itself upon the stretch to comprehend it. But if we rise yet higher, and consider the fixt Stars as so many vast Oceans of Flame, that are each of them attended with different Set of Planets, and still discover new Firmaments and new lights, that are sunk farther in those unfathomable Depths of Ether, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our Telescopes, we are lost in such a labyrinth of Suns and Worlds, and are confounded with the Immensity and Magnificence of Nature (No. 420, 2 July, 1712).²³⁶

For Janowitz, 'The excitement of the Addisonian sublime was that it invited the reader or watcher of skies to experience a deep pleasure in probing the limits of reason rather than its foundations'.²³⁷ Addison borrows from Lucretius the idea that the vastness of Space

²³⁶ Anne Janowitz, 'The Sublime Plurality of Worlds: Lucretius in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Art of the Sublime*, ed. Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/anne-janowitz-the-sublime-plurality-of-worlds>lucretius-in-the-sup-
[supeighteenth-century-r1138670](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/anne-janowitz-the-sublime-plurality-of-worlds)).

²³⁷ Janowitz, 'The Sublime Plurality of Worlds: Lucretius in the Eighteenth Century'

concentrates our minds on the foundation of experiences, pleasures, and reasons, and not its limits, arguing that we will ground ourselves in the footing and never move beyond the tangible to question or face the limitless possibilities for rational questioning. Byron, too, recognises what Addison is postulating. For example, when visiting St. Peter's, Byron questions the effects of Catholicism on the soul, and it is his natural aptitude for inquiring and searching for answers that brings him to Cain's story while moving beyond the traditional Christian interpretation.

Approximately halfway through the second act, and a quarter of the way through scene two, Byron moves away from Cain's experience in Hades and ever so slightly shifts the focus away from a projected observation to an inverted assessment of rationality. Lucifer instigates further reasons for Cain's rebelliousness when he states that:

peopled with
Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness—
A Paradise of Ignorance, from which
Knowledge was barr'd as poison. (2.2. 99-102)

Here, what we are presented with is the motivation for action, as well as Byron's own critique of Calvinist Christianity. On the one hand, Lucifer reminds Cain that Christianity keeps its disciples 'in blindness', leading to a fool's 'Paradise of Ignorance' where they unconditionally accept what they are force-fed in the puritanical fanaticism of Sunday's sermons and where the ultimate view is that knowledge is poison. On the other hand, this is the reason why Cain must venture out into the universe and seek truth, which, as far as Lucifer and Cain are concerned, can set individuals free.

The pursuit of truth marks the beginning of Cain's Promethean quest. Lucifer continues, '*Their* Earth is gone for ever— [...] Oh, what a beautiful world it *was*!' (2.2.120,124). It is Lucifer's seemingly innocent incitement that allows Cain to imagine the beauty that once contained Earth, but now it is no more. Cain hears Lucifer, and envisions a beautiful world in which knowledge and truth bring pure enlightenment to the human race, creating a kind of utopian Heaven-on-Earth. However, since there is no longer a Tree of Knowledge to be found, Cain will take it upon himself to rebel against the God that supposedly loves humanity, and seek to find truth in order to save humanity. Yet, in a

moment of what appears to be genuine concern, Lucifer seems to warn Cain that ‘It may be Death leads to the *highest* knowledge’.²³⁸

Upon their return to Earth, Cain has made up his mind that he will rebel against his predetermination, go forward on his quest for knowledge, and seek truth and the freedom that it brings, seeing knowledge ‘as being | The road to happiness!’ (2.2.230-31). Again, Lucifer warns him, ‘But ignorance of evil doth not save | From evil; it must still roll on the same, | A part of all things’ (2.2. 235-7), and then provides sound advice before Cain’s journey: ‘Approach the things of earth most beautiful, | And judge their beauty near’ (2.2.249-50). To this, Cain replies that Adah, his sister and wife, is ‘The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest’ (2.2.251), before he launches into the claims to support his premise. In his eyes, Adah is nothing like the celestial entities, and to gaze upon Adah’s face will force Cain to ‘turn from earth and heaven | To gaze on it’ (2.2.268-9).

Howe contends that

Cain’s first act is to question the sanctity of God’s imposition of form upon chaos. He is encouraged throughout to see this simply as an act of tyranny. His ending as an exiled murderer is thus ironic because it depends upon his blindness to his own capacity to shape boundlessness.²³⁹

The problem with this assertion is that it reduces Cain’s rebellion—and rebellious nature—to an almost Miltonic degree. We know that Byron read and was influenced by Milton, but I would counter Howe’s argument and claim that the Miltonic influence is at a minimum in *Cain*.²⁴⁰ Rather than use Milton to imply a deeper connection, as Howe infers, I would argue that Byron’s sympathies for Cain and Lucifer extend beyond any kind of Miltonic influence because, as I have shown in this chapter, there are moments of the Lucretian sublime, specifically through Byron’s use of the atomic sublime. It is this utilisation of the Lucretian sublime that moves Byron from the Roman stanzas of *CHP* IV and into the latter cantos of *Don Juan*.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Byron, *Cain*, 3.1.164.

²³⁹ Howe, *Byron and the Forms of Thought*, p. 66.

²⁴⁰ In his monograph *The Romantic Legacy of Paradise Lost*, Jonathon Shears devotes an entire chapter to his argument that Byron writes against the Miltonian epic.

²⁴¹ I would argue that Byron’s use of the Lucretian sublime does not negate the Miltonic influence; rather, I feel that Byron’s choice to use atoms and the void of space compliments the Miltonic

Finally, in her book *Being Shelley: The Poet's Search for Himself*, Ann Wroe maintains that 'Satan's gift, through the fatal apple, had been self-knowledge. Shelley's opinions, ringing in Byron's ears as they toured Lake Geneva in the summer of 1816, turned up on the lips of Lucifer, "Master of Spirits", in Byron's *Cain*'.²⁴² If Wroe is correct, then Shelley would have had a hand in influencing Byron's ideas on religion. However, I contend that Byron's thoughts of religion (at least the unfavourable ones) come from his antipathy to Calvinist and Presbyterian dogma, and that his notions of a loving, forgiving God stem from his time spent amongst the Catholics in Italy. Nevertheless, readers are presented with a fascinating journey of religious self-discovery that will ultimately culminate with Byron's excursion into the world of *Don Juan*.

Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter, we have seen an assortment of ideas concerning Cain, his placement in the universe, and his role as a rebel-hero. There can be no doubt that Byron intended *Cain* to be a sequel, or at the very least a revision, of *Manfred*, especially after his time spent in Italy amongst the Catholics. It may be said that Cain was persuaded by Lucifer to rebel, yet this decision—and the desire to succeed where Adam and Eve could not—was quite attractive given the insecurities of Cain.

With regards to framing Byron's thoughts on religion and his use of philosophy, in connection to the previous chapters and the thesis as a whole, I have previously argued that when the poet-narrator is in Rome, he seeks spiritual guidance upon entering St. Peter's. Having arrived at the Vatican, as a fallen sinner in God's domain, he undergoes a transformation, an arguably transcendent experience that leaves him forgiven and elevated above himself. If the poet-narrator's sins are binding chains, then forgiveness breaks the shackles and St. Peter's lifts the spirit upwards, (en)lightened by the forgiveness of God. But what about Cain?

Cain figures prominently as the rebel who chooses not to ask for forgiveness, but rather to listen to his (mis)guided instincts and follow Lucifer into the outer realms of the universe. Here, according to both Lucifer and Cain, they are able to see the inner-workings

sublime and, as a result, further his experiment of the sublime. Finally, I would contend that Byron is more apt than Howe or Shears seem to realise.

²⁴² Anne Wroe, *Being Shelley: The Poet's Search for Himself* (New York: Vintage, 2007), p. 321.

of the cosmos down to its atomic level. While I chose not to debate whether Lucifer's intent was malicious, I believe that the responsibility for rebellion against any kind of predetermination lies squarely with Cain. If not, then my theory is unsupported. Instead, Byron presents readers with a character who, through the guise of rebellion, chooses to strike out on his own and seek the Tree of Knowledge. As I have shown, Cain's willingness to move forward stems from the evolution of Manfred as the Byronic hero.

One point with Horová that I will agree on is that

Lucretius' influence on the Romantics generally is most felt in the Latin poet's keen appreciation of nature and natural phenomena, which highlights the quiet seclusion of the country and the power of contemplation away from the maddening crowd of the city and its ambitions.²⁴³

Cain goes against the pleasure principle of Epicurean philosophy, instead focussing on the seriousness of the Lucretian atomism that allows for the sublime to make its presence known. There is no way that the sublime could appear in Byron's poetry, if it was framed within the contexts of Epicurean thought. In fact, I challenge Anne Mellor's belief that there is an element of sublimity with the irony and comedic moments of *Don Juan*, as I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter. Instead, I suggest that there is an engagement with the sublime that is ultimately displaced by the accession to the divine, as posited by Bernard Beatty.

²⁴³ Horová, 'Byron's Lucretian Regency', p. 124.

CHAPTER 5

BYRON, *DON JUAN*, AND THE SUBLIMITY OF ENGLAND

‘The abyss, as it were, drives us back to the despised safety of present invention constructed from past experience’.—Bernard Beatty²⁴⁴

Introduction

This final chapter will focus on how Byron utilises and comes to terms with the sublime as it is presented in the English cantos of the poem. I will focus my analysis on five distinct yet related cantos: first, Canto X will provide a foundation from which I will examine the void and the sublime, continuing the discussion presented in Chapter Four. Next, Cantos XI and XIII will focus on moments of doubt and scepticism in relation to Byron’s thoughts on metaphysics and how they pave the way towards the Norman Abbey and Aurora Raby stanzas. As a point of transition, I will then look at what prominent Byron scholars such as Bernard Beatty and Gavin Hopps have to say about the Norman Abbey as both a building and a representation of the gothic. Then, I will elucidate on the abyss stanzas of Canto XIV with respect to their depiction of nothingness and, finally, I will arrive at Canto XV and Aurora Raby. Here we will find Byron coming to terms with Aurora as a symbol of the Platonic notion of Ideal Beauty and the sublime. Before concluding the thesis, I will ask: ‘In what ways is Aurora representative of Ideal Beauty (as examined in Pre-Socratic, Socratic, and Platonic terms), and how does this shape Byron’s message of the sublime and religion at the end of *Don Juan*’?

Canto X—Parabasis, or Voiding the Sublime

In his classic study, G. M. Sifakis notes that parabasis occurs only in ‘realistic’ drama, and that this specific kind of dramatic genre can be ‘defined as follows: (a) the story is original and its outcome unpredictable; (b) the dramatic situations truthfully imitate situations of everyday life; [and] (c) the characters are individuals psychologically portrayed by the way they act and react on the stage’.²⁴⁵ As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, *Don Juan* displays each of these traits and can be seen as a parabolic text. It should be noted that

²⁴⁴ Bernard Beatty, *Byron’s Don Juan* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1985), p. 59.

²⁴⁵ G. M. Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses: A Contribution to the History of Attic Comedy* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), p. 8.

while parabasis is unique to comedy, it should not be taken lightly. In fact, it ‘does not aim at representing the everyday life of individual human beings. [...] On the contrary, it transcends the individual phenomena and tries to capture the essence of life itself; ... a true picture and interpretation of the world’.²⁴⁶

The parabolic moment in a comedy occurs when the actors remove themselves from the stage; there is a slight pause as the chorus steps forward and delivers the ‘author’s opinions’ before they retreat and the actors reappear on stage to resume the action of the play. By suspending the play’s actions, the chorus is able to accomplish two things: first, their interjection disrupts the flow of the play, and second, they are able to give an opinion (albeit that of the author) and comment directly on the play’s action. One can argue that Byron’s digressions stem from his understanding and use of parabasis, because they interrupt the flow of the poem’s action but also because readers are presented with an alternative point of view, such as moments of the narrator’s thoughts and reflections.

The poem itself is widely regarded as a comedy or a mock epic with comedic overtones, yet scholars have failed to recognise that Byron intends to demonstrate his poetic savvy by employing parabasis as a way to circulate between the comedic and the serious aspects of his poem. Byron’s use of parabasis should not be overlooked because it is an integral element to the structure of *Don Juan*, in that it connects the first nine cantos to the English ones. If one thinks of the poetic structure of *Don Juan*, *ottava rima* comes to mind. For the Italians, who created the *ottava rima*, the stanzaic structure allows for a comedic element to pervade the poem’s overall and thematic structure.²⁴⁷ Structurally, *Don Juan* tells of the eponymous protagonist’s tales through the first nine cantos, yet when readers approach Canto X, this marks the ‘parabasis’ of the poem. As one of the shortest cantos, it serves to bridge the Harold-Juan-esque travelogue of the first nine cantos with that of the following English ones. And while the English cantos (XI-XVI) can be divided even further, one must still examine Byron’s use of parabasis as a way to appreciate fully

²⁴⁶ Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses*, p. 9.

²⁴⁷ At this point, one should recognise that *Beppo*, created two years before *Don Juan*, can be seen as a precursor to the later *magnum opus* where the poetic form pokes fun at the absurdity of life.

the sublime in the later cantos.²⁴⁸ However, we must first examine Canto X, the shortest one.

In this canto, Byron abstains from any travel-related experience and chooses to focus on ‘philosophical’ questions. For example, the canto opens with Newton seeing ‘an apple fall’ in the first stanza, but in the second it is man who ‘fell with apples’.²⁴⁹ While these fleeting moments can be easily overlooked, I would argue that they are subtly placed into the text by Byron for a number of reasons: first, Byron is giving the reader an opportunity to think about these two significant lines. Does he expect them to be overlooked? Possibly. Or, is he hoping that the serious reader will carefully examine the worthiness of each line and each word as it is presented on the page? Probably. Second, in any event, Byron calls attention to the duality of man and apples falling. On the one hand, he frames the idea with reference to Newtonian physics, while on the other hand, he juxtaposes this with religious doctrine and the Biblical story of the fall of humankind. Either way, Byron’s splendid use of the fall’s context forces the reader to think of what the future might hold for Juan, while still reflective of the past.

In stanza 32, Donna Inez

recommended him to God
 ‘And no less to God’s Son as well as Mother
 ‘Warned him against Greek worship, which looks odd
 ‘In Catholic eyes’. (*Don Juan* X, 32)

Once again, readers find themselves in-between Byron’s personal allusions and that of a larger poetic context. Donna Inez represents Byron’s mother, Catherine Gordon Byron, who explicitly warned Byron against Catholicism by forcing her Calvinistic beliefs upon the poet. As the good Spanish Catholic, Donna Inez warns against the perils of the Greek Orthodox Church, which could be seen as ‘threatening’ to her, just as Catherine Byron was threatened by Catholicism. Nevertheless, Byron continues to provide a duality of ideas either to force the reader to think about the tensions arising in his mind regarding religion or to foreshadow what is to come in the English cantos.

²⁴⁸ I would argue that the English cantos can be divided into the following groupings: XI-XII, London/English society; XIII-XIV, Norman Abbey; XV, Aurora Raby; XVI, culmination of the sublime.

²⁴⁹ *Don Juan* X. 1.

One final stanza in the tenth canto ‘hides’ Byron’s feelings and maps his path for the remaining cantos:

I won’t describe—that is, if I can help
 Description; and I won’t reflect—that is,
 If I can stave off thought, which, as a whelp
 Clings to its teat, sticks to me through the abyss
 Of this odd labyrinth; or as the kelp
 Holds by the rock; or as a lover’s kiss
 Drains its first draught of lips:—but, as I said,
 I *won’t* philosophize, and *will* be read. (*Don Juan* X. 28)

It would appear that Byron, once again, plays with the duality of the stanza’s meaning. He informs his readers that he merely wants to be read, which is fine, but it begs the question: Why does Byron include philosophical references in the poem? I would argue that the answer is not entirely complex, but allows for two possibilities: either Byron is wrestling with serious questions, and one of the only ways to alleviate the issues is to ‘discuss’ them in the poetry, or he intends to utilise the minor digressions as a way to foreshadow and foreground the English cantos.

In returning to *Parabasis and Animal Choruses*, Sifakis holds that ‘Parabasis means digression and not parodos’.²⁵⁰ The parodos is the first song sung by the chorus in both the ancient Greek tragedy and comedy. Thus, the intent of parabasis, according to the Greeks, is to shift the movement of the play, whether it is comedic or tragic, with the help of the chorus. As a result, ‘Comedy... grew side by side with tragedy’.²⁵¹ The functional role of the chorus differs between comedy and tragedy; in the former, the chorus brings laughter to the audience as a way either to demonstrate a certain point of view or to enhance the comedic value of the moment. In the tragic play, the parabolic song is not a digression, as Sifakis points out, but an objective commentary that either clarifies a point or acts as an intermediary between the gods and humankind.

Parabasis comes after the agon—the highly structured argument between the characters. In *Don Juan*, it is easy to see that the agon moments occur with the digressions

²⁵⁰ Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses*, p. 69.

²⁵¹ Sifakis, *Parabasis and Animal Choruses*, p. 17.

that, on the surface, appear to be comedic, but are, I would argue, a pointed debate between Juan and the poet-narrator. Thus, through the whole of the poem, the digressions stand for parabasis and provide further support for the idea that throughout his works, Byron follows classical models of poetics.

Canto XI – Doubting, Scepticism, and Metaphysics

Canto XI marks a major shift in Byron's treatment of the sublime and religion in *Don Juan*. In some ways, it is a continuation of Canto X, and in others it stands out and apart from the previous cantos. The canto begins with an appraisal of George Berkeley, the bishop and Anglo-Irish philosopher: 'When Bishop Berkeley said 'there was no matter', | And proved it— 'twas no matter what he said'.²⁵² Here, two instances are happening: first, we have a *possible* criticism of Coleridge and Shelley who, as previously mentioned, were proponents of idealism, and second, and quite the opposite, Byron could be writing in support of Berkeley's ideas.

In the first instance, which I contend is the easiest notion to follow, Byron is explicitly rejecting the idealistic philosophical tradition. Following from Plato and Shelley, Byron chooses to include idealists as diametrically opposed to his own notions of reality, whether supported through Aristotle and Locke. The second instance is a bit more complicated because it would continue Byron's rejection of Plato and Shelley, but it would allow for an exception with Berkeley. Byron rejects the materialist and atheist idealism of Plato and Shelley, and instead embraces Berkeleyan idealism. It is true that idealism and theology are rarely opposed, but in this case it is Shelley's neo-platonic idealism that Byron rejects in favour of Berkeleyan idealism. This affords him a 'happy medium' between philosophy and religion, which as we will see will be transposed into the sublime later with Aurora Raby and the Norman Abbey.

In her monograph *The Development of Byron's Philosophy of Knowledge*, Emily Bernhard Jackson traces the progression of Byron's engagement with philosophers from the Eastern Tales through *Don Juan*, calling particular attention to the Enlightenment thinkers: Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Bernhard Jackson asserts that 'By the time he arrives at *Don Juan* [Byron] has developed a theory of knowledge that has worked though

²⁵² *Don Juan* XI. 1.

elements of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and even the Scottish thinker William Drummond'.²⁵³ This is crucial to my development of Byron's sublime, because it brings together the idea that Byron is actively engaged at the intersection of philosophy, religion, and the sublime. By looking at Berkeley in particular and, to an extent, Hume, we will see that Byron utilises idealism and doubt as a way forward towards the sublime.

According to Jerome McGann, Byron

distrusted Systematic Enlightenment thoughts because he saw all systematic philosophy not as a tool for exploring difficult problems but as a device for settling matters. Byron admired order and reason primarily as they were methodical—ways rather than states of being. Order was a way of making things more clear. Wordsworth and Coleridge wanted aids to reflection: Byron, aids to understanding.²⁵⁴

Here I would agree with McGann, because it seems to me that Byron is able to reject the ideas of the first-generation Romantics who seem to theorise and speculate in favour of something that appears to be more concrete. I would even extend this idea to say that this could be what causes Byron to move away from the uncertainty of belief in nature. By rejecting the ideas of his Romantic predecessors, Byron sees the scepticism of the Enlightenment as a way to the enlightenment of Catholicism: it grants him both the affordability of doubting, whilst being open to the dogma of Catholicism and the sublime.

In the second stanza, Byron appears to continue venting his disgust through an attack: 'sublime discovery 'twas to make the | Universe universal Egotism!'²⁵⁵ This is a possible attack on Wordsworth, especially in lieu of my previous reading. And to further the criticism, Byron utilises 'doubt' three times within two lines: 'Oh Doubt!— if thou be'st Doubt, for which some take thee | But which I doubt extremely'.²⁵⁶ Just like the previous stanza, as well as an allusion to 'doubt itself be doubting' found in IX. 17, Byron seems to attack Wordsworth while invoking the liberal-minded philosophy of yet another Enlightenment thinker, this time David Hume. Hume was known for attacking the idealism

²⁵³ Emily Bernhard Jackson, *The Development of Byron's Philosophy of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2010), p. 14.

²⁵⁴ Jerome J. McGann, *Don Juan in Context* (London: John Murray, 1976), p. 148.

²⁵⁵ *Don Juan* XI. 2.

²⁵⁶ *Don Juan* XI. 2.

of Berkeley and the empiricism of John Locke. The tone is ironic, and thus while it seems that Hume, who advocated doubting (harkening back to Sextus Empiricus, and looking forward to Edmund Husserl's *epoché*), would be the ideal philosopher for Byron to employ, it turns out that this is not the case.

As Byron approaches the third stanza in the eleventh canto, he turns his focus to what I call the 'coded sublime'. Here,

For ever and anon comes Indigestion
 (Not the most 'dainty Ariel') and perplexes
 Our soarings with another sort of question:
 And that which after all my spirit vexes,
 Is, that I find no spot where man can rest his eye on,
 Without confusion of the sorts and sexes,
 Of being, stars, and this unriddled wonder,
 The World, which at the worst's a glorious blunder—

(*Don Juan* XI. 3)

While this stanza is seemingly 'simple', it is actually more complex and one in which the poet-narrator codes a message to the reader. I would argue that he is discussing the sublime; its 'soarings' prompt 'another sort of question', which 'vexes' 'my spirit' and can be the source of 'indigestion' that 'perplexes'. Since he is unable to find a 'spot where man can rest his eye on | Without confusion', the poet-narrator seems also to be attacking Wordsworth's pantheism found in 'Tintern Abbey', compared with 'Of being, stars...| The World, ...a glorious blunder'. Of course, it is not 'the most "dainty Ariel"' that is able to ponder such questions, but it will take an individual who has the mental stamina to brave such queries that might call into question all that he believes.

Bernard Jackson holds that 'In true Byronic fashion, this knotty passage manages to endorse and condemn Berkeley simultaneously. ... the speaker's assertions in lines 5-7 of the first stanza suggest that Berkeleyan Immaterialism is wrong'.²⁵⁷ If we look more closely at these lines, then we may argue that the 'soarings' that cause 'another sort of question' denote liberal or idealistic thought, and that 'my spirit vexes' is the doubting of Platonic and Shelleyan idealism, which leaves 'no spot where man can rest his eye on | Without

²⁵⁷ Bernhard Jackson, *The Development of Byron's Philosophy of Knowledge*, p. 176.

confusion'. Thus, the poet-narrator is left with the option of turning to Cartesian rationalism or Lockean empiricism to help him to understand the world better, before he recognises that 'the world' is 'a glorious blunder', or, at least, the 'indigestion' of the frustration at trying to comprehend and make sense of his metaphysical beliefs.

According to George Ridenour,

The grasp of metaphysics may not be impressive, but the edginess of the passage is of more than biographical interest. The poet wants to base his epic solidly on reality, and he wants to make a point of the fact. [...] furthermore, it is to his interest (as well as to his taste) to undermine any systematic formulation of reality, to set system against system, and to exalt the primacy of that immediate experience (what he sometimes calls 'fact' or 'existence of which the poet is a peculiarly authoritative spokesman. And finally, the question of reality is important to the poem's social comment'.²⁵⁸

Ridenour's quotation seems to support my idea that Byron intends to reject systematic philosophies and those postulated by individuals like Wordsworth. However, I would argue that it is Byron's intent to reject *all* systems, especially those that do not lend support to his notion of the sublime, otherwise it would place him in a similar position to Wordsworth—that of being a poet-philosopher who happens to wax philosophical. Hence, what readers get is a poet-narrator who 'will ... leave off metaphysical | Discussion, which is neither here nor there: [...] but as I suffer from the shocks | Of illness, I grow much more orthodox'.²⁵⁹ With these few lines, the fifth stanza marks the beginning of a change in tone and subject matter for both the canto and the poem as a whole, because of the qualifying and disciplinary effects on the ailing, 'mental' body.

Byron moves into the sixth stanza and the new shift moves towards the religious. Here, he seems to believe in hope and love, and the stanza is worth quoting in its entirety:

The first attack at once proved the Divinity;
(But *that* I never doubted, nor the Devil);
The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
The third, the usual Origin of Evil;

²⁵⁸ George Ridenour, *The Style of Don Juan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 112.

²⁵⁹ *Don Juan* XI. 5.

The fourth at once established the whole Trinity
 On so uncontrovertible a level,
 That I devoutly wished the three were four,
 On purpose to believe so much the more. (*Don Juan* XI. 6)

While this could be seen as Byron's playfulness towards the devoted believer, I contend that this demonstrates a moment in which Byron is becoming devoted. Like many individuals who are uncertain of themselves in a situation, Byron compensates for his insecurities by turning to comedy. This comedic moment masks an instant where Byron is not only unsure of himself, but is turning towards religion. So, as a way to overcompensate for his lack of knowledge or understanding, he turns to comedy. If we closely analyse select lines, then we see: 'Divinity' 'never doubted' 'the Virgin's mystical virginity,' 'the usual origin of evil' 'established the whole Trinity' 'On purpose to believe so much the more'. Divinity never doubts the annunciation, whilst original sin helped to create the need for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It appears that the poet-narrator is adamant about his belief in the religiously divine, so much so that he wishes that there is more. On the one hand, it would appear that Byron's tone is sarcastic, or it could be that he genuinely wishes that there was more to the Trinity, and is thus sincere in his belief. This will serve him well because, as we will see in the final cantos, he will move ever closer to the religious sublime. This is not something that can be rushed in its assertion or explanation, for it must be thoroughly deliberated and worked out, which is one of the reasons as to why Byron moves slowly through the thought-process. 'I say, Don Juan, wrapt in contemplation'²⁶⁰ is not the travelogue-journaling of lands and cultures seen and experienced, but is instead the thoughtful contemplation of the poet-narrator, which will lead both him and his creator to the religious sublime.

In Canto XI, when the poet-narrator is describing life in London, Byron satirises the 'religiousness' of London housing and the play on 'let there be light' both in the religious sense and in the sense of the practical letting of light found in the home:

Of bricks, to let the dust in at your ease,
 With 'To be let,' upon their doors proclaimed;
 Through 'Rows' most modestly called 'Paradise',

²⁶⁰ *Don Juan* XI. 9.

Which Eve might quit without much sacrifice;— (*Don Juan* XI. 21)

On the one hand, it would appear that the poet-narrator is describing the mundane sterility of Georgian housing, with its bricked rows of homes that stretch onwards, whereas on the other hand there are also connotations of religion, where the rows of homes to be let stand sturdy like the rows of pews in a church that ‘proclaim’ modesty as the gates before paradise. ‘But Bedlam still exists’, where the desire to live in the fashionable parts of London (Mayfair, Pall Mall, St. James, Chelsea, etc.) will drive the Eves to madness.²⁶¹ It is as if Byron makes the reader aware that those wishing to live in the high end boroughs of London will do almost anything, to the point of (religious) fanaticism, in order to get to the gates of paradise.

Continuing with this brief moment of fanaticism, the 27th stanza is perplexing yet intriguing in the way it can be framed with this discussion. I quote the stanza in whole:

A row of gentlemen along the streets
 Suspended, may illuminate mankind,
 As also bonfires made of country seats;
 But the old way is best for the purblind:
 The other looks like phosphorus on sheets,
 A sort of Ignis-fatuus to the mind,
 Which, though ’tis certain to perplex and frighten,
 Must burn more mildly ere it can enlighten. (*Don Juan* XI. 27)

In their notes to the Penguin edition of *Don Juan*, editors T. G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W. W. Pratt point out that the bonfires of the country seats probably allude to the social and political unrest of both the French and Industrial revolutions. In some instances, according to the editors, mobs hanged Jacobian dissenters from lamp-posts during the church and king insurrections, and the phosphorus glowed eerily on their clothes. Byron is doing two things with this particular stanza: first, I think that Steffan, Steffan, and Pratt are correct in what the stanza means, but it appears that Byron goes further than they are willing to give him credit. Byron’s socio-political commentary is a sleight of hand; he very subtly mentions a social reference. And second, in terms of this thesis’s main line of argument,

²⁶¹ *Don Juan* XI. 21.

one can examine the stanza from the point of view that this could be a thinly veiled reference to the sublime.

For example, by closely looking at the last four lines of the stanza, could the ‘phosphorus on the sheets’ be the enlightenment that philosophers and poets write about? ‘A sort of Ignis-fatuus to the mind’ causes the moment of understanding and brilliance for both the philosopher-poet and the reader, an instant that perplexes and frightens, but as long as it can ‘burn more mildly ere it can enlighten’. Clearly, this is an allusion to John Wilmont, the Earl of Rochester’s ‘Satire Against Reason and Mankind’:

Were I (who to my cost already am)
 One of those strange, prodigious creatures, man
 A spirit free to choose, for my own share
 What case of flesh and blood I pleased to wear,
 I’d be a dog, a monkey, or a bear,
 Or anything but that vain animal,
 Who is so proud of being rational.

[...]

Reason, which fifty times for one does err;
 Reason, an ignis fatuus of the mind,
 Which, leaving light of nature, sense, behind,
 Pathless and dangerous wand’ring ways it takes
 Through error’s fenny bogs and thorny brakes;

[...]

Books bear him up awhile, and make him try
 To swim with bladders of philosophy;
 In hopes still to o’ertake th’ escaping light;
 The vapour dances in his dazzling sight
 Till, spent, it leaves him to eternal night.
 Then old age and experience, hand in hand,
 Lead him to death, and make him understand,
 After a search so painful and so long,
 That all his life he has been in the wrong.

Huddled in dirt the reasoning engine lies,
 Who was so proud, so witty, and so wise.²⁶²

Here, Rochester is satirising both reason and humanity's quest to obtain and conquer reason. The lines begin with the speaker questioning his own existence, but rationalising that he is intellectually superior to other animals; and, because of this advantage, man is free to choose his life's path. The speaker then decides to utilise his intellect and go forth, trying to learn all that he can in order to quench his thirst for knowledge; however, reason can divert one from the path of knowledge. Distracted by the quest itself, the speaker informs the reader that 'The vapour dances in his dazzling sight | Till, spent, it leaves him to eternal night. | Then old age and experience, hand in hand, | Lead him to death', which helps him to understand that no amount of knowledge can prevent death.²⁶³ As we shall see, the idea that death is something to be accepted in the quest for knowledge can be observed in Juan, as he continues his meanderings through the Norman Abbey and his eventual meetings with the Black Friar and Aurora Raby. I would argue that the acceptance of death is not death literally, but rather the metaphorical death of ignorance in place of the knowledge of Catholicism and the sublime.

In another seemingly ineffectual and casual reference, in stanza 38, the poet-narrator observes that 'She rings the world's *Te Deum*'. As a medieval hymn of praise and thanksgiving, *Te Deum Laudamus* translates as 'We praise thee, O God', and Henry Purcell and George Frideric Handel were among the notable Baroque composers who created variations on the mediaeval theme.²⁶⁴ Purcell's version was composed in 1694, near the end of his life, and can be seen as a celebration of a life's work devoted to God. Handel's version, the *Dettingen Te Deum*, was composed in 1743 and is substantially longer than his predecessor's work. I bring this to light because I believe that Byron, for all his mother's religiosity, would have been exposed to at least Purcell's version as a child growing up in Aberdeen and London. In fact, I would argue that with Handel living the final 25 years of his life in London, there is also ample support to claim that Byron may have heard

²⁶² John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Frank H. Ellis (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 72. Lines 1-7, 11-15, 20-30.

²⁶³ Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Complete Poems*, p. 72. Lines 23-26.

²⁶⁴ See, Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, ed. T.G. Steffan, E. Steffan, W.W. Pratt. (New York: Penguin, 2004.), p.697.

Handel's version as well. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis, I would argue that Byron was familiar with at least one version, because he mentions the hymn in the poem.

In both Purcell's and Handel's versions of *Te Deum*, the lines are the same, calling upon the choir and parishioners to 'praise thee, O God' and to 'acknowledge thee to be the Lord'. God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, along with cherubim and seraphim, are all called upon to be worshiped and acknowledged. The final chorus, 'O Lord, in thee have I trusted', sees the individual asking God to 'never let me never, never, never be confounded'. Here, the song ends with God being asked to illuminate all. By referencing *Te Deum* in *Don Juan*, Byron is foreshadowing Juan's enlightenment, which will come in the form of Aurora Raby and the ghost monk at the Norman Abbey.

Canto XI is one in which a complexity of issues arises, from the rejection of past beliefs to the continued questioning and scepticism of the metaphysics, and finally onto the preparation for Juan as he carries on with his quest towards the sublime and religion. Whilst the canto looks to the complexity of Byron's thoughts, especially since he seems to have Juan tinkering with ideas of religion that he himself appears to wrestle with, Byron compensates for the uncertainty by juxtaposing the satirical poetry of Rochester with *Te Deum*. I contend that Byron's intentions may appear to be confusing to the reader, but he demonstrates that he is like every other person who has questioned their beliefs and their faith. As a way to sort out his uncertainty, Byron must explore all options from the comedic to the devoutly serious. From now on, he will have Juan become more active in his engagement with the religious and the sublime. This will be seen in the latter cantos.

Canto XIII – The Norman Abbey, or Stairway to Heaven

In his study of *Don Juan*, Bernard Beatty states that 'The Norman Abbey section is the fullest narrative episode in the poem and yet it remains, like the ruined Abbey, a fragment which we cannot fully interpret without timorous guess work as to the whole of which it forms the part'.²⁶⁵ I would agree with Beatty's claim, yet would argue further that in order to comprehend fully the later cantos of *Don Juan*, one must attempt an analysis of what Juan describes in the Norman Abbey stanzas. This way, the reader can have a better understanding of the significance of the symbolism of Aurora Raby.

²⁶⁵ Beatty, p. 128.

At 13 stanzas in length (55-67), the description of the Norman Abbey provides the setting for the final cantos. It is 'An old, old monastery' that 'lies perhaps a little low, | Because the monks preferred a hill behind, | To shelter their devotion from the wind'.²⁶⁶ In stanza 56, 'It stood embosom'd in a happy valley, | Crown'd by the high woodlands'.²⁶⁷ In his poetics of geography, Byron personifies the Rasselasian happy valley that is crowned, like a royal, by high woodlands. Here, the poet-narrator blends the natural world with the religious world. Since the Abbey marked the seat of Catholic power prior to the dissolution of the Church by Henry VIII, it is stripped away of any Catholic icons and iconography, and instead stands embosomed, crowned, and proud in a happy valley. And despite 'losing' its identity as a Catholic abbey, the Norman Abbey endures (certainly much longer than Henry VIII) and, as a result, it is not merely crowned by the high woodlands, but lovingly and majestically stands as an emblem of God's triumph over human egotism.

The tranquillity of the countryside continues into stanza 57:

Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,
 Broad as transparent, deep, and freshly fed
 By a river, which its soften'd way did take
 In currents through the calmer water spread
 Around. (*Don Juan* XIII. 57)

Placed at the foot of the Abbey is a lake whose serenity pays homage to the self-possessed placidity of the natural world. The juxtaposition between the religious and natural worlds lends itself to a natural counterbalance that seems to go above and beyond Wordsworth and Shelley. It is as if Byron, unknowingly, has come into his own as a poet who can uniquely weld two seemingly different notions into a picture of harmony. The lake calms the wild river as the two become unified within the presence of the Abbey.

In stanza 59, the poet-narrator's description of the natural surroundings of the Abbey gives way to an account of the physical traits of 'the Gothic pile'. The 'church was Rome's' and 'stood half apart | In a grand Arch'. The pile of rubble left after the Abbey's destruction adds to the reverence of the temporal-spatial location. According to the poet-narrator, the whole of the Abbey, its church, and its ruins, 'kindled feelings in the roughest

²⁶⁶ *Don Juan* XIII. 55.

²⁶⁷ *Don Juan* XIII. 56.

heart, | Which mourn'd the power of time's or tempest's march, | In gazing on that venerable Arch'.²⁶⁸ The Abbey continues to hold emblems of sacrosanctity, from the 'Twelve saints ... sanctified in stone' to 'The Virgin Mother of the God-born child | With her son in her blessed arms look'd round'.²⁶⁹ The statue of the Virgin Mary stands solemn as she presides over the Norman Abbey's hallowed grounds, since the twelve saints have not done the same since the reign of Charles.

'A mighty window, hollow in the centre, | Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings, | Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter', conjures the image of the magnificent stained glass rose windows of Notre Dame, Chartres Cathedral, and countless others on the Continent.²⁷⁰ Sunlight shining through the stained glass of gothic cathedrals not only illuminated bible stories for the congregations, but also helped create a transcendent experience during the religious service. Regarding transcendence,

But in the noontide of the Moon, and when
 The wind is winged from one point of heaven,
 There moans a strange unearthly sound, which then
 Is musical— a dying accent driven
 Through the huge Arch, which soars and sinks again.
 Some deem it but the distant echo given
 Back to the Night wind by the waterfall,
 And harmonized by the old choral wall: (*Don Juan* XIII. 63)

Here, the poet-narrator describes the sublimity of the wind as it blows and sings its way through the opening of what we can assume to be the West Front window of the Norman Abbey. It does not matter which direction the wind comes from, for if it blows in from the west and across the opening towards the east, then the wind bathes the Abbey (and the remnants of the church) as it journeys towards the rising sun and the coming day. However, if the wind moves from east to west, then it signals the end of the day as it slips into night. The open, broken window, facing both the birth of the day in the east and the death of the day in the west, acts as a portal between the living and the dead, between the natural world and the sublime.

²⁶⁸ *Don Juan* XIII. 59.

²⁶⁹ *Don Juan* XIII. 60, 61.

²⁷⁰ *Don Juan* XIII. 62.

The Norman Abbey stanzas provide readers with an introduction to the Abbey as both a physical, decaying place and a once formidable relic of the Catholic Church, where a hallowedness still permeates the locale. On the one hand, it affords Juan and the poet-narrator a moment of pensive reflection and thought as they stand in awe of a human creation that existed in homage to God. On the other hand, the actual ruins harken the imagination to call forth images of a life that once was for the brothers devoted in their service. Like the Alps of Switzerland, the Norman Abbey plays a role in fashioning the thoughts into the mind's eye as a projection of both the past and the future. Once Juan is fully receptive of the power of the Abbey, even in its decayed state (as certainly occurs by the end of Canto XIII), he will be able to confront, wrestle, and overcome the abyss stanzas which await him. By the time that Juan enters the Abbey's grounds, he has travelled a long way—both in terms of physical distance as well as in personal maturity—which will serve him well as he makes his final push into the sublimity of the Abbey, its grounds, and its religion.

Canto XIV—Intermission (Between Canto XIII and Canto XV)

Compared with Cantos XIII and XV, Canto XIV can be seen as 'philosophical' because it alludes to what Byron calls the 'abyss'. When one thinks of the abyss, one might be inclined to think of Cain amidst the cosmos, or Manfred peering down from the precipice above. However, Byron utilises the abyss in Canto XIV as a way to frame the Aurora Raby stanzas (Canto XV) within the contexts of the Norman Abbey stanzas (Canto XIII), by suspending thought. Byron chooses to bring the abyss into the poem by first reminding readers of the mountainous chasm that is echoed in *Manfred*:

[...] and there

You look down o'er the precipice, and drear
The gulf of rock yawns,—you can't gaze a minute
Without an awful wish to plunge within it.

'Tis true, you don't—but pale and struck with terror,
Retire: but look into your past impression!
And you will find, though shuddering at the mirror

Of your own thoughts, in all their self-confession,
[...]

To plunge with all your fears—but where? You know not,

And that's the reason why you do—or do not. (*Don Juan* XIV. 5-6)

Stanza 5 recalls Manfred's wish to plunge himself into the depths of the abyss, except this time it is Juan's recollection of a time past. It is not that Juan wants to commit suicide, but instead it is clearly a reflection of Manfred, since past impressions are Manfredian moments recalled by Juan's memory. Since Juan is not Manfred, fear is instilled in him of what he may or may not become.

The bathos of profundity is a slight digression in which 'This narrative is not meant for narration, | But a mere airy and fantastic basis, | To build up common things with commonplaces'.²⁷¹ It is hard to know Byron's intentions: is he being serious, or is he taunting his readers or questioning their knowledge? There seems to be an unresolved tension in which Byron is unsettled in his approach to the poetry of Juan: 'To swim or sink— I have had at least my dream. [...] In play, there are two pleasures for your choosing— | The one is winning, and the other losing'.²⁷² It is then difficult to understand what Byron is attempting to accomplish when he composes these lines. If they are true to the bathetic, then one could argue that there is a sleight of hand in which Byron is not unsure of what he wants to say, but he is doing it in a way that is comedic. Another plausible argument could be that held by Philip Shaw:

Like the suicidal gulf explored in Canto XIV, the abyss of thought leads the sceptic to the very limits of human understanding: is there something or nothing? Is it better to be or not to be? Faced with such unanswerable questions, it is better, perhaps, to stay close to shore so that we may commit, once again, to story.²⁷³

Shaw clearly understands the significance of the suicidal gulf; as he points out, this is the 'to be or not to be' moment. The Black Friar and Aurora Raby have crossed the gulf and

²⁷¹ *Don Juan* XIV. 7.

²⁷² *Don Juan* XIII. 11-12.

²⁷³ Philip Shaw, 'Twixt Life and Death': *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Don Juan and the Sublime*, in *Byron's Ghosts: The Spectral, the Spiritual and the Supernatural*, ed. Gavin Hopps (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 147-64 (p.157).

show that existence is much better than death. It is through existence that one is able to find and come to know God, so that there is no need for suicide. The suicidal gulf will be short lived because Canto XV will focus on Aurora Raby and give rise to the notion that the abyss is not merely a physical abyss but something more ‘philosophical’ in that it could be a symbol for the sceptic’s belief in religion or the notion that the truly ‘philosophical’ know nothing of the real or material world. Canto XV will help shed light on Byron’s intended meaning, because it focuses on bridging the Norman Abbey and Aurora Raby stanzas. It moves us from the physical structure to the symbolic meaning of Aurora and her significance to Juan and the reader.

Canto XV—Aurora Raby and Her Environs

I would like to begin the analysis of this canto with an extended quotation from Gavin Hopps’s essay ‘Gaiety and Grace: Byron and the Tone of Catholicism’:

Finally, the posture of ‘eschatological indifference’ is consummately embodied in the character of Aurora Raby, who like Juan is a Catholic and may fairly be described as ‘in the world but not of the world’. She has, for instance, ‘an aspect beyond time’ and ‘look’d as if she sat by Eden’s door (XV, 45); the ‘worlds beyond this world’s perplexing waste / Had more of her existence (XVI, 48); and she renews in Juan a ‘love of higher things and better days; / The unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance / Of what is called the world, and the world’s ways’ (XVI, 108). On two occasions, the narrator even explicitly refers to her attitude of ‘indifference’ towards worldly affairs and comments on her refusal to indulge in any ‘vanity’ (XV, 77; 83; 73). What can we deduce from this?²⁷⁴

Sitting at Eden’s door, Aurora is both of and not of this world; she is the division between the spiritual and earthly worlds, acting as an intermediary, like the Virgin Mary, because she is tangible to Juan but able to intercede on his behalf. Also, we should note that she represents religious love: both the notion of Christian love (e.g., the teachings of Jesus) as well as love in general. Like Aurora, love transcends all and is sublime. Through careful

²⁷⁴ Gavin Hopps, ‘Gaiety and Grace: Byron and the Tone of Catholicism’, *The Byron Journal*, 41.1 (2013), 1-14 (p. 11).

analysis, we can deduce that Canto XV is an important canto in the whole of *Don Juan*, because it provides a framework for which to know and understand Aurora before her appearance in Canto XVI.

Juan's first mentioning of Aurora is in stanza 43, where she is described as 'better than her class' and as a 'young star who shone | O'er life, too sweet an image for such glass'.²⁷⁵ He continues, stating that she is 'A lovely being, scarcely formed or moulded, | A Rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded'.²⁷⁶ Juan's description of Aurora Raby is one in which purity reigns; for she is 'lovely', 'sweet', and shining brightly through her incandescence. The rose imagery immediately brings to mind the symbolism of virginity, made popular during the medieval period: if the rose is open, its exposure runs the risk of petal-plucking and deflowering, whereas Aurora's 'sweetest leaves yet folded' denote her virginity and her purity:

In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes which sadly shone, as seraphs' shine.
All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave—as pitying man's decline;
Mournful—but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door
And grieved for those who could return no more.

(*Don Juan* XV. 45)

It is not her physical figure that is sublime, but her whole being, including lamenting eyes that are sympathetic for those around her. She is 'radiant and grave', which denotes both an illuminating quality and a seriousness to her 'mournful' demeanour that bemoans those lost souls from Eden. She seems to be an extension, an earthly version, if you will, of the Virgin Mary with regards to her genuine concern for those souls not in Heaven. Part of her sublimity is rooted, according to Juan, in the fact that:

She was a Catholic too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more dear

²⁷⁵ *Don Juan* XV. 43.

²⁷⁶ *Don Juan* XV. 43.

[...]

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew
 As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
 As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
 And kept her heart serene within its zone.
 There was awe in the homage which she drew;
 Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
 Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
 In its own strength—most strange in one so young!

(*Don Juan* XV. 46-7)

If we examine these lines with regards to Shaw's previous quotation, it is possible to claim that Aurora Raby represents the Catholic abyss; that is, she signifies Catholics who accede to the abyssal incomprehensibility of God and, as a result, take their leaps of faith and believe in the unexplainable mysteries of the Church.

Aurora embodies the purity of humankind. She is 'sincere, austere' and has 'her own gentle heart'. She is clearly introspective and thoughtful with a 'heart serene' and draws the 'awe' of her suitors. She is not the boisterous, outgoing, careless representation of humanity but, rather, the pensive, reserved, and cautious individual who embodies a kind of gentle mysteriousness because she chooses to not speak. Also, I would argue that Aurora possesses qualities of the spiritual sublime.

Shaw believes that 'Aurora is linked, then, from the outset, with the religious sublime',²⁷⁷ with Beatty similarly seeing Aurora as 'an embodiment of spiritual life' and as one who 'is momentarily an occupant of that standby Romantic category, the ideal woman, who may or may not be an illusion'.²⁷⁸ Both Shaw and Beatty demonstrate that as readers move through the latter stanzas of Canto XV, they begin to see and hold Aurora in a whole new light. For example, she is not merely another female presence that Juan encounters in his epic voyage(s), but is something so much more. She transcends herself in the face of humanity, as she is not just an individual who is religious, but rather she is *the* religious individual. Taken together, Aurora is clearly not just the 'ideal woman', but also the *ideal*

²⁷⁷ Shaw, 'Twixt Life and Death', p. 159.

²⁷⁸ Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan*, p. 166.

human being. Her religiousness, including her unfailing devotion to Catholicism, demonstrates a kind of ‘Pope-lieness’. Her transcendence is not merely the transcendence of self, such as we see in the Alpine stanzas of *CHP* III or in the speaker of ‘Tintern Abbey’. Instead, acting as an intermediary of the Catholic Church, she is able to transcend both the whole of humanity and religion (specifically Catholicism) while appearing to be a human version of the Virgin Mary, as I alluded to previously.²⁷⁹

At the end of Canto XV, Juan continues to describe Aurora in detail:

Aurora, who look’d more on books than faces,
Was very young, although so very sage,
Admiring more Minerva than the Graces,
[...]
But Virtue’s self, with all her tightest laces,
[...]
And really, if the Sage sublime and Attic
[...]

always in a modest way,

Observe; for that with me’s a ‘sine quā’. (*Don Juan* XV. 85-6)

In these lines, Aurora appears to be emblematic of the sun(light), which can easily be construed as enlightenment, as well as symbolic for enlightenment. Her vision and wisdom become a source of knowledge, and from this Juan states that she is virtuous. Taken together, her wisdom and virtuousness are coupled and help create her sublimity, which is a unique type in that it fits her and her alone. When Juan sees her, one can imagine that he thinks what Beatty says: ‘She belongs to both the past and present, religious and secular worlds’.²⁸⁰

In stanza 91, Juan queries,

But here again, why will I thus entangle
Myself with metaphysics?
[...]
And yet, such is my folly, or my fate,

²⁷⁹ I will return to this idea of Aurora as likened to the Virgin Mary later in the chapter.

²⁸⁰ Beatty, *Byron’s Don Juan*, p. 148.

I always knock my head against some angle
[...]

For I was bred a moderate Presbyterian. (*Don Juan* XV. 91)

While the casual reader may gloss over these lines, they are far more important and deserve close attention. Structurally, they mark a significant transition in the canto and the poem as a whole. In looking at the canto, they move to the final five stanzas that will discuss the sublime, seriousness, and Aurora caught between two worlds. With regards to the poem, they mark the transition towards what is arguably the most important canto, XVI, which examines Aurora, nature, the sublime, and religion.

These lines seem to demonstrate Juan's (or Byron's) final contemplation of religion. In fact, I envision the Byron-Juan-narrator character as trying to make sense of everything that he has viewed, come into contact with, and contemplated over the course of the journey and his life. To me, it appears that Byron's head is 'swimming' with ideas—both of belief and disbelief—and it is as if he needs one more moment of questioning in order to evaluate the evidence that is before him, so that when he is ready to move forward, he can do so with a clear and focused mind.

In stanza 95, Juan queries the reader about seeing 'a ghost'. He goes on to state that belief in ghosts is 'dumb' and that the individual who does believe could be 'ridicule benumb'.²⁸¹ However, the stanza ends with an incredibly poignant couplet: 'That source of the sublime and the mysterious:— | For certain reasons, my belief is serious'.²⁸²

Stanza 96 begins:

Serious? You laugh: you may; that will I not;
My smiles must be sincere or not at all.
I say I do believe a haunted spot
Exists—and where? That shall I not recall,
Because I'd rather it should be forgot. (*Don Juan* XV. 96)

These lines denote a marked change in Juan's perceptions in that he becomes more serious in his quest for a belief in the religious, as well as quashing the indignation of the readers who do not hold the same beliefs. Here, Juan clears his mind and his conscience so that he

²⁸¹ *Don Juan*, XV. 95.

²⁸² *Don Juan*, XV. 95.

will be able to move forward through his journey to find religion, with Aurora as his Virgilian guide, except this will not be a journey into Hell but rather one that transforms Juan from his mischievous past to one of a matured future.²⁸³ Instead, it is not beyond the realm of possibilities that Byron intends Aurora to be Juan's Beatrice, as both are not of this world, while still being a part of it. Both, unintentionally, command a sexualised interest in their counterparts, yet that is not the priority of their task. Rather, their aim is to bring Dante and Juan out of the 'wood' and into the light of near Heaven. Since Beatrice and Aurora connect both the human and spiritual worlds, it is no surprise that Dante and Juan can gaze up at them in loving admiration as well as respect and awe.

The canto ends somewhat philosophically with stanza 99:

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
[...]
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on [...]. (*Don Juan* XV. 99)

Juan does not poke fun at that which he does not know or cannot comprehend, but instead admits that there are things in this world that he cannot know and yet which he accepts. Juan's intellectual development is crucial because it demonstrates a Byronic leap of faith, and illustrates to the reader that Juan's mind is prepared to journey further and deeper into the abyss of both his mind and religion. I would argue that this moment is crucial, because it presents readers with the image of an intellectually matured Juan, who is going to begin the final steps on the path to religious maturity. Aurora will play Beatrice to Juan's Dante as she leads him around the grounds of the Norman Abbey, and it will be in Canto XVI that Juan truly comes to know himself.

Canto XVI—Aurora Raby, Nature, Religion, and the Sublime

The sixteenth canto is the last complete canto, as Canto XVII was left unfinished at the time of Byron's death. As such, I contend that Canto XVI is by far the most important, not simply for the fact that it is the final complete canto, but because it is a culmination of what

²⁸³ Beatty writes that 'Aurora is a guide to the reader of the last cantos' (*Don Juan in Context*, p. 210). I would go further and argue that Aurora is not just *a* guide, but *the* guide to both readers of the last cantos as well as Juan, much in the same way that Beatrice guides Dante in *Il Paradiso*.

Don Juan has to offer, namely bringing Juan (and Aurora) to the forefront of a discussion at the intersections of nature, religion, and the sublime. According to Shaw, ‘Byron, throughout *Don Juan*, confronts the reader with a number of related moments of suspended thought’.²⁸⁴ It is this suspension of thought (or as the twentieth-century phenomenologist Edmund Husserl called it, *epoché*) that will enable Juan to see and fully appreciate Aurora’s guidance and what religion has to offer.

Early in the canto, Byron sets the stage for what is arguably his magisterial ending: ‘Believe—: If ’tis improbable, you *must*, | And if it is impossible, you *shall*: | ’Tis always best to take things upon trust’.²⁸⁵ I do not read this moment as an example of Byronic satire, where he smirks as Juan tells the reader to trust him, but rather see these three lines as something much more significant: Byron is alluding to his family motto, ‘Crede Byron’. Thus, Juan is telling readers to ‘believe’ or ‘trust’ Byron. But why should we? After all, readers of Byron’s poetry will be quite familiar with the poet’s tongue-in-cheek and at times biting satire, which often lacks seriousness. Yet here is his speaker, almost pleading with readers to take him seriously. And while it is probable that a great number of readers will not do as Juan requests, we should do as he wishes because the poem will culminate in this canto and its most important message will be conveyed.

When Juan reintroduces her to the readers, ‘He thought Aurora Raby’s eyes more bright’²⁸⁶ and compares her to ‘the full moon’, ‘the chaste orb’ and wants to ‘hail her with the apostrophe’.²⁸⁷ Looking upon Aurora’s beauty literally moves Juan to be ‘somewhat pensive, and disposed | For contemplation rather than his pillow’.²⁸⁸ For once, Juan is more concerned with contemplative matters rather than those requiring ‘little Juan’; for, if the roles were reversed and it was Donna Inez standing before him instead of Aurora, Juan would not be contemplating anything, but would be a man of ‘action’. Here, we begin to see two things: first, we see that Aurora is valued above all other women in Juan’s life, because she causes him to stop and contemplate his choices and his actions.²⁸⁹ And second,

²⁸⁴ Shaw, ‘’Twixt Life and Death’, p. 155.

²⁸⁵ *Don Juan* XVI. 6.

²⁸⁶ *Don Juan* XVI. 12.

²⁸⁷ *Don Juan* XVI. 13.

²⁸⁸ *Don Juan* XVI. 15.

²⁸⁹ Arguably, the one woman who comes closest to Aurora is Haideé, who is quiet and introspective, but lacks the chastity that is necessary for Juan to complete his quest.

Aurora alone can 'save' Juan by bringing him to the forefront of what will become his religious experience.

Once Juan becomes open to the entry of the divine or, to be more specific, to the saving grace of Aurora's Catholicism, 'a monk, arrayed' visits him.²⁹⁰ The 'Black Friar' was purported to be a headless ghost that many visitors to Newstead Abbey claimed to have seen.²⁹¹ A compelling argument by Shaw holds that 'for Byron the encounter with the sublime leads not to the triumph of Reason, not to its nihilistic voiding, but results, rather, in the opening out of consciousness to the haunting of the divine'.²⁹² Here, 'haunting' can be viewed in two ways: it can be the negative 'ghostly' apparition or it can be related to the 'divine'. The Black Friar, as a ghost or an apparition, reminds Juan of both the divine and evil. However, the Black Friar is clearly divine and not to be feared, despite the lyrics to 'Fair' Adeline's song:

Beware! Beware! of the Black Friar,
 Who sitteth by Norman stone,
 For he mutters his prayer in the midnight air,
 And his mass of the days that are gone.
 [...]
 A monk remained, unchased, unchained,
 And he did not seem formed of clay,
 [...]
 He walks from hall to hall.
 [...]
 But his eyes may be seen from the folds between,
 And they seem of a parted soul.
 But beware! Beware! of the Black Friar,
 He still retains his sway,

²⁹⁰ *Don Juan* XVI. 21.

²⁹¹ In the 27th footnote to his edition of *Don Juan* XVI, Peter Cochran states that 'some visitors to Newstead Abbey *claimed* to have seen a headless monk in the chamber next to B.'s bedroom, in which Robert Rushton usually slept (Marchand I, 174-5). On 13 August, 1814 B. writes to Moore, "The ghosts, however, and the gothics, and the waters, and the desolation, make it [Newstead] very lively still'" (BLJ IV 158).

²⁹² Shaw, "'Twixt Life and Death', p.147.

[...]

And whatsoe'er may be his prayer,

Let ours be for his soul.²⁹³

If the Black Friar is not malicious, then neither Juan nor the readers should fear him.²⁹⁴ I would argue that he is trapped on the grounds of the Norman Abbey because he was not afforded any closure upon its destruction and, as a result, his wanderings are a kind of lamentation. He roams the grounds, mourning the annihilation of the Abbey and looking to be absolved by its visitors. Though he cannot communicate directly with the living, they may be able to sense his desire for closure; however, he is not the only entity lamenting.

The notion of nature grieving is not unique to *Don Juan*, because if one recalls the 27th stanza of *CHP* III, in the midst of the horror of the carnage at Waterloo, Harold comments that 'Dewy with nature's tear-drops as they pass, | Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves, | Over the unreturning brave'. The difference is that when Harold experiences nature lamenting, it is because of the loss of human life and the destruction of the natural world for (in)significant gains. On the other hand, Juan looks to the natural and spiritual worlds as being able to soothe his mind in its comprehension of the destruction caused by humans. One only has to gaze upon the ruins of the Norman Abbey in order to appreciate what Juan and countless others have endured when confronting their first impressions of the Norman Abbey.

The Abbey is situated in the pastoral landscape of Nottinghamshire, and it is also the natural world that mourns the loss of the abbey and religion. Nature bemoans the Abbey and the monks' loss as the west face can be, on calm days, reflected in the lake below. Here, the lake acts as a mirror that shows the Abbey what the west face looks like and reminds it of its devastation and the pains of the past. Opposite is the east face and directly below, the former nave. While it is impossible to reflect the nave in the lake's waters, Nature works for the Abbey in another way. In the nave, the main body of the church rises above the aisles, where nothing is left but a carpet of overgrown grass. Nature

²⁹³ *Don Juan* XVI. Lady Adeline's lines come from her six-stanza song between stanzas 40 and 41.

²⁹⁴ One should take notice that Aurora is 'missing' from Juan's discussion of the Black Friar. I would argue that she is missing because she knows that he is not to be feared and needs to let Juan come to this conclusion on his own.

encroaches over the ruins, erasing them from sight and mind. Once again, Beatty is apposite in his analysis: ‘The effect here is both elegiac, as though Nature is singing a dirge for its desolated partner, and suggestive of immense present power’.²⁹⁵

High up the west face wall, just below the Virgin and Child, is the large hole that used to contain the rose window. Whilst unbroken, the window encloses the nave and offers it and the monks shelter. From the nave, one could look westward through it and towards the lake, the woods, and the grounds of the Abbey. However, the same could be said for looking eastward towards the nave; either way, the window acts as a portal between the natural and the spiritual worlds. It is here that the two are wedded together to create the religious sublime.

Here, one could easily reiterate Shaw’s summation that the sublime ‘describes a state of mind’, marking ‘the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what may lie beyond these limits’. And, finally, that the sublime ‘refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for what lies beyond thought and language’.²⁹⁶ As Byron-Harold-Juan progresses through the course of the major works, readers begin to see and find the Norman Abbey stanzas typify the epitome of Byron’s sublime. The culmination of various locales and moments, such as the grounds of the ruined abbey, the west front rose window overlooking the grounds, the remains of the abbey church, and Aurora herself, play an integral part in bringing Juan to the realisation of the sublime. Beatty states that ‘Without Aurora, these remarkable transformations would seem as farcical as the first canto’.²⁹⁷ Aurora is then the guide who brings Juan through the sites and instants, helping him to move from being merely an observer to an active participant in the quest towards the sublime.

Nearing the end of his journey, Juan has seen, heard, and witnessed a wealth of experiences that have brought him ever closer to the sublime, and this moment is no different. One could argue that he has taken all that he knows, all that he has learned, and claim that in the midst of the natural and spiritual worlds he is at an advantage and

²⁹⁵ Beatty, *Byron’s Don Juan*, p. 146.

²⁹⁶ Shaw, *The Sublime*, pp. 1-3; *passim*.

²⁹⁷ Beatty, *Byron’s Don Juan*, p. 150.

perfectly able to differentiate between these two sublime worlds. He is now able to see beyond his immediate self and look towards and see what the sublime has to offer.

When comparing Aurora with the Black Friar's ghost, the former belongs to the human world and the ghost is trapped between the spiritual/divine world and the human world, making it all but impossible to escape his bondage. Thus, Aurora is not trapped like her heavenly counterpart and is able to move freely between the divine and human worlds, not as a ghost but very much like a priest or a pastor. In fact, the notion that the Abbey is set in the pastoral landscape of the Midlands countryside lends support to the notion that the rustic environment is both pastoral in its physical setting as well as in the spiritual setting. Both the Black Friar and, more importantly, Aurora offer themselves as pastors, guiding the once 'sheepish' lamb from the shadows of doubt and into the valley of belief.

Reading the grounds, the ruinous Abbey, the ghost, and Aurora alongside each other offers a 'conscious present occupation of surrounding space', according to Beatty.²⁹⁸ I would go further and argue that the entire setting creates an atmosphere of what I call the 'sublime space', which is not a vacuous void but rather the sublimity of all objects and entities within a given space. Seemingly, these fit together in order to create a moment of perfect harmony that brings together all of the elements and produces this unique and possibly fleeting moment for the individual, which could be seen as 'preserved in living sympathy with the mysterious cosmos'.²⁹⁹

According to Beatty, 'Juan's silence therefore elevates him within the Norman Abbey. It elevates him too within the poem'.³⁰⁰ However, the question remains: How does Juan's silence elevate him within the Norman Abbey? Beatty is ultimately suspicious of the sublime. The sublime is not meant to replace religion, by any means, but instead should be used to aid the individual on his path towards God. I would extend Beatty's idea that Aurora is needed in order to guide Juan's transformation, as she has already undergone her transcendence from the material, human world to the immaterial, spiritual-religious world. This elevates Aurora beyond the human world all the way to Eden's door, whilst still maintaining the notion that all can be saved through transcendence, love, and the divine.

²⁹⁸ Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan*, p. 144.

²⁹⁹ Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan*, p. 146.

³⁰⁰ Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan*, p. 150.

If we return to John Milbank's essay 'Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent', a number of quotations point us in the direction of the answer. For example, Milbank maintains that the 'discourse on sublimity [...] tends to open up a necessary continuity between the turn to the subject and the dissolution of the subject [...] the idea that the transcendent or the unrepresentable creator God is the paradigmatic instance of the sublime'.³⁰¹ Thus, if I understand Milbank correctly, he is arguing against the discourse of the sublime and its association with the idea of an abstract, impersonal deity. Instead, he favours a return to the concept of the beautiful, which, unlike the neo-Kantian sublime, is rooted in the personal, intimate conception of the divine maintained by the Church fathers. When the individual faces the sublime, there is the turn towards the subject and, at the same, a move away from it. Just as Juan is silent at the Norman Abbey, it is that silence that aids in his coming towards the sublime, but at the same time it also distances him from it.

If we move further into our understanding of Milbank's assertion, we can look towards the very basics of Baroque aesthetics in that an 'openness to the divine [...] tended to identify the beautiful as such with the ingenious and surprising'.³⁰² Milbank's quotation works quite well with the idea that Aurora is a kind of guide for Juan as well as a representation of the divine, as opposed to the sublime. She is able to connect Juan to the divine through her sublimity, and because she is human, Juan is able to relate to her on a more personal level than he would with, say, the Virgin Mary.

The premier aesthetician of the Baroque period was Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, who happened to be the first to translate Longinus's treatise *On the Sublime* from Latin into French. It is safe to say that Byron, who would have been familiar with Longinus from his days at Harrow, would have probably been familiar with Boileau's French translation as well. In any event, Boileau would come to interpret the sublime as revealing 'the beautiful as the *je ne sais quoi*, such that it is impossible to have a *theory* of the sublime, and the only way to explain it is to exemplify it'.³⁰³ At the very least Boileau, in addition to translating Longinus, is able to inform his readers that they can *try* to theorise the sublime,

³⁰¹ Milbank, 'Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent', p. 212.

³⁰² Milbank, 'Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent', pp. 213-14.

³⁰³ Milbank, 'Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent', p. 214.

but, because it is beyond our comprehension, all we can surmise is that we just don't know *how* to explain it. With Burke, there is a split between the sublime and the beautiful. Turning again towards Milbank, the silence brings Juan or the individual towards the sublime while they try to comprehend it, but at the same time, the inability to comprehend the sublime leads to the silence of reverence or misapprehension.

In the thirteenth canto, Byron's poet narrator states that 'She made the earth below seem holy ground'.³⁰⁴ While he is referring to the Holy Virgin, I would argue that that particular description is deliberate; the poet narrator is referencing Aurora as well as the Virgin Mother. In his essay 'Byron and the Post-Secular: Quia Impossibile', Gavin Hopps supports my claims by stating that the 'view of the Virgin's "extra-terrestrial" perspective and protective role permits a widening from the ground immediately beneath the statue to include the whole earth'.³⁰⁵ I would argue that in addition to the Virgin being at the centre of the description that she is inaccessible, it is up to Aurora to guide Juan through the ruins to the sublime. As a result, there is 'an openness to the *possibility* of transcendence', according to Hopps, which can be distinguished from the false transcendence of the sublime.³⁰⁶ And it is this possibility towards openness that, if we return to *CHP* III and the 'Alpine stanzas', we see:

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt

In solitude, where we are *least* alone;

A truth, which through our being then doth melt

And purifies from self: it is a tone,

The soul and source of music, which makes known

Eternal harmony [...]. (*CHP* III. 90)

Embedded within Juan are the lessons learned from Harold's time spent in Switzerland. There is a duality of being physically alone in nature, but comforted by the surroundings of

³⁰⁴ *Don Juan* XIII. 61.

³⁰⁵ Gavin Hopps, 'Byron and the Post-Secular: Quia Impossibile', *The Byron Journal*, 43.2 (2015), 91-108 (p. 100).

³⁰⁶ Hopps, 'Byron and the Post-Secular: Quia Impossibile', p. 103.

the environment to the point that there is a feeling of being a part of that location. This duality is a truth, and this truth ‘melts’ our being into the collective beings of the natural, spiritual, and human worlds. Through this connection with those who are greater than ourselves, we are ‘purified’ from ourselves because we become a part of something more important than the singular self. And, as a result, we are met with an ‘Eternal harmony’ of divine presence. Finally, as Beatty so aptly states, ‘Juan’s silence therefore elevates him within the Norman Abbey. It elevates him too within the poem’.³⁰⁷

Conclusion

At first glance, one might be overwhelmed by the sheer length and magnitude of *Don Juan* but, as this chapter demonstrates, Byron builds up the poem so that it might culminate with the Norman Abbey stanzas. There is a slight return towards classical aesthetics with parabasis as well as the subtle use of *Te Deum*, an intersection that allows both the reader and Juan to decide which way to proceed. If the previous chapters are of any indication, it can be deduced that Juan will move towards the religious. George Ridenour argues that:

For, as we have seen, in the world of *Don Juan*, nature has fallen and stands in need of redemption. And at the same time, nature is valuable both in itself and as a norm against which a corrupt civilization may be exposed. For the Christian, nature has fallen and must be redeemed. But though fallen, nature is God’s creation and must be of necessity retain the imprint of the Creator (hence the possible ‘natural theology’).³⁰⁸

It is as if throughout the entire journey, Juan has been led back to the Norman Abbey and his childhood. Juan’s religious education and his education in and of the sublime come full-circle when he arrives at the Norman Abbey. His quest has been a series of adventures that have led him back to this starting point: the Norman Abbey and what it, through its exemplification of Catholicism, has to offer.

³⁰⁷ Beatty, *Byron’s Don Juan*, p. 150.

³⁰⁸ Ridenour, pp. 34-5.

Aided by the supernatural Black Friar and the transcendent Aurora Raby, Juan comes to find that 'Nature fused with Eros is at once a divinity and a dead end'.³⁰⁹ The Friar and Aurora, being representations of the heavenly, are able to bring Juan towards religion and ultimately the sublime; however, they do not and cannot provide him with what it is that he seeks. Juan needs to come to the conclusion on his own.

Drawing upon his classical education, one could surmise that Juan sees Aurora as a move away from the reified 'Platonic and Neo-Platonic discussions of the beautiful, as inherited by the whole western tradition, [which] had linked it closely with *eros*: creaturely and especially human beauty was deemed to lead one to a higher *eros* for the true intellectual beauty'.³¹⁰ One could contend that the Black Friar brings Juan to Aurora who, in turn, brings Juan to the sublime. Thus, it is Aurora who embodies both the sublime and love, much in the same way God the Son does in the New Testament. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that Aurora represents both the earthly and the heavenly in terms of bringing Juan, via beauty and eros, to the forefront of the divine and not the sublime.

³⁰⁹ Beatty, *Byron's Don Juan*, p. 224.

³¹⁰ Milbank, p. 219.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of this thesis, it has been my intent to postulate, demonstrate, and support the idea that Byron was intimately acquainted with both classical and contemporary ideas of the sublime, as well as to illustrate his deployment of such modes in his major middle and later period works. As we initially saw, David Miall's idea of foregrounding, through the use of sublime language, can be used to describe the variety of ways in which the reader is brought into direct contact with raw, unmediated experience, as evidenced in the alpine scenes of *CHP* III. Of course, of high importance for both Miall and Longinus is the role of sublime language in describing the setting within the poem. Byron, I think it is safe to say, perfects sublime language through the use of hyperbaton in stanzas 92 to 96.

Careful attention to the use of language is the means by which we come to a better, more accurate understanding of the sublime. Longinus imparts this when he discusses amplification, which occurs when language is infused into the subject with an air of grandeur, possibly and most often through the emotions. Byron, I contend, first comes across amplification as a schoolboy at Harrow whilst reading Virgil and other Roman writers.

Hyperbaton, according to Longinus, is the proper use of words and phrases in order to convey a specific moment or a description. A fine example of Byron's use of hyperbaton is the alpine sequence (stanzas 92-97), because it is the poet's language that amplifies and hyperbates the 1816 summer thunderstorm in the Alps

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,

Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud! (CHP III, 92)

What Byron does through his creative use of language is ‘grip’ the readers. By foregrounding readers on the shore of Lake Lehman, Byron uses hyperbaton to make readers feel as if they are standing next to the poet-narrator witnessing the awesome power of the natural world.

Nevertheless, as I suggested, stanzas 92 to 97 of *CHP* III demonstrate what appears to be (and could be argued as) the Kantian mathematical and dynamic sublime:

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightning’s! ye!
 With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
 To make these felt and feeling, well may be
 Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
 Of your departing voices is the knoll
 Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest. (CHP III. 96)

The formlessness of Byron’s description of the thunderstorm over the Alps constitutes a form of the mathematical sublime, whereas the fearfulness of Harold’s description (similar to Burke’s terror and awe) resembles the dynamic sublime. Either way, we will never know for certain as to how far Byron’s knowledge of Kant extended.

As a whole, it appears that *CHP* III was a verse-letter addressed to Byron’s daughter Ada, yet it seems that the intentionality of a letter is lost almost immediately within the canto because of Byron’s ‘playing’ with language throughout, but most relevantly with what I refer to as the ‘nature stanzas’. By the time that Byron gets to stanzas 92 to 97, there is evidence of influences from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, particularly their poems ‘Tintern Abbey’, ‘Hymn to Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni’, and ‘Mont Blanc’, respectively. At a time when Byron had not experimented with using the natural world as a setting for his poetry, he is afforded a momentous occasion: to visit Switzerland and the Alps, in the middle of summer, in the company of Shelley. Further, it was Shelley who was infatuated with Wordsworth’s poetry, and it is the former who doses Byron to the point of nausea with the latter. As I previously mentioned, there is no doubt that despite being repulsed by Wordsworth’s poetry, Byron was temporarily influenced by what he read and heard. Also, perhaps less explored is the idea that the alpine stanzas echo

the Empiricist tradition of Locke and Hume through language's ability to denote expressions and impressions.

When we come to *Manfred*, we find that there is an underlying tension between *CHP* III and IV, and the tragic verse-play comes to represent that exact tension. In the third canto, Byron provides readers with the externalisation of the outside world, which is the natural world and its impact upon the poet, the reader, and Harold. On the other hand, there is the internalisation of the fourth canto where Byron brings the world of art, architecture, and the human self into one another, as we saw with Harold's engagement with the aforementioned in Venice, Florence, and Rome.

The tension that *Manfred* exudes is indicative of the tension between the cantos. However, the stark difference is that this tension lies within Manfred's unwillingness to accept assistance from either the Chamois Hunter or the Abbot and, as a result, we find the protagonist in a state of isolation and existential self-despair.³¹¹ Manfred's self-isolation, it can be argued, is his 'hell', yet it is necessary for him to go through the trials and tribulations in order to survive and face the universe afresh. Thus, the Abbot teaches Manfred the importance of looking inwards towards one's self, and as this is something that Manfred resists, he never comes to understand fully the Abbot's reasons prior to his death.

If Chapter Two is pivotal to the development of Byron's theory of the sublime, then it poignantly moves away from any allusion to the Longinian sublime as it prepares the way for *CHP* IV. Canto IV is an artistic sweep told from the vantage point of a poetic travelogue down the Italian peninsula, and it represents all human elements of the sublime.

In Rome, the sublime brings the reader closest to God. The Pantheon, the former pagan temple that became a Catholic church, not only served multiple religions, but finds Byron utilising hyperbaton once again. In stanza 146, the opening line: 'Simple—erect—severe—austere—sublime' denotes, as we previously saw in *CHP* III, the poet's inability

³¹¹ Being that the Chamois Hunter is a part of the natural world (similar to Wordsworth's 'Recluse' and 'Pedlar'), he is separate (or external) from Manfred. Meanwhile, the Abbot, representing the spiritual world, can be seen as joined (or internal) to Manfred. On another note, this could be a reason to support the idea of the versions of the third act. Recall that in the first version of Act III, Manfred laughs off the idea of the Abbott's salvation, whereas in the revised Act III, written after Byron's visit to St. Peter's and Rome, the Abbot does not seem as foolish, nor is Manfred so quick to dismiss him.

to convey his thoughts and feelings adequately, so he turns to hyperbaton as a way to describe a moment of reverence; therefore, readers clearly see Byron's appeal to the forms of reason and thought. Once he becomes accustomed to the splendour of St. Peter's Basilica, Byron is able to reflect on the magnitude of that which is before him:

But thou, ...
 Standest alone—with nothing like to thee—
 Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.
 [...]
 Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
 In this eternal ark of worship undefiled. (*CHP* IV: 154)

Here, within the walls of the Vatican and under the dome of St. Peter's, Catholicism makes its first appearance, and the use of language to grip the reader is deliberate. Inside the basilica, language accents the description. Hyperbaton helps the reader to visualise and comprehend Harold's experience as he comes face to face with the grandeur that is St. Peter's, Catholicism, and God's glory.

Following *CHP*, I turned my focus towards *Cain*. The play is the re-telling of the Biblical story of Cain's killing of his brother Abel, from the former's perspective. Initially, one might think that a play (one that re-tells a story from Genesis) would not be able to contain any elements of the sublime, yet *Cain* is marvellously complex in an array of ways that seem to coincide with the use of the sublime. To begin with, Byron sets up Cain as the 'un-tragic hero'. On the surface, it would appear that because Cain is destined to fail in his rebellion against God, he would immediately be the tragic hero. However, at the request of Lucifer, Cain embarks on a quest for knowledge knowing that he may fail, and the former becomes his guide in a very anti-Christian rebellious revolt in which the act of revolt helps give life meaning. In addition, it is in Act II that the Lucretian sublime enters Byron's use of the sublime. The Lucretian sublime's tenet, *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing comes nothing), can be and should be seen as the starting point of Byron's sublime. Until now, Byron's sublime has been fixated on *something*, whether it is nature, language, art and architecture, or concepts of beauty, but now it is reduced to nothingness. This reduction to nothing becomes Byron's starting point for a shift that begins in Act II.

As the most important of the acts, Act II makes use of Lucretius's discussion of atoms within the vastness of the void. The minute size of the atoms, coupled with the

vastness of space, gives rise to the idea of infiniteness. As Cain enters the ‘abyss of Space’, he finds it ‘beautiful’. Byron then returns to using language as a way to convey the ‘silent, vast, dim’ sublime, as elucidated by Lucretius. James Porter argues that Lucretian atomism coincided well with the sublime, because there was the ‘radical negation’ of all that is, and ‘the infinitesimally small can appear infinitely and forbiddingly large’.³¹²

Cain’s thirst for knowledge leads to his quest to obtain it, much in the same way as the works of Byron’s middle and late periods lead to his quest for the sublime, and it allows him to start anew as he turns towards *Don Juan* and the culmination of his thoughts on the sublime.

For my study, the most important and relevant cantos in *Don Juan* are in the final third of the poem (Cantos X-XVI). In Cantos X and XI, Byron employs the ancient Greek term *parabasis*, which is a ‘coming forward’. Originally used in ancient Greek drama as a way to bring the chorus forward into the action of the play and later devised in Greek comedies to provide the actors with a way to digress, Byron uses parabasis to ‘play’ figuratively with his readers as he presents them with digressions and serious questions regarding Empiricist scepticism and metaphysics. This leads the narrator and reader to a passing reference to *Te Deum Laudamus*, a choral hymn of praise favoured during the Baroque period.

The importance of Byron’s noting of *Te Deum* is one that is significant when considered alongside the Norman Abbey stanzas. Whilst the destruction of the Norman Abbey could be seen as unimaginable and wholly reprehensible, Byron chooses to be optimistic in that the ruined abbey, in all of its arrested development, is similar to Venice by being representative of a sublime setting. In addition, the open spaces of the abbey’s grounds can be interpreted as voids in which to see the joining of humanity, nature, and the divine. Juan is afforded the opportunity for pensive reflection in a location that blends the human, natural, and spiritual worlds into one space.

Aurora Raby dominates Canto XV and represents the culmination of that towards which Byron has strived: the sublime. Aurora epitomises and embodies the sublime as a substitute for true, religious transcendence. Juan is intrigued by Aurora’s silence, which

³¹² James I. Porter, ‘Lucretius and the Sublime’, *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 167-84 (p. 168).

can be seen as reflective or meditative. Her sublime is personal, intimate, and more individualised than that of St. Peter's. It is in part her devotion to Catholicism that makes her a Virgilian guide like that of Dante's Beatrice. Being a representation of the heavenly, Aurora brings Juan towards religion and the sublime. She is emblematic of the beautiful, the sublime, and love, in so far as that she represents the personal, intimate, and divine that brings Juan to the forefront of the sublime.

Byron does not merely 'pick and choose' various theories of the sublime in order to create a patchwork of his own philosophy, but rather shows close readers of his poetry the depth and magnitude of his ability to comprehend classical theories of the sublime as well as expand upon what his forerunners were trying to accomplish. Further research needs to be conducted on Byron and the British Empiricist aesthetic tradition. Naturally, research on Byron and Burke would be at the forefront, but I think that the opportunity to examine Byron's understanding of John Locke, David Hume, and the idealism of George Berkeley (especially with regards to *Don Juan* XI) could manifest itself into a new critical arena of study. Regarding classical theories of the sublime and Byron, I feel that this could be one area to explore in greater detail for a monograph. For example, an expansion of Byron and the Lucretian sublime, as well as a closer analysis of Byron's understanding of Horace, would be pertinent. Finally, I believe that further research on Byron and parabasis, as well as Byron and his knowledge of *Te Deum*, is needed. For example, the question: 'Does parabasis extend beyond *Don Juan* in the works of Byron?' should be raised and researched. Also, we know that the British composer Henry Purcell arranged a version of *Te Deum*, and so did George Frideric Handel, and it is entirely possible that Byron was aware of at least one, if not both, of these compositions. Of course, there is the possibility that nothing will come of this, or to any of my queries, but if I have learned anything from the thesis, it has been that Byron is a far more complex poet than often acknowledged.

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