

# **BYRON AND THE BIBLE**

**by**

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I would like also to record my deep sense of gratitude to the late Mrs. Nora Huish who inspired and encouraged me throughout my work.

## REFERENCES

All references to Byron's texts are taken from:

*The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1993).

All Scriptural references are taken from the Authorised King James Version of the Holy Bible. The impression I have used is:

*The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments: translated out of the original tongues: and with former translations. Diligently compared and revised, by His Majesty's Special Command* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1810).

I have used an 1810 edition because it is the nearest edition to the one which Byron would probably have used. I have carefully followed the text, but have modernised the spelling from the old style 's' to the modern 's' where appropriate.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

The Holy Bible

AV — Authorised Version (King James)

NIV — New International Version

RSV — Revised Standard Version

## **NOTES**

Although it is customary not to print the books of the Bible in italics, I have done so throughout the thesis in order to differentiate between the biblical books and the prophets of the same name to whom I occasionally refer.

## INTRODUCTION

That Byron read and was influenced by the Bible is beyond doubt. The aim of this thesis is to show how the Bible, as a site of structural forms, influenced Byron's writing. The Bible's literary formation is unique and recent investigation shows that what have sometimes been regarded as errors and absurdities, are, in the main, part of a richly woven, intricate, but culturally very different way of writing. The 'otherness' of the Bible with its different formal base from classical and post-Renaissance texts necessitates in some respects a completely different way of reading than those to which modern readers are accustomed. Byron, who read the Bible regularly and with respect, would inevitably have been affected by this different form of reading. This thesis intends to show the link between the way in which Byron wrote and the way in which the Bible is written and has customarily been read. This will then open up important new emphases in reading Byron himself.

Byron's critics acknowledged the influence of the Scriptures upon his work from the very beginning. Initially his detractors regarded his works as licentious, blasphemous and even subversive. They were seen as an attack on the very heart of Christian beliefs, an attempt to destroy the religious and moral foundations of a Christian society. His well-publicised life-style was regarded as evidence of his lack of Christian beliefs and an irreligious and immoral attitude, which was made manifest in his writing.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the twentieth century that a more

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<sup>1</sup> Redpath, T., *Young Romantics & Critical Opinion* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1973), gives a very comprehensive survey and anthology of contemporary criticism, together with contemporary literary critical opinion of Byron's work in leading literary periodicals. See for instance, p. 43, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, III, May & June 1818: Wilson, the reviewer of *Manfred*, *The Lament of Tasso* and *Childe Harold IV*, declared them to be morally dangerous. The

balanced investigation began into the way in which Byron's religious beliefs influenced his writing, but this investigation was always of beliefs, as such, rather than scriptural forms.

Firstly, there was much debate as to whether Byron was a sceptic, believer or unbeliever and this debate continues today. The source for the debate was stimulated both by his writing, in particular *Cain*, and through his known or mythological biography. Byron's friends and acquaintances recorded their conversations with him and often pronounced upon his religious beliefs, no matter how fleeting the acquaintance. Some criticism, like that of the Rev. Robert Dallas and Leigh Hunt, was tainted by disillusionment because they regarded Byron had been less than generous towards them, whilst other criticism, like that of Thomas Medwin, was regarded as sycophantic. Byron was often allied with the scepticism of Voltaire or the emotionalism of Rousseau as his religious beliefs were equally often elided with the presumption of liberal political opinion. Others looked towards his upbringing for explanations for his unorthodoxy.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until almost the middle of the twentieth century that critics began to systematically explore Byron's preoccupation with certain biblical themes, such as

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magazine publishes a letter addressed to the author of *Beppo* in which he calls Byron, "mankind's enemy". Also, letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. by E.V. Lucas, 1935, II, 279 as cited in *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Andrew Rutherford (London: Routledge & K. Paul; and New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970). Periodicals of the day reviewing Byron's work included *The Edinburgh Review*, *British Critic*, *The Quarterly Magazine*, *The Literary Gazette*, *The New Monthly Magazine*, *Constable's Edinburgh Magazine*, *The Literary Examiner*, *The Examiner*, *The Indicator* and three religious periodicals which gave Byron's work a great deal of attention, *The Christian Observer*, *The Eclectic Review* and *The British Review*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lives of the Great Romantics: by their Contemporaries*, Vol 2, ed. by Chris Hart (London: William Pickering, 1996), for recollections of Byron by Dallas, pp. 83-138, Hunt, pp. 163-226, Medwin, pp. 227-274, together with those of Scott, Galt, Moore, Hobhouse, Guiccioli, Kennedy and Trelawny. Moore was amongst those who considered Byron to be influenced by reading Voltaire and Rousseau. Also, for example, Roberts, the reviewer for *The British Review* IX, Feb. 1817, who had a low opinion of Rousseau, considered that Byron had much consulted Rousseau's *Confessions*. Cited in Redpath's *Young Romantics and Critical Opinion*, p. 99.

the Fall and the Flood. With it came the realisation that the connection between Byron's use of Scriptures as a literary source and his engagement with religion is far more intricate than had previously been recognised. This discussion, however, tended to concentrate on his knowledge of the Bible, his relationship to Christian doctrines and the effects of his early Calvinism upon him.<sup>3</sup> There has been, however, in the last few years, a more literary and scripturally informed approach in Wolf Hirst's *Byron, the Bible, and Religion* (1991), which draws a collection of essays together from the twelfth international Byron seminar and in Bernard Beatty's *Byron's Don Juan* (1985). Harold Stevens' very thorough thesis, entitled 'Byron and the Bible: A Study of Poetic and Philosophic Development' (1965), which has proved helpful to me, also takes a literary and well-informed scriptural approach to Byron's relationship with the Bible. Stevens looks at the relation of Byron's writings to biblical allusions, themes and imagery. In his introduction he says that Byron:

...knew the Bible so well that such knowledge became unconscious as well as conscious – to the extent that suggestive patterns sometimes operated in his mind and found expression in his poetry without his full awareness.<sup>4</sup>

My interest, though, lies in Byron's use of the Scriptures, not as in Stevens' thesis with biblical allusions, imagery and themes, but rather as a site of structural forms; the way he reads, misreads, recycles, uses and reuses the Scriptures. This is not to say that Byron's intention is to copy the way in which the Scriptures are

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of such criticism are Marjarum, E.W., *Byron as Skeptic and Believer* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1962) who is amongst those who believe that Byron was influenced by Rousseau and that his "overpowering sense of guilt...is a direct result of Calvinistic training", p.7; Ridenour, G. M., *The Style of Don Juan*, Yale Studies in English, Vol. 144 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), who, amongst others, sees Byron's poetry as informed by a coherent vision of man's Fall; Wilson Knight, G., *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966); and more recently Barton P., *Lord Byron's Religion: A Journey into Despair* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Stevens, H.R., 'Byron and the Bible: A Study of Poetic and Philosophic Development', Ph.D thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 1964), p. 1.



written, as Stevens also asserts, but rather that because Byron read the Scriptures regularly and loved them, certain habits of form and of reading generated by them, influenced, consciously and unconsciously, the structure of his own composition. In other words, the thesis does not attempt to prove direct and conscious literary influence or imitation, or to investigate biblical allusions, themes and imagery, but it seeks to demonstrate that implicit shaping and structuring along biblical lines in Byron's works have come about through habits of mind generated through his wide reading of the Scriptures. The structural models and implied ways of reading the Scriptures are not the same as for classical literature. Byron, of course, read Homer, Horace and Juvenal and he specifically seeks out classical models for his tragedies. However, it is equally true that Byron also read the Scriptures much more systematically than most of his literary contemporaries with the striking exception of Blake, who read them in order to re-write them, rather than be influenced by them.<sup>5</sup>

Byron was certainly influenced from an early age by his reading of the Scriptures. He boasted that he had read the Bible right through by the age of eight and he always kept the Bible his sister had given him, beside him.<sup>6</sup> Guiccioli comments that Moore had been told by Byron's first nurse's husband that as a child Byron was particularly inquisitive about religion and that the Rev. Dr. Glennie who

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson Knight reiterates Gamba's reflections that Byron was intensely religious, with a particular respect for the Bible; Kennedy's assertion that the Bible was always on his table in Greece; and Moore's comment that he read the Bible almost daily; cited in Wilson Knight, G., *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> See Byron's letter to Murray dated 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1821 in Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, new and complete edition (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 536. The Rev. Francis Hodgson also remarks that Byron kept the Bible that Augusta had given him near him. Hodgson continues with lines he claims were written by Byron on the 'Bible' but not published with his works. The fragment ends with the lines, "But better had they ne'er been born/Who read to doubt, or read to scorn." Hodgson, J. T., *Memoir of the Rev. Francis Hodgson, B.D., Scholar, Poet and Divine, With numerous Letters from Lord Byron and others*, Vol. II, 2 Vols (London: Macmillan & Co., 1878), pp. 150-151.

taught Byron at Dulwich had remarked to Moore that at the age of ten Byron “already possessed an intimate acquaintance with the historical facts in the Scriptures, and was particularly delighted when he could speak of them to him, especially on Sunday mornings after worship. He was wont then to reason upon all the facts contained in the Bible, with every appearance of faith in the doctrine which it teaches.”<sup>7</sup> Galt records Byron’s remarks that when he was young he had access to a great many theological works, and remembered that he was particularly pleased with Barrow’s writings and that he also went regularly to church.<sup>8</sup> Of course, Byron was an avid reader of many kinds of books.<sup>9</sup> If it can be seen that the classics had an influence on the structural form of his writing, then it follows that, so too, would the Scriptures. But whilst the Scriptures are at least as important as the classics, they have never been fully investigated as a governing principle of the structure of his compositions.

I intend to make my enquiries into the way the local idioms and larger structural forms of the Bible influenced Bryon’s writing, by dividing the thesis into four main sections: phrases, paragraphs, books and works. The sections correspond simply to differences of scale — small, medium, and large — and facilitate a precise enquiry. I set out here what I understand by the terms:

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<sup>7</sup> *Lives of the Great Romantics: by their Contemporaries*, Vol 2, ed. by Chris Hart (London: William Pickering 1996), pp. 319-323.

<sup>8</sup> *Lives of the Great Romantics*, p. 39. Isaac Barrow (1630-77) was a mathematician and theologian. He was the first Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge, but resigned in 1669 to make way for Isaac Newton. Barrow founded the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became Master in 1673.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson Knight gives Byron’s very extensive list of Byron’s early reading material, which Byron had recorded from memory in 1807. Placed under various categorical headings, Byron’s list reflects his great love of historical writings and includes various historical writers of England, Scotland, Ireland, Rome, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, America, Hindustan and Africa. Other headings include an extensive list under Biography and less so of Law, Philosophy, Geography, Divinity, Eloquence and Poetry. The Poetry list includes the British Classics, some French and a little Italian. Wilson Knight, G., *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), pp. 16-18

Phrases — the local examination of detail, looking at the formation and structure of phrases, lines and sentences. We shall investigate what impact, if any, certain biblical words and phrases have upon Byron. In particular, ‘pregnant utterances’ unique to the Scriptures, and also the parallelism of the ancient Hebrew poetry in the Scriptures, which is its most striking local feature of style, shall be explored to see whether either of these elements can be detected in Byron’s writing.

Paragraphs — The Bible, it is generally now agreed, appears to be written by gathering and stitching together various small literary units called pericopes. We shall enquire whether there is any evidence of this in Byron’s writing, paying particular regard to the way in which his text, like that of the Scriptures, is put together by an editing process with various interruptions, interpolations and appendices. A striking feature of the Bible is the ‘divans’, or little complexes of pericopes that have been gathered together. Can any of these be found in Byron’s work?

Books — As a literary site, the Scriptures is a collection of books with different concerns which, nevertheless, claim mysterious unity. It is both a collection of books and a single book. This ‘doubleness’ of the Scriptures will be investigated along with the notion of what constitutes a book. As the biblical unity of a book such as *Genesis* or *Isaiah* manifestly does not conform to the classical model of unity, what distinction can be made and can this model of unity make better sense of Byron’s work than other models? This section will take into account eighteenth-century ideas of a book in terms of authorship, ownership, coherence and emerging literary tradition.

Works — Although the books of the Bible can be read in isolation, when they are read as a whole they form, and are intended to form a continuum, a repetition, a purposive recycling and recapitulation of thoughts, ideas and figures. This applies to the Hebrew Bible and more especially to the understanding of the larger Bible of the Christian Church. A continuum is achieved through such things as cross-referencing, allegory and typology. Because typology is unique to the exegesis of Scriptures and a favoured form of biblical interpretation by the ‘church fathers’, which has remained, to some extent, to the present day, and indeed shows signs of revival, we shall enquire into whether a typological way of writing and reading, in any way, influenced Byron.<sup>10</sup>

The thesis needs, at various points, ‘control models’, i.e., writing by other poets, possibly influenced by the Scriptures, in order to determine Byron’s relation to the Scriptures more accurately. It might well be thought a good idea, in this respect, to compare Byron with other Romantics, but that is an endeavour beyond my task. That Byron is different from his fellow Romantics is understood and the conclusion of the thesis will make a cursory judgement upon the reasons for this, taking special note of Blake’s use of the Scriptures. But as the aim of the thesis is to prove that the structure of Byron’s writing follows biblical forms through his habit of reading the Bible, it would be more beneficial to the thesis to choose comparative writers that have themselves been steeped in the Scriptures, or in some sections to choose writers that Byron read and admired. In doing so it can be ascertained whether the structural forms in their writings, as opposed to those

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<sup>10</sup>Lubac, Henri de, *Medieval Exegesis*, translated by Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1998) is the principal expounder and apologist for such methods of exegesis.

of the Scriptures, influenced Byron's writing. I have taken note of Bryan Shelley's book *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel*, but as the book's Preface states, Shelley's reading of the Bible "intentionally deviates from the orthodox understanding of the text".<sup>11</sup> Also, Shelley is more interested than Byron in treating the Bible as myth. Shelley can take, for example, *Isaiah*, which is an historical text, or a combination of historical text, imagining an historical vindication and redemption of Israel, which Shelley dehistorises and turns into a myth about a possible new future for humanity which is permanently true and which will come about by the culmination of something like socialism and imagination. This is, of course, a dehistorised version of the Bible; it is an enterprise which Byron would not undertake because of his respect for history on the one hand, and his interest in the Bible as an imaginative version of real history, on the other. Blake and Shelley are counter-examples to the emphases of the present thesis.

The reader might also well argue that because Byron had read Milton and no-one more obviously uses the Bible in English literature than Milton, that he would be the most obvious person with whom to compare Byron's use of the Bible. I have not done so for two main reasons. Although Milton uses the Scriptures, the organising principle of *Paradise Lost* is that of classical epic. He is thinking structurally in terms of Virgil and Homer, just like his aureate diction. He is deliberately not allowing the structures of Scripture to influence him. Secondly, Milton is much more of a rationalist than Byron. Indeed Milton tries to make the Bible more rational than it is. We could not imagine Byron setting out to justify

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<sup>11</sup> Shelley, B., *Shelley and Scripture: The Interpreting Angel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), Preface, viii.

God's ways to man through a re-writing of the Bible. In these respects, Milton does not make a good control model. The Byronic hero may owe a good deal to Milton's Satan and the return of Lambro to destroy Haidee and Juan's idyll may owe something to Satan's arrival in Adam and Eve's Paradise but, significantly, Byron does not copy Milton's literary structures.

The writers and texts that have been selected as control models are random in the respect that I did not wish to influence my empirical findings by choosing writers or texts where the results could be readily anticipated. For instance, in the second chapter, I choose completely random texts from the *Book of Common Prayer* since, I would argue, that although the history of style belongs, of course, to a larger history, yet the quasi-scientific method of taking random examples has made my findings more accurate than if I had deliberately rigged the field of enquiry. Of course, there are some patterns in my choice of 'random' models. Because I write this introduction from the standpoint of having completed these investigations, I now find that some enquiries are far more fruitful than others. Any empirical enquiry will have some negative results. So I apologise in advance to the reader for having to plough through some sections where it might legitimately be said that little had been gleaned. This is particularly so of the first chapter and it applies, too, to parts of the second. But it is necessary to the methodology of the thesis that I am systematic and that a loosely quantitative base — small, medium, and large — which I have adopted, govern my enquiry. I want to remain loyal to that and I also want to remain loyal in a kind of quasi-scientific fashion to negative conclusions as much as to positive ones. In doing so, the thesis argues that there is plenty of evidence for the view that biblical structures are present in Byron's work and that his re-writing of these biblical structures is

largely instinctive, having come about through habits of mind generated by his reading and, indeed, memorising the Bible. Similarly the thesis demonstrates that the link between Byron and the Bible is more fundamental and more literary than one of religious dogma (though, of course, Byron was certainly interested in this) and thus opens up a new reading of Byron's work, in itself, and the possibility that the structures and forms of the Bible have played a more pervasive part in secular literature than has hitherto been granted.

## CHAPTER ONE

### PREGNANT UTTERANCES

We shall begin by examining local detail, words and phrases, and in particular, the phrase 'pregnant utterances'. I do so because the phrase calls attention at the outset of the thesis, to the nature of language itself from a biblical point of view.

We may say that 'pregnant utterances' are fertile, seed-bearing, and exist to transform and alter a situation in which they are announced. The pregnant utterance not only announces itself, but carries within it something beyond itself which is yet to be, but which is not yet fully known. In other words, it is a force that operates in the present whilst at the same time carrying something of the future of which there is a sense, but without knowing exactly what it will be. Pregnant utterances do not announce any ordinary thing, they are themselves historical and operate to generate the larger meanings of history. They are, therefore, generating words and are a feature of the Scriptures which is not found in secular literature.

Although the term 'pregnant utterances' is my own coinage, it is similar to the phrase derived from linguistic and philosophical enquiry, 'performative utterance', which is used by Gabriel Josipovici in his essay entitled 'The Bible: Dialogue and Distance'. He describes 'performative utterance' as:

A form of words in which the speaker is not just saying something about an action, but is actually performing the action by uttering the sentence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Josipovici, G., 'The Bible: Dialogue and Distance' in *Ways of Reading the Bible*, ed. by Michael Wadsworth (New Jersey: Harvester Press, 1981), p. 139. The essay gives an excellent and in-depth discussion on the 'performative', or 'pregnant utterance', pp. 133-153.



Pregnant utterances in the Scriptures are usually marked out as being particularly important and requiring special consideration by being prefaced by certain words or formulas such as “behold”,<sup>2</sup> in the Old Testament and, in the New Testament, “verily, verily, I say unto you”. The generating word is thus held up and singled out from the text as having peculiar authority. They are not just simply words in the modern sense of words, as part of a separated world of discourse; they are words which as soon as they are uttered, make happen what they declare. They are declarative, performative and powerful.<sup>3</sup> It is possible, therefore, that because of Byron’s wide reading of the Scriptures, reading them more than most other of his contemporary poets, for instance Wordsworth or Shelley, that he had a particular receptivity to the idea of the generating word.

Byron, as a half-Scot brought up initially within a highly Protestant culture which takes for granted that the word has privileged authority (as opposed to visual images for instance), would read the Scriptures with more attentiveness and reverence than most of his English contemporaries would have done. He would have a sense that there is nothing more powerful than words because he would have read from the Scriptures at an early and impressionable age that they actually affect events. They are dynamic and once they are said, they make happen.

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<sup>2</sup> The word ‘behold’ is described as “an interjection calling attention to what is to follow. Literally, lo, look”, in *Cruden’s Complete Concordance to the Bible*, ed. by John Eadie (Gordonsville: Dugan Publishers, Inc., 1986), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on ‘pregnant utterances’ in the Bible, see the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament theology & Exegesis*, Vol. I, gen. ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1997), pp. 145-147. The ‘Guide’ Section, no. 5 entitled ‘Speech-act theory’ cites J.L. Austin’s *How to Do Things With Words* (1962); J. Lyons, *Semantics* (1977); M. Stubbs, *Discourse Analysis* (1983); and names Anthony Thiselton as being in the forefront of theologians who recognised the significance of speech-act theory in general and Austin’s work in particular. Thiselton argues that many utterances assigned in the Scripture to God or attributed to Jesus are illocutionary in form or presented as being irreversible; i.e., Jacob’s cry to Esau I “have blessed him...and he shall be blessed” (*Genesis 27:33*). This is because Jacob had no means of un blessing. Thiselton recognised that formal illocutionary acts depend for their validity upon the authority of their author, at the same time he refutes the thesis that the “power language” of the Old Testament merely reflected the primitive animistic world view of the Hebrew writers.

Would this then not lead to the view that the nature of language, at its absolute God-given essence, should be declarative and performative and that if this is not the case and language does not create, or make happen, then it is peculiarly offensive, hypocritical, betraying, bland? Such a presumption might make Byron particularly aware of the nature of ordinary language as being, in comparison, slack, unrepeatable, not performing what it says, separated from truth, clichéd. Byron was, as Paul West pointed out in his chapter 'The Escape from Cliché' in *Byron and the Spoiler's Art*, obsessed with the avoidance of cliché.<sup>4</sup> Is it not at least plausible that Byron's extreme sense of cliché is deepened by a Protestant biblical sense where the nature of language of itself belongs to God, in that it is performative with no gap between something being said and its happening, and therefore where there is a gap it is peculiarly offensive?<sup>5</sup>

It may well be that Byron was in a way haunted by the authentic word and the inability of poets to recreate it. We will start our investigation, in a way at something of a tangent, by looking at Byron's translation of *The Morgante Maggiore Di Messer Luigi Pulci* because although its tone has a deliberate lightness to it which seems at odds with 'pregnant utterances', nevertheless its concern for the generating word is clearly seen at the beginning of the poem.

Peter Vassallo in *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence* suggests that Byron chose to translate Pulci's *Morgante* because he wanted to demonstrate that the so-called

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<sup>4</sup> West., P., *Byron and the Spoiler's Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960).

<sup>5</sup> Leonard Goldberg's essay 'Byron and the Place of Religion' argues that Byron bestows upon language a quasi-religious function by making a word act like a thing, rather than a mere symbol, so that it becomes "more an incarnational vehicle than a mimetic one...an exfoliation of the divine word". He suggests, "Were words things, what one might voice through, or with them would be the principle of becoming, the experience of turning one thing to another that is already partially glimpsed in metonymy." Essay in *Byron, the Bible, and Religion*, a collection of essays delivered at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Byron Seminar, 1985, Haifa, Israel, ed. by Wolf Z. Hirst (Newark: University of Delaware Press & London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1985), pp. 153-168, p. 158 & pp. 166-167.

‘irreligious’ tone of *Don Juan* was, in fact, part of Italian literary tradition.

Vassallo says that “Byron was writing after a tradition of poetry in which an occasional laugh at things sacred was considered salutary”.<sup>6</sup> Recommending his translation to Murray, Byron seems to echo Vassallo’s insight:

It must be put by the original, stanza for stanza, and verse for verse; and you will see what was permitted in a Catholic country and a bigoted age to a church-man, on the score of religion:—and so tell those buffoons who accuse me of attacking the Liturgy.<sup>7</sup>

Vassallo argues that another reason why Byron chose to translate the first Canto rather than any other was because it best exemplified the many facets of Pulcian style. The careful reader would be expected to notice that the total effect of the poem depended upon the poet’s constant modulations of tone, such as the solemnity of the invocation to the Word and the Virgin in the beginning, followed by a facetious description of the Court of Charlemagne, the rollicking episode of the besieging of the monastery, the hilarious encounter of Orlando with the giants, the humorous conversion of Morgante and the abrupt transition to Orlando’s sober disquisition on the quality of God’s mercy and justice for the benefit of his loutish neophyte. From all of this, Vassallo asserts, Byron expected the discerning reader to judge for himself that this kind of flippant impiety was tolerated in the ‘capital of Christianity’.<sup>8</sup> Teresa Guiccioli also expressed her concern that Byron’s translation was misunderstood and that he had written it in order to show the English what a priest could say in that style of poetry in a Catholic country.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vassallo, P., *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Murray from Ravenna, dated 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1820 in Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), letter no. 355, p. 434.

<sup>8</sup> Vassallo’s *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> Teresa Guiccioli, *My Recollections of Lord Byron* (London, 1869) in *Lives of the Great Romantics By their Contemporaries*, Vol 2, pp. 275-343, p. 281.

The poem begins with the Scriptural account of creation (I. 1. 9-10), where, in the opening chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, the Word comes before God although they are the same (*John* 1:1). It was the spoken word that created and not just thoughts or actions. This makes the generating word all-powerful.

Although the narrator of *The Morgante Maggiore* acclaims God as the creator, he then calls God “Benign” and “pious” (I. 1. 14), and asks the Virgin Mary to help him with his story (I. 2). In a sense the narrator is accusing the Word of betrayal because it is no longer performative, powerful or authoritative in poetry and ordinary language. The narrator describes the Word, or God, as non-interfering and hypocritically virtuous. He thus calls for help from Mary, and in doing so, is in a way, concluding that the language of poetry needs a spiritual essence because ordinary language is ineffective. In the ‘Advertisement’ for the poem Byron spells out the poet’s problem of finding an authentic utterance. He says that Boiardo has treated his own narrative too seriously and with a harsh style. Pulci’s gaiety, he believes, has led to the mistaken belief that he was deriding religion. Byron, therefore, sees his own actions as a poet as mediating between styles, between the almost God-like, oratorical voice of *Childe Harold* and ironical, cliché-using and cliché-avoiding voice of *Don Juan*, in order to speak authentically.<sup>10</sup> The narrator of *The Morgante Maggiore* calls on Mary, the mother of Christ, to be “benignly” kind to his poem. He calls upon Mary because he says, “The day that Gabriel said “‘All hail’ to thee” (I. 2. 20), she was given the keys to all things. In other words she became the essence of knowledge. She has been given “each key/Of heaven and hell, and everything beside” (I. 2. 18-19).

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<sup>10</sup> McGann argues that Byron’s translation of Pulci’s *Morgante* is important because it stands at the centre of his whole revisionist project in poetry. McGann claims that it is a crucial document in Byron’s argument with the Lake School over the issue of poetic diction; Byron’s *Morgante* standing for a deeper, richer, more ancient and broadly European and less insular poetry than the ‘upstart’ ‘Lakist School’. See McGann, J.J., *The Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, Vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 509.

'Pregnant utterance', here, of course, has a particular force for Mary's body generated the Word of God, in this instance it generated knowledge and also certain female roles for Mary. They are, at the same time, both present as in "Virgin" and "daughter", and futuristic as in the term "mother" and "bride" (I. 2. 17). The word "bride" here has a double role, that of Joseph's bride, whilst at the same time referring to her role as part of the Church of Christ, or the Bride of Christ. In this way, the word contains both the immediate future and an inkling of a more obscure future event, something of which there is a sense or even a knowledge in the Scriptures, but which is not yet fully known or understood. Also, all her roles give Mary a complete relationship with God. Mary, therefore, has an intimate relationship with the Word and the narrator asks that she illuminates his mind, in order to give his verse, "flowing rhymes, a pleasant style and free" (I. 2. 22). *The Morgante Maggiore* is, of course, a special case because it depends upon earlier Catholic habits of mind still present and preserved in Byron's translation, but not originated by him, yet there is evident interest in 'pregnant utterances' in Byron's version.

The striving after the performative word within Byron's poetry is clearly distinguishable in quite a different poem, *The Prophecy of Dante*, where the reader is required to imagine Dante addressing him. Dante says:

For what is poesy but to create  
From overfeeling good or ill; and aim  
At an external life beyond our fate,  
And be the new Prometheus of new men, (IV. 11-14)

For Byron's Dante, poetry should create truth whether or not it is palatable and that truth should seek to generate something beyond itself for future generations. The price of the pregnant utterance, or the performative word, means for Dante,

suffering; of being chained to a lone rock and being the prey of vultures. Earlier in the poem the narrator laments that his “soul within thy language” (II. 21) is set with the “old Roman sway” (II. 22), and declares that he will “make another tongue arise” (II. 23), whereby “every word as brilliant as thy skies/ Shall realize a poet’s proudest dream” and make all present speech seem inferior (II. 27-28). The old, traditional language is bland. A new language is needed so that each word stands on its own, carrying its own authority. Byron indicates in the dedication that his inspiration to write the poem stems from his admiration for an absolute coincidence of language and event. Vassallo in *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence* argues that *The Prophecy* offers a literary mode and mood which Byron assumed for the purpose of arousing the Italians to political awareness of their cultural heritage. He adds that there were signs in Ravenna of a clandestine uprising against the Austrians and Byron hoped that Italian patriotism would find expression in action. The poem, Vassallo argues, “was not so much a pose as a genuine attempt to write in a manner which would strike a responsive note in most cultured Italians”.<sup>11</sup> Put another way, they were not idle words, but declarative, performative, generative, designed for action. In his Dedication to the poem, Byron addresses the Lady, (that is Teresa), saying that she is the cause for his daring to undertake the task, adding:

Thou, in the pride of Beauty and of Youth,  
 Spak’st; and for thee to speak and be obey’d  
 Are one; but only in the sunny South  
 Such sounds are utter’d, and such charms display’d,  
 So sweet a language from so fair a mouth—  
 Ah! to what effort would it not persuade? (Dedication, 9-14)

Though the ‘performative utterance’ here is turned into a love compliment, nevertheless, the language resembles that of Moses’ song when he led the

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Vassallo’s *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, pp. 38-39.

Israelites out of Egypt and was within sight of the Promised Land. God commands Moses to teach the Israelites the words so that the words would remain with them and be a living witness to the future generations. Moses' utterance in *Deuteronomy*, chapter 32, reflects God's anger against the Israelites for their worshipping of the 'strangers' gods, after he had taken care of them:

GIVE ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;  
and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. (32: 1)

He found him in a desert land, and in the  
waste howling wilderness; he led him about,  
he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.  
As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth  
over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings,  
taketh them, beareth them on her wings:  
So the Lord alone did lead him, and  
*there was* no strange god with him. (32: 10-13)

For a fire is kindled in mine anger,  
and shall burn unto the lowest hell,  
and shall consume the earth with her increase,  
and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.  
I will heap mischiefs upon them;  
I will spend mine arrows upon them.  
*They shall be* burnt with hunger,  
and devoured with burning heat,  
and with bitter destruction: I will also send  
the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison  
of serpents of the dust. The sword without,  
and terror within, shall destroy both the young man  
and the virgin, the suckling *also* with  
the man of gray hairs. (32: 22-25)

And Moses made an end of speaking all these words  
to all Israel: And he said unto them, Set your hearts  
unto all the words which I testify among you this day,  
which ye shall command your children to observe to do,  
all the words of this law. For it *is* not a vain thing for you;  
because it *is* your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong  
*your* days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. (32:  
45-47)

The performative vocabulary of Moses here can be directly compared with the language of Dante's address. Byron uses the same imagery as the Deuteronomist:

Oh Florence! Florence! unto me thou wast  
Like that Jerusalem which the Almighty He  
Wept over, 'but thou wouldst not;' as the bird  
Gathers its young, I would have gather'd thee  
Beneath a parent pinion, hadst thou heard  
My voice; but as the adder, deaf and fierce,  
Against the breast that cherish'd thee was stirr'd  
Thy venom, and my state thou didst amerce,  
And doom this body forfeit to the fire. (I. 60-68)

And later:

The Plague, the Prince, the Stranger, and the Sword,  
Vials of wrath but emptied to refill. (III. 2-3)<sup>12</sup>

Although Byron uses the same language and imagery as the Deuteronomist, his is not quite a 'pregnant utterance' in the sense that I have described. This is because Byron writes already knowing the outcome of future events that are prophesied within the text. His text cannot control or generate the future. It is possible that because Byron already knows the outcome of the prophecies he tends to blur Jewish and Christian theology. Take for instance his references to "the great Seers of Israel" (II. 8); "This voice from out the Wilderness" (II.12); and "the veil of coming centuries/Is rent" (II. 35-36); all within a few lines of one another. The narrator says that the Seers of Israel spoke at a time of conflict and were not listened to, or obeyed and were a voice from out the wilderness. This reference alludes to the prophet Isaiah's call to listen to "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (*Isaiah* 40:3). Isaiah spoke during a period of political and military uncertainty and many of his prophecies, (the first 'Isaiah'), concerned the

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<sup>12</sup> The NIV Bible which, of course, Byron would not have read, uses the same language as we have been using. It makes it clear that the words are declarative and dynamic a means of generating life. It says: "When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you — they are your life'" (*Deuteronomy* 32:45-46). It uses the word 'pinion', as does Byron, to describe the way in which an eagle carries its young, and the words 'venom' and 'viper' as opposed to Byron's 'adder' and the AV 'serpent of the dust'.



Assyrian invasion of Judah. This particular reference however (usually considered 'Deutero-Isaiah') is about God's restoration of Judah following the conflict. Isaiah's prophecy of a voice calling to prepare a way for the Lord is repeated in *Matthew* 3 and there refers to John the Baptist. Within the text of *Isaiah*, however, there is no particular reference to a person preparing the way for a Messiah and he does not mention the words Messiah or Saviour. However, Isaiah's reference to a voice calling to make a straight path in the wilderness carries a meaning beyond itself and is too vast to be contained within the reference to the immediate restoration of Israel. Words in the Hebrew Bible are customarily thought of as having both definite and indefinite reverberation.<sup>13</sup>

The same thing applies if we look at what Christians regard as another of Isaiah's Messianic prophecies. It is the literal pregnant utterance of, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (*Isaiah* 7:14). Both Jews and Christians read the text as saying that a miraculous child will be born (not necessarily born in a miraculous way) but Christians, quite legitimately, read the New Testament alongside the Old and in doing so regard it as a Messianic prophecy. The text does not say the baby will do anything, but that the birth of a baby called Immanuel will be a sign that God will destroy Judah's enemies. The birth of the child carries a meaning beyond itself and the meaning is so large that it is not contained within the reference to the enemies being destroyed. Byron is aware of the further, much larger meaning when he refers to the Seers of Israel and of a voice crying from out of the wilderness at the same time. Again, within a few lines he refers to the "veil of coming centuries/Is rent".

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<sup>13</sup> See Rad, G. von., *Message of the Prophets* (London and Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965); or his *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. II (London and Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965).

Although Byron is secularising the reference, it alludes initially to the veil of the temple being torn in two at the moment of Christ's death. The veil of the temple separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolised God's presence, was placed. Only the high priest could pass the veil and only on the Day of Atonement. The rending of the veil by an earthquake at the time of Christ's Crucifixion symbolised that through Christ, a way was now open for all to enter into God's presence. Dante's rent veil is announced through a new declarative language that brings with it glimpses of a troubled future. This idea is repeated later in the text:

Yet through this centuried eclipse of woe  
Some voices shall be heard, and earth shall listen;  
Poets shall follow in the path I show,  
And make it broader... (III. 62-65)

The language here emanates from the same Spirit as that of the prophets when, Byron significantly goes out of his way to remind us, there was no gap between what was declared and what actually happened:

The Spirit of the fervent days of Old,  
When words were things that came to pass, and thought  
Flash'd o'er the future... (II. 1-3).

However, no-one would listen to, or take notice of these words, or as the text says, of this voice from the wilderness.

Another example of Byron blurring Jewish and Christian references can be seen in the third canto when the narrator says:

He, too, shall sing of arms, and christian blood  
Shed where Christ bled for man; and his high harp  
Shall, by the willow over Jordan's flood,  
Revive a song of Sion... (III. 121-124)

In the first instance this refers to Tasso's poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, about the first crusade to capture Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> Christian knights had shed their blood where Christ had died. But 'Christ bled for man' refers to Christ's crucifixion and the high harp by the willow of Jordan's flood reviving a song of Sion, alludes to *The Hebrew Melodies*, 'By the Rivers of Babylon we sat down and Wept', which itself paraphrases *Psalms* 137:1-4:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.

Byron merges the Jewish and Christian references and the river of Babylon where the Israelite exiles hung their harps on the willow, is merged with the river of Jordan of the crusade of the Holy Land. Byron's implicit acceptance of the idea of the generating word leads him to speak simultaneously of both its present and future state. In doing so the pregnant utterance loses its status. Although Byron uses the same language and imagery as the psalmist or the Deuteronomist, because he is writing of things that have already happened and therefore knows the outcome, he cannot, of course, make a pregnant utterance in the biblical sense. His words cannot make happen something that has already happened. Campbell's quotation, which Byron places under the title of the poem, "'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,/And coming events cast their shadows before', whilst it is true for the prophets, is not true for the writer of *The Prophecy of Dante*, because the 'coming' events have already passed. The model here though is still a biblical one certainly familiar to Byron – that of Apocalyptic writing, which, as in *Daniel*

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<sup>14</sup> Tasso, Torquato, (1544-95), wrote *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Liberated) in 1581. He later rewrote his work as *Gerusalemme Conquistata* in 1593, in response to criticisms.

7, describes a past swathe of known history as though it is a prophecy of the future.

Byron's concern for the authentic utterance makes him particularly sensitive towards its receptivity. Again, in *The Prophecy of Dante* he writes:

...and the line  
Of poesy, which peoples but the air  
With thought and beings of our thought reflected,  
Can do no more: then let the artist share  
The palm, he shares the peril, and dejected  
Faints o'er the labour unapproved—Alas!  
Despair and Genius are too oft connected. (IV. 33-39)

In other words, when poetry 'peoples but the air/With thought' rather than performative words, then despair results. This leads to the supposition that the narrator is arguing that people ought to be perpetually receptive to the generating word. This is the message given by another great Seer of Israel, the prophet Hosea, when he speaks of God admonishing Israel for its wickedness:

The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place of* the breaking forth of children. (*Hosea*, 13:12-13)

The text says that Israel's guilt has accumulated against it, but it has been offered a chance of renewal. However, Israel is unwise and is unable to take this chance of renewal, or a new birth. The text continues by saying that because it is unable to take the chance of renewal, it will be destroyed. In other words Israel ought to be perpetually pregnant, in the sense that it ought to be perpetually open to the receptivity of God's word, which will enable it to go forward. Renewal is again offered to Israel in a time of difficulty, but typically Israel is not in a condition to receive that receptivity, so it is not 'pregnant' in which case it will be destroyed. The idea that we ought to be perpetually pregnant, whereby at the same time as

announcing ourselves we are also announcing something else which is going to happen beyond us, can also be seen in *The Prophecy of Dante*. Dante wishes his country to be pregnant with, amongst others, the wise, people who will discover new worlds:

Thy soil shall still be pregnant with the wise,  
The gay, the learn'd, the generous, and the brave,  
Native to thee as summer to thy skies,  
Conquerors on foreign shores, and the far wave,  
Discoverers of new worlds, which take thy name; (III. 43-47)

People ought to be perpetually pregnant in that they ought to be perpetually receiving or discovering new things, things that are at present beyond their horizons. The discovery of new worlds means that although they will remain native to their country, they will also be part of something new, which bears their name. They are at the same time announcing themselves and also announcing something beyond themselves, a new world whose future will generate itself. Byron is seeing secular history through biblical models here.

Perhaps the antithesis of a pregnant utterance is that of empty words, (when poetry 'peoples the air with thoughts'), or even flattery in order to seduce, as those of the harlot in *Proverbs 7*. These are words which give a false picture and a false hope. Because of their falseness they form the hypocritical language which betrays the generating word. The words do generate a form of history, but it is an entrapment and leads to despair and destruction. In *The Prophecy of Dante* they are described thus:

And language, eloquently false, evince  
The harlotry of genius, which, like beauty,  
Too oft forgets its own self-reverence,  
And looks on prostitution as a duty. (III. 76-79)

... thus the Bard too near the throne  
Quails from his inspiration, bound to *please*, —

How servile is the task to please alone!  
 To smooth the verse to suit his sovereign's ease  
 And royal leisure, nor too much prolong  
 Aught save his eulogy, and find, and seize,  
 Or force, or forge fit argument of song!  
 Thus trammell'd, thus condem'd to Flattery's trebles,  
 He toils through all, still trembling to be wrong:  
 For fear some noble thoughts, like heavenly rebels,  
 Should rise up in high treason to his brain,  
 He sings, as the Athenian spoke, with pebbles  
 In's mouth, lest truth should stammer through his strain. (III. 85-97)

The words are meaningless because they are false, moulded to fit whatever image they are trying to create. They flatter and seduce by presenting a false picture and are deliberately unclear in an attempt to subordinate the truth. They are an entrapment because they hinder and condemn by the constant effort needed to distort and conceal the purer more eloquent language, so that its true status is not revealed. Of course, criticism of empty language is found in other places than the Scriptures, but the model of prophetic utterance with its special claim to truth is central to the poem.

We do not get a strong sense of salvation history with its hope of ultimate restoration in *The Prophecy of Dante*. There are cycles of vision, despair, suffering and death within the poem. The performative word of which it speaks does not generate a world beyond itself, one that leads to further life:

The bloody chaos yet expects creation,  
 But all things are disposing for thy doom;  
 The elements await but for the word,  
 'Let there be darkness!' and thou grow'st a tomb! (II. 42-45)

The words are the antithesis of the scriptural creation whereby order was created from chaos and God commanded light and then made life. The words are also the antithesis of salvation history because with salvation history there is always the possibility of renewal; that no matter how bad things are there is always the

possibility of change, of conversion that leads to redemption, the regeneration of life, a pregnancy beyond this. The tone of *The Prophecy of Dante* is much like that of *Manfred*, inasmuch as that whilst reading *Manfred* we do not get a sense of a world that is generated beyond it. Manfred almost exults in the fact that he has no children, nothing will happen after him, there is no future history. Manfred finds that when he most wants to produce the performative word (here associated with magical invocation) in order to make Astarte appear, he is unable to do so and requests help from Nemesis. Nemesis argues that the power of the performative words rests with Manfred and that he must use his own authoritative words to make her speak. When eventually Astarte does speak, Manfred is not restored, but is left convulsed, lifeless. This can be compared with Dante's:

Think not that I would look on them and live.  
A spirit forces me to see and speak,  
And for my guerdon grants *not* to survive;  
My heart shall be pour'd over thee and break: (III. 31-34)

In both poems, when words of authority and power are used, they do not generate life, but lead to death. Although the language throughout *The Prophecy of Dante* is one of suffering and despair, there is a softening of the attitude towards the end when, it seems, people will not be blinded to the truth. This is reminiscent, perhaps, of the slight uplifting towards the end of *Manfred*, when Manfred takes hold of the Abbot's hand before he dies.<sup>15</sup> However, the final words in the poems are of death and of the tomb. Whilst Dante constantly refers to a vision of a purer language and although it is ultimately accepted, there is still a sense within the poem that history is in a bind, that we cannot get out of it, that no matter what, the end is death. Similarly in *Manfred* we have a sense that whatever happens, for

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<sup>15</sup>Stevens asserts in his thesis 'Byron and the Bible' that *The Prophecy of Dante* heralded a change in the nature of Byron's work, which became more serious. 'Byron and the Bible', p. 28.

Manfred there is no generating history. We can sense a brother/sister relationship, which is sterile and does not lead to pregnancy as the love of Juan and Haidee does. Byron has a strong sense of sterility in its consistent biblical use, both literally and as a metaphor for spiritual unblestness. Customarily, in the Old Testament, sterility was considered a curse or an affliction sent by God,<sup>16</sup> because procreation was considered to be both a commandment and a blessing.<sup>17</sup> It was considered that if fertility was a blessing, then sterility must be punishment and curse. Is it not possible then that within Byron's work this sense of sterility is connected to his preoccupation with guilt and the frequent sense of being cursed and that this, in turn, is connected to his underlying assumption that language is, or ought to be, generative? I have argued that this assumption principally derives from Byron's peculiar and sustained relation to the Scriptures.

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<sup>16</sup> "For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife." (*Genesis*, 20:18).

<sup>17</sup> "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth (*Genesis*, 1:28); also "And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply" (*Genesis* 9:7).



## PARALLELISM

Robert Lowth (1710-1787) was the first to draw attention to parallelism as the defining idiom of Hebrew poetry. Since then, it has been recognised as the most tell-tale feature of biblical style. Lowth defines parallelism as a structure of thought rather than of external form. He regards the Hebrew poem as being composed by balancing a series of sense units against one another according to certain simple principles of relationship. The units are formed into phrases or clauses, often complete sentences. Lowth distinguishes eight forms of parallelism ranging from simple repetition and echo to variation, comparison and contrast. In his book *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* he defines parallelism thus:

The correspondence of one Verse, or Line, with another, I call Parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in Sense; or similar to it in the form of Grammatical Construction; these I call Parallel Lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding Lines, Parallel Terms.<sup>18</sup>

Lowth's three main traditional categories of parallelism are synonymous, antithetic and synthetic. Parallelism has received intense scrutiny over the past century from biblical and literary scholars. The emerging consensus is that parallelism is a more subtle literary device than previously thought. Previously, scholars emphasised the equivalence between colas<sup>19</sup> of a poetic line. For instance C.S. Lewis in his *Reflection on the Psalms* (1961) describes parallelism as the practice of saying the same thing twice in different words. The new criterion for understanding parallelism is development rather than equivalence.

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<sup>18</sup> Lowth, R., *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Vol. II, (first published in Latin 1753, translated into English, 1778), p. 32. Lowth was elected to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford in May 1741 and, being a theologian and Hebrew scholar, delivered a series of lectures on biblical poetry.

<sup>19</sup> Cola is a name given to the clause of a parallistic verse. Other names are hemistichs, stichs, versicles, half-verses, or A and B. The terms colon and bi-cola were terms used in Greek rhetoric (i.e. prose as well as poetry). See Kugel, J.L., *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 2.

One of the main advocates of this is J.L. Kugel who does not replace Lowth's three categories, but simply argues that the second colon always contributes to the thought of the first colon, as suggested by his formula, 'A, and what is more, B'.<sup>20</sup> For instance if we isolate the verbs in *Psalm* :1, we can clearly see the progression of thought as Kugel suggests:

Blessed *is* the man  
that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

All three verbs figuratively relate the unblessed person to evil, but there is a progression from "walketh" to "standeth" to "sitteth" as the psalmist imagines an ever closer relationship to evil. Therefore, not only is something repeated, but also something is added.

Parallelism has attracted such intense scrutiny that more types and subtypes have been added to Lowth's three categories. However, it is outside the remit of this thesis to delve minutely into the intricacies of parallelism, but rather to try to ascertain whether the pattern of biblical parallelism, the rhyming of thoughts, is discernibly present to any degree in Byron's work. To do this we shall also look at such poets as Christopher Smart, James Montgomery and Dryden who were very much influenced by the Scriptures to see to what extent, if any, parallelism is present in their work, compared to Byron's.<sup>21</sup> This will enable us to set out a context of provability. Firstly, we shall investigate the idea of biblical parallelism as defined by Lowth, Kugel and C.S. Lewis. Following this, we shall broaden the

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<sup>20</sup> See Kugel's chapter regarding the parallelistic line entitled "A is So, and *What's More*, B" in *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History*, pp. 1-58.

<sup>21</sup> The discussion on Dryden's work follows Christopher Smart and James Montgomery because I feel Dryden's work enables a more exact and extended comparison with that of Byron's and so it would be useful to have them together.

discussion to include the nature of parallelism, which will include such things as word pairs, word grouping and the dynamics of words.

Christopher Smart (1722-1771) remained a well known poet in Byron's time.<sup>22</sup>

Smart actually learned Hebrew and was also well acquainted with Robert Lowth's work.<sup>23</sup> Smart was particularly impressed with his detailed account of biblical poetry in Lowth's Oxford lectures *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753, English translation 1778). Some of the closest analogues for Smart's sacred ode can be found amongst eighteenth-century verse paraphrases of biblical texts, which includes Lowth's *Ode Prophetica* which is a Latin version of *Isaiah* 14:4-27.

Smart's work then, was influenced both by Lowth and by the Scriptures.

Following a tradition of other great poets such as Sidney, Pope and Milton, Smart translated the psalms of David. His *Jubilate Agno* is written in the style of the psalms with deliberate repetition and parallelism. For instance, Fragment B, 75-78:

Let Ibhaz rejoice with the Pochard—a child born in  
prosperity is the chiefest blessing of peace.  
*For I bless God for my retreat at CRANBURY, as it was the  
place of the nativity of my children.*

Let Elishua rejoice with Cantharis—God send bread and  
milk to the children.  
*For I pray God to give them the food which I cannot earn*

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<sup>22</sup>Byron refers to Smart's work in a letter to Moore dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1813. Byron retorts to Moore, "Will you be bound like Kit Smart for ninety-nine years in the *Universal Visiter*?" According to Dr. Johnson: *Boswell*, Vol. V. p. 288, this refers to Old Gardner the bookseller employing Rolt and Smart to write the *Universal Visiter*. There was a formal agreement which Allen the printer saw whereby they were bound to write nothing else, were to have a third of the profits, and the contract was for ninety-nine years. Cited in Moore, T., *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 187.

<sup>23</sup> Smart reprinted Robert Lowth's Latin version of *Isaiah* 14:4-27, entitled 'Ode Prophetica' from Lowth's *Praelectiones* in the *Universal Visiter*, Jan. 1756, 99. 25-27, saying that it was one of the finest odes ever written without inspiration. See *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart, Vol. II, Religious Poetry 1763-1771*, ed. with introductions and commentaries by Marcus Walsh & Karina Williamson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 114 & p. 116.

*for them any otherwise than by prayer.*<sup>24</sup>

However, as we are enquiring into whether the reading of the Scriptures generated modes of thinking which influenced the writing, rather than simply affecting a deliberate style, it would be wrong to take this poem into too much account. It is better, I think, to look at his poem, *a Song to David*, instead.<sup>25</sup> Smart draws upon the psalms, one of the richest sources of parallelism in the Scriptures, amongst other biblical books, for this poem, but unlike *Jubilate Agno*, it is not an imitation of the style. Smart spoke of the ‘exact Regularity and Method’ in his Advertisement for the *Song*, printed in *Poems on Several Occasions*, (1763).<sup>26</sup> It explains how the poem is given shape by division into thematic groups of stanzas. It can be seen that structure, balance, rhythm, rhyme are very pronounced throughout. If we take stanza VII for instance:

Pious—magnificent and grand;  
'Twas he the famous temple plann'd:  
(The seraph in his soul)  
Foremost to give his Lord his dues,  
Foremost to bless the welcome news,  
And foremost to condole.

We can see, as Kugel’s description of parallelism, that the last three lines contribute to the thought of the first colon; the way in which David’s piety is manifest. We can also see Kugel’s formula ‘A and what is more B’. David is pious because he planned the famous temple, and what is more he is pious because he is foremost to give his Lord his dues, bless the welcome news and to condole. But we do not see a progression of piety, as opposed to the biblical example given earlier, where there is an ever closer relationship with evil. It

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<sup>24</sup> *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart, Vol. I, Jubilate Agno*, ed. with an introduction by Karina Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> *a Song to David* in *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart, Vol. II, Religious Poetry 1763-1771*, ed. with introductions and commentaries by Marcus Walsh & Karina Williamson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 99-155.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter (V) ‘Structure’ in *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart, Vol. II*, pp. 117-125, p. 117.

could be argued that the height of piety in the stanza is to plan the temple, and the least is that of condolence. The repetition of the word 'foremost' is rhetorical but also psalm-like, especially with the last line being introduced by 'And'. If we take for another example stanza L, we can again see a balancing of sense units:

PRAISE above all—for praise prevails;  
Heap up the measure, load the scales,  
And good to goodness add:  
The gen'rous soul her Saviour aids,  
But peevish obloquy degrades;  
The Lord is great and glad.

The overall sense unit is that of praise. The proposition that we should praise because it prevails, is subjoined by a further proposition that praise should be plentiful because it adds to the goodness of praise. There is a progression of the intensity of praise from 'heap' to 'load' with an increase in goodness. The first sense unit regards generosity in praise. The second sense unit advances this with a further proposition that the generous soul helps her saviour, which is counterbalanced with peevish obloquy which degrades. Within this stanza there is, in the first half, something which is not only repeated but added, whilst within the second half there is a form of antithetic parallelism. It is difficult to know how far this organisation is that of a general rhetoric, or influenced by the parallels and antitheses as in the dominant poetic idiom of Pope's heroic couplet, and how much is owed to the Scriptures. But there is certainly something in common.

Although little known nowadays, James Montgomery,<sup>27</sup> was, in fact, a well-known poet in Byron's own time. According to Hodgson, Montgomery's lines in his poem the 'Grave' are far better known than their author:

There is a calm for those who weep,

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<sup>27</sup> All references to James Montgomery's work are taken from Montgomery, J., *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery*, collected by himself (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850).

A rest for weary pilgrims found;  
They softly lie and sweetly sleep  
Low in the ground—<sup>28</sup>

Montgomery's poems certainly had an influence on Byron as can be seen from Byron's poem entitled 'Answer to a Beautiful Poem, Written by Montgomery, Author of 'The Wanderer in Switzerland', &c. &c. Entitled 'The Common Lot' (1806). It begins:

Montgomery! true, the common lot  
Of mortals lies in Lethe's wave;  
Yet some shall never be forgot,  
Some shall exist beyond the grave.

It ends with:

Then do not say, the common lot  
Of all, lies deep in Lethe's wave;  
Some few who, ne'er will be forgot,  
Shall burst the bondage of the grave.<sup>29</sup>

Although James Montgomery a Moravian, was steeped in the Scriptures, his poem *The Wanderer of Switzerland* is based on recent historical facts which he says are referred to in the supplement to *Coxe's Travels in Switzerland*, *Planta's History of the Helvetic Confederacy*, and *Zschokke's Invasion of Switzerland by the French in 1798*.<sup>30</sup> As the title '*The Wanderer*' suggests, Montgomery was influenced by similar Romantic stock, the theme of the wanderer, which both Byron and Coleridge use.<sup>31</sup> Montgomery's poem consists of a dialogue between the wanderer who was emigrating from his country because of the French invasion

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<sup>28</sup>Hodgson was a neighbour and correspondent of Montgomery who at the time of their acquaintance was editing a paper called the 'Sheffield Iris'. In 1822 Hodgson sent Montgomery an ode to restoration of Greek independence as a contribution to the 'Iris'. Hodgson, J.T., *Memoir of the Rev. Francis Hodgson, B.D.*, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1878), pp. 91-92.

<sup>29</sup> McGann's *The Complete Poetical Works*, Vol. I, pp. 174-175.

<sup>30</sup> See Montgomery's introduction to the poem in his *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery*, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Kennedy describes Byron as "the young wanderer", in his 'Conversations with Lord Byron', in *Lives of the Great Romantics*, p. 398. Interestingly, Daniel McVeigh's essay "In Caines Cynne": Byron and the Mark of Cain', asserts that Cain's wanderings are like, in some ways, those of Christianity itself for the past two centuries, and Byron, as much as Blake and Coleridge, its prophet. Essay in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Gleckner & Bernard Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 273-290.

and the shepherd who welcomes him into his home. In the first two stanzas we see examples of parallelism in the form of repetition and variation:

*Shep.* “WANDERER, whither dost thou roam?  
Weary wanderer, old and grey;  
Wherefore hast thou left thine home  
In the sunset of the day?

*Wanderer.* “In the sunset of my day,  
Stranger, I have lost my home:  
Weary, wandering, old and grey,  
Therefore, therefore do I roam.

In the first stanza we see Kugel’s formula ‘A and what is more B’. The wanderer roams and what is more he has left his home. We can see an example of C.S. Lewis’s definition of parallelism, i.e. saying the same thing twice using different words, in the description of the wanderer as being old and grey and being in the sunset of his day. The second stanza echoes the first in the form of an answer, and the first line is syntactically parallel to the last line of the first stanza with a transformation of the word ‘thy’ to ‘my’. First impressions, therefore, are of a poem which promises to be a rich source of parallelism. Although the poem does provide further examples of parallelism, such as the lines in part II, stanza 4:

Like the pillars of the skies,  
Like the ramparts of the world;

and in part III stanza 18:

Till their little ones were slain,  
Till they perish’d on their nest.

And part III, stanza 23:

Weak and weaker grew our hands,  
Strong and stronger still our hearts.

it is not as rich in parallelism as the first two stanzas would seem to suggest.

Again, it is not easy to determine how much the parallelism which we have

indicated is derived from the Scriptures, to which Montgomery was passionately attached, and how much to the repetitions common in ballad-style narratives.

John Dryden<sup>32</sup> (1631- 1700), was born at the vicarage of Aldwinkle in Northamptonshire, into a family of moderate Parliamentary supporters with Puritan inclinations. He was as immersed in the Scriptures as Byron reading and referring to them assiduously. Although Dryden was brought up in a kind of religious atmosphere as a Puritan, his poem *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) marks his conversion to Catholicism. Dryden, like Byron, was obsessed with history and with final visionary meanings in history. His poem *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), which Byron knew and revered, adapts the Old Testament story and characters found in *2 Kings*, and is an allegory satirising contemporary politics, whilst giving a reading of contemporary history as a repetition of the pattern of sacred history. So Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, almost hands Byron an allegorical way of reading the Scriptures. It is Dryden's relationship with the sweep of history, biblically conceived, that interests Byron, just as much as a developed satirical portrait such as *Mac Flecknoe*. In his essay on Dryden's use of the heroic couplet, Ramsey mentions parallelism in Dryden's work and says:

The pattern of balance within a verse (like the frequent balances that work between the two verses) is very obviously proper to twoness of meaning: parallelism, antithesis. Yet it is very easy to overrate their importance in Dryden's poetry.<sup>33</sup>

Ramsey supports his argument by quoting from an essay by George Williamson who finds in parallelism and antithesis the basic rhetoric of the tradition of the

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<sup>32</sup> References to Dryden's work are taken from *The Poems of John Dryden*, Vol. I, ed. by James Kingsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

<sup>33</sup>Ramsey, P., 'Oh Narrow Circle: The Heroic Couplet', *The Art of John Dryden* (Lexington, USA: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), p. 72.



neoclassic heroic couplet, and says that Dryden as often departs from that tradition as supports it.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, because of the metrical and rhetorical balance that the couplet provides and because of its obvious scriptural links, *Absalom and Achitophel* would appear to be a good example to investigate parallelism. If we take the famous first sentence of the poem we will clearly find the same thought expressed in different ways:

In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,  
 Before *Polygamy* was made a sin;  
 When man, on many, multiply'd his kind,  
 E'r one to one was, cursedly, confind:  
 When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd  
 Promiscuous use of Concubine and Bride;  
 Then, *Israel's* Monarch, after Heaven's own heart,  
 His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart  
 To Wives and Slaves: And, wide as his Command,  
 Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land. (1-10)

Firstly, we find the idea of lawful polygamy expressed in three different ways; before it was made a sin, when one to one was confined, and no law denied its use. Also the effect of polygamy; 'man on many multiply'd his kind' and David 'Scatter'd his Maker's Image throughout the Land'. However, I do not find this a clear example of biblical parallelism because although the thoughts are expressed in different ways within the one sentence, the propositions are not subjoined but are reiterated in separate colons. The line 'When Nature prompted, and no law deny'd' is interesting because it sets in motion a contrast of thought, although not a contrast in words. In the actual words, nature and the law work together, but the contrast is made within the mind because polygamy is no longer lawful.

Throughout the poem examples of parallelism are to be found, as in the lines:

How then coud *Adam* bind his future Race?  
 How coud his forfeit on mankind take place? (771-772).

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<sup>34</sup>Williamson, G., 'The Rhetorical Pattern of Neo-Classical Wit', *Modern Philology*, XXXIII (August, 1935), p. 77-81.

However, I would tend to agree with Ramsey and Williamson that it is hardly a feature of his work. For the most part, Dryden's work maintains a steady progression of thought.

If we make a brief recapitulation of the writers we see that parallelism was significant within Christopher Smart's work. Although it was certainly present within Montgomery's *The Wanderer*, it was less prevalent than with Smart. If parallelism was a feature of Dryden's work, it would have been noticeable within *Absalom and Achitophel*, where the couplet style lends itself towards parallelism and antithesis. However, we found that although it is present it is in no way a decisive feature. With that work as a background, we are able to enquire into Byron's work and make a comparison. We will firstly look at the *Hebrew Melodies* (1815) because they imply a claim to be based on the Scriptures, and then at the *Corsair* (1814) because of its use of the heroic couplet which provides a parallel to *Absalom and Achitophel*.

One of the most obvious comparisons can be seen in the first three lines of 'On Jordan's Banks'. Three holy places are compared, Jordan's banks, Sion's hills and Sinai's steep. This has a similar structure to our biblical example where the reader is taken within three stages to an ever closer relationship with evil. Within Byron's poem we find three progressively irreligious states of religiously important sites. The first is one of nonchalance, which progresses to evil and eventually to what is considered in the Old Testament as the height of evil, that of idol worshipping. The proposition is that, even at the height of evil, God is silent. The second stanza adds to the first with another three examples of specific instances of God's interaction with Moses, but where God now appears to be

silent. The idea of God's non-intervention is taken further by contrasting it with His great power by adding the words that God spoke to Moses that no-one sees God and lives.<sup>35</sup> This then begs the question that if it is wrong and it is within God's power to put right, why not? The question forms the last two lines of the poem and interestingly is 'when' and not 'why'. In other words faith in God is intact, but there is a recognition of not being able to understand His timing. The two quite biblical-sounding parallel questions of:

How long by tyrants shall thy land be trod?  
How long thy temple worshipless, Oh God?

are a culmination of the frustration at the godless occupying holy places — generally in the land as in the first stanza, and thus specifically in the temple in accordance with the specifics of the second stanza. However, although there is an ever closer relationship with evil in the first stanza and although each instance of God's intervention adds to the other in the second stanza, I find myself having reservations in concluding that this is true biblical parallelism. Perhaps my reasons can be more readily explained if we take another instance of biblical parallelism. If we look at Lamech's song:

Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice;  
ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:  
for I have slain a man to my wounding,  
and a young man to my hurt.  
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
truly, Lamech seventy and sevenfold. (*Genesis 4: 23-24*)

We can see the same thing said twice in different words and in each instance something extra has been added. We can also see a proposition delivered and a second subjoined to it, as indeed we were able to see with the first biblical example where the proposition 'Blessed is the man' is delivered, and the 'walketh', 'standeth' and 'sitteth' propositions are subjoined to it. In 'On

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<sup>35</sup> *Exodus 33:20.*

Jordan's Banks', it is not as clear. There is indeed a rhyming of thoughts, but the main proposition is not delivered until the end of each stanza. Would it not be more truly a biblical parallelism if the proposition was delivered first and the others drawn under it? If for instance Byron had written, 'God thy thunders sleep — on Jordan's banks, on Sion's hill and even on Sinai's steep?' Again, the main proposition of questioning how long the situation will last, is not delivered until right at the end of the poem. If we compare this poem to another of the *Hebrew Melodies*, 'By the rivers of Babylon We Sat Down and Wept', which is based directly on a psalm, we can see that in this poem there are no parallel lines. There is no rhyming of thoughts, either repeated, contrasted or varied. The narrative progresses swiftly with just two slight hesitations, "And ye, oh her desolate daughters!" and "Oh Salem! its sound should be free".

For our final example within *Hebrew Melodies* we can instance 'The Destruction of Sennacherib'.<sup>36</sup> The poem consists of six stanzas and within each stanza, with the exception of the second, there is a steady progression of the mini-narrative. In the second stanza there is a contrast of thought between the metaphors of the leaves of the Summer and the leaves of Autumn. The same criticism applies to this stanza, as to that of Dryden's example, the propositions are not subjoined, they are made separately.

Byron's use of the same heroic couplet in *The Corsair*, as that of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, makes it a helpful example to investigate. However, unlike *Absalom and Achitophel*, where there are undoubtedly examples of

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<sup>36</sup> Although I am following McGann's text and he uses the name 'Semnacherib', the Bible uses the spelling 'Sennacherib' which is the customary use.

parallelism to be found, I found it difficult to isolate instances of parallelism in *The Corsair*. Nevertheless, there are certain lines that lend themselves to closer scrutiny. For instance:

Yes—it was Love—if thoughts of tenderness,  
Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,  
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,  
And yet—oh more than all!—untired by time; (*The Corsair*, I. 12.  
293-296)

The clauses are subjoined and each one adds to the notion of love tried and tested. But yet again, I have problems in concluding that this is necessarily influenced by biblical parallelism. If we go back to the example of *Psalms* 1 where the man is blessed because he walks, sits and stands, we find that the mini-narrative is held up by the repeated clauses each with verbs that give an ever closer relationship to evil. The verbs, 'tried' and 'strengthen'd', in the above lines of Byron, are added to by three descriptive words, 'unmoved', 'firm', and 'untired'. Therefore, there is not a steady progression of the verbs and the clauses do not support the progression of the miniature narrative in the same way as the *Psalms*. Rather, they would appear to be more of an emphatic device, than a parallel thought. Although there appears to be little evidence of parallelism within the poem, we may also enquire into the repetition of words within the following lines:

Up rose the Dervise with that burst of light,  
Nor less his change of form appalled the sight:  
Up rose the Dervise—not in saintly garb,  
But like a warrior bounding on his barb, (*The Corsair*, II. 4. 142-  
145)

Once again, it would be difficult to argue for biblical parallelism, as it is hardly saying the same thing twice, in different words, or contrasting the way in which the Dervise rose up. However, there is a contrast within the lines 'not in saintly garb,/But like a warrior'. We can also see a form of contrasted parallel thoughts in the lines:

The Pacha wooed as if he deemed the slave  
Must seem delighted in the heart he gave;  
The Corsair vowed protection, soothed affright,  
As if his homage were a woman's right. (*The Corsair*, II. 7. 265-  
268)

Even if there was a strong argument that these lines display the main feature of biblical parallelism, which I do not contend, there is still a difficulty in finding other examples to support this case. If we tend to accept Ramsey and Williamson's argument that parallelism is not a feature of Dryden's work because there are not sufficient instances, then we have even more reason to conclude that neither does the specific form of biblical parallelism feature in these examples from Byron, though it may be a subterranean influence in places.

Thus far our investigation has taken account of the more traditional ideas concerning the patterns of parallelism itself. Perhaps, however, we should ask ourselves whether we should also look to the nature of parallelism? Could there be any merit in looking at such things as units of words, words which are conceptual, or compound words, or word pairs, alliteration, or indeed the energy created by words? Within the Scriptures, *Proverbs* provide a rich source for units of conceptual words. Take for instance, *Proverbs* 6: 12-14 where a scoundrel or villain is described:

A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.  
He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth  
with his fingers; Frowardness *is* in his heart, he deviseth mischief  
continually; he soweth discord.

The words 'naughty', 'wicked', 'froward', 'mischief' and 'discord', form a group of words which lack a certain concreteness. The words are used to describe certain gestures, but the meaning of each gesture is also rather abstract. We can only make a guess at the meaning of 'speaketh with his feet', or 'teacheth with

his fingers'. The 'speaketh with his feet' could mean a number of different things; for instance it could mean that a wicked man is found in the midst of trouble, that is, he walks into trouble. However, even today, within Middle Eastern culture, to show the underside of the foot, even if covered, is a sign of disrespect and causes offence. Similarly, winking in Judaic culture has a different significance to that of Western culture and is always associated with sin. For instance *Proverbs* 10:10 comments, "He that winketh with his eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall". The parallel and semantically determinative phrase 'but a prating fool shall fall', appears to be unrelated to any antithesis to the significance of winking. We could say that the antithesis is between a secret sign and open speech. But the relationship is uncertain and leaves us without any sure guide to this significance. In fact the meaning of each phrase, on its own, is uncertain, but collectively they form a guide to the nature of a scoundrel and the significance of his actions. Parallelism is formed by the repetition of the various ways in which the nature and actions of a scoundrel are expressed. This unit of words follows the words, 'poverty' and 'want' (as in scarcity), from the previous sentence, which are used to describe the consequences of a sluggard. The sentences following the unit, uses the words; 'proud' and 'lying'(v.17), 'wicked' and 'mischief' (v.18), and 'false' (v.19). These words form another unit of conceptual words which are used to describe six things that the Lord hates and one which he detests. Therefore there are three separate units of conceptual words, all within a short space of text.

Our earlier, necessarily brief, enquiry into Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, suggests that although patterns of parallelism are discernible, they are not a significant feature. A study of units of conceptual words within the poem also reveals that although there are examples, again, it would be difficult to argue that

units of conceptual words form a feature within the poem. One example of a unit which we could examine further occurs within lines 316-326:

My father Governs with unquestion'd Right;  
The Faiths Defender, and Mankinds Delight:  
Good, Gracious, Just, observant of the Laws;  
And Heav'n by Wonders has Espous'd his Cause.  
Whom has he Wrong'd in all his Peaceful Reign?  
Who sues for Justice to his Throne in vain?  
What Millions has he Pardon'd of his Foes,  
Whom Just Revenge did to his Wrath expose?  
Mild, Easy, Humble, Studious of our Good;  
Enclin'd to Mercy and averse from Blood.

The words, 'Good', 'Gracious' and 'Just' are each used to help define the way in which King David governs. Each of the following three questions which contains such words as 'Wrong'd', 'Peaceful', 'Justice', 'Just', 'Revenge', and 'Wrath', helps to define the way in which David is a Good, Gracious and Just ruler. The following two lines use a group of conceptual words to define the character of David. The words which help describe the way in which he governs and the words used to describe his character, also help to define the argument and concept of a good king. Repetition comes from the variety of expressions that present the qualifications and nature of King David. Although, unlike the example given in *Proverbs*, there is no uncertainty as to the significance of any of the phrases, they are used collectively, in the same way as an aid to definition. There are further examples such as lines 355-359, where the words, 'virtue', 'courage', 'loyalty' and 'mercy' form a small unit of words, but these units are infrequent and do not appear to me to be significant to the nature of parallelism.

Our initial study into the pattern of parallelism reveals how it is an expansion of text. That is, it says the same thing twice using different words, and as in Kugel's definition, something is also added. The above examples of the nature of



parallelism would so far indicate that units of conceptual words also form an expansion, using repetition in a variety of expressions. With this in mind it is interesting to note that Byron writes the heroic couplet in two different ways. In one way he reproduces the cadence of the Popeian couplet, and in another, such as *The Corsair*, he writes a much freer couplet, even than that of Dryden, where he allows it to run on, or uses an expansion of words. This is particularly interesting when we consider the terseness of Pope's heroic couplet, which Byron admires so much. This begs the question of why Byron writes in a different style to the one he admires? It would seem a good idea, therefore, to enquire into Byron's use of the heroic couplet in, *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers* as well as in *The Corsair*. In *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, we could examine one group of conceptual words. They appear in lines 687-694:

Truth! rouse some genuine Bard, and guide his hand  
To drive this pestilence from out the land.  
Even I—least thinking of a thoughtless throng  
Just skilled to know the right and chuse the wrong,  
Freed at that age when Reason's shield is lost  
To fight my course through Passion's countless host,  
Whom every path of pleasure's flowery way  
Has lured in turn, and all have led astray—

Here we find a group of words such as 'genuine', 'thoughtless', 'reason', 'passion' and 'pleasure'. The first two lines delineates a need for truth. The following lines depict the way in which the narrator lives. The text does, in a way, expand upon the need for a genuine bard, because the text suggests that the narrator has been led astray though lack of sound advice, or a truthful bard. But this is not an expansion in the same way as our earlier examples, because each phrase does not help define the need for a genuine bard. There is no repetition in a variety of expressions concerning the need for truth. The rest of the text leads only to the conclusion that it would keep people from being led astray. There is

also difficulty in depicting further illustrations of units of conceptual words. For instance, the word 'Justice' on line 32, is followed by 'Shame' on line 34, and the word 'Genius' line 773, is followed by 'sublime' in the next line, but, again, it would be difficult to argue that these words form units.

*The Corsair*, however, does appear to have a greater number of units of conceptual words. Take for instance the words, 'Ambition', 'love', 'regret', 'glory', 'joy', 'contempt', 'hate', 'fate', 'hopeless'; all within five lines in Canto II:

Ambition's dreams expiring, love's regret,  
Endangered glory, life itself beset;  
The joy untasted, the contempt or hate  
'Gainst those who fain would triumph in our fate;  
The hopeless past, the hasting future driven  
Too quickly on to guess if hell or heaven... (II. 10. 342-347)

The words are found in parallel phrases which are a repetition, or expansion, of the main proposition, that of the end of ambition's dreams. This proposition is subjoined by further propositions, that of; 'love's regret', 'Endangered glory', 'joy untasted', contempt or hate for those who have prospered in our downfall, a hopeless past, and an eagerness to live life with indifference to consequences. The parallel phrases express in different ways and therefore gives a deeper understanding of the consequences of 'ambition's dreams expiring'. We could also look at the words; 'love', 'tenderness', 'temptation', 'unmoved', 'hope', 'rage' and 'discontent', in Canto I:

Yes—it was Love—if thoughts of tenderness,  
Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,  
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,  
And yet—oh more than all!—untired by time;  
Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,  
Could render sullen were she ne'er to smile,  
Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent  
On her one murmur of his discontent... (I. 12. 293-300)

The conceptual words are found within the phrases which are an affirmation of love. The nature of love is expressed in a variety of ways. The phrases within the first four lines are synonymously parallel because they express in positive terms the consequences of love: 'thoughts of tenderness', 'strengthened by distress', 'firm in every clime', 'untired by time'. The second four lines are antithetically parallel because the consequence of love is expressed in negative terms – 'nor defeated hope', 'nor baffled wile/Could make sullen' – 'Nor rage', 'nor sickness', could make a mention of discontent.

From our enquiry into units of conceptual words, it would appear that instances are difficult to isolate within Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, but within *The Corsair*, with its expansive use of the heroic couplet, they appear to be a regular feature. In his book *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Luis Schokel suggests that the established usage of word pairs in Hebrew poetics indicates that they are usually found in parallel arrangement. He says:

It is clear that for all the work of development of the poem, especially as regards parallelism, the poet must have at his disposal a store of word pairs: synonyms, antonyms, merismi, related words, etc. The poet does not always invent, rather he uses what is at hand: mountains and hills, girls and boys, the young and the old, city and country, day and night, happiness and joy, sight and hearing...<sup>37</sup>

He adds that although one might think that the language itself provides this store of word pairs with its lexical and semantic field, the fixed nature of many pairs indicates that they may already be found in literary form, either in oral tradition or written down. Following Schokel's argument that the usage of word pairs comes

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<sup>37</sup> For a discussion on word pairs in parallelism see Schokel, L.A., *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1988), pp. 52-60.

from the poet's store of words which is readily to hand, perhaps it would be well to broaden this part of our investigation to include with word pairs, such things as stock-in phrases and compound words. There are certain compound words which appear to be peculiarly scriptural. Take for instance the words 'bloodguiltiness', and 'lovingkindness'. One of the places that the word, lovingkindness, is to be found is in *Psalm 17: 7-9*:

Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them*. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies *who* encompass me about.

The word 'lovingkindness' forms part of a unit of word pairs and stock-in phrases. It is closely followed by word pairs such as 'right hand', 'rise up' and 'deadly enemies'; and by phrases such as 'put their trust', 'apple of the eye', 'shadow of thy wings'. The word 'lovingkindness' translates from the Hebrew 'cheseth' which means a kindness given because of love shown to someone who is to be pitied. This feeling of kindness leads to a kind act. The main proposition is that God's lovingkindness leads to a kind act, that of protecting the people who trust Him from their aggressors. The phrases, 'keep me as the apple of the eye' and 'hide me under the shadow of thy wings' are well-known scriptural phrases and represent the kind acts, or ways, in which the psalmist asks for God's protection. The following sentence although it subjoins the phrases of the ways in which God could protect, also relates back to the main proposition that of being saved from aggressors. The phrase 'the wicked that oppress', and the word pair 'deadly enemies', are a progressively more powerful way of saying 'those who rise up *against them*'. Within this unit of word-pairs and phrases, we can identify two sets of parallelism. The first parallelism is the variety of expressions of the way in which God could show his lovingkindness; by saving with his right hand, keeping

as the apple of the eye, and hiding under the shadow of His wings. The second parallelism comes from the different expressions of the nature and character of those who are opposed to the psalmist; they rise up against, wicked that oppress, and deadly enemies who encompass.

As with our investigation into units of conceptual words, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* appears to have little in the way of units of word pairs or well-used phrases. There are instances such as in lines 733-736, where we find the phrases; 'run before him', 'shouts of joy', 'place of his aboad', and the word pairs, 'morning Star' and 'Guardian God'. But apart from the phrase, 'shouts of joy' and the word pair 'morning Star', it is debatable whether these could be considered good examples. The lines 936 and 937 also have the words; 'Royal Throne', 'Heav'n inspir'd', and 'God-like' grouped together, but, the instances of units of word pairs and well-known phrases appear to be quite limited. However, for our enquiry we could take the word pairs, 'Native Land', 'Successive Title', 'Noah's Ark' and 'Mighty Minds' found in lines 300-305:

And Nobler is a limited Command,  
Giv'n by the love of all your Native Land,  
Than a Successive Title, Long and Dark,  
Drawn from the Mouldy Rolls of *Noah's Ark*.  
What cannot Praise effect in Mighty Minds,  
When Flattery Soothes, and when Ambition Blinds!

I find difficulty in arguing the case for parallelism for this word pair unit. In previous examples we have found that word units are within phrases which forms repetition by a variety of expressions. The text above has the main proposition that, a limited command given in love by your own country is better than an ancient successive title. The rhetorical question which follows, the effect of praise in mighty minds, does add to the argument of, which is preferable, limited

command or successive title, because the inference is that praise comes from commanding and not inheriting. However, it would be difficult to say that this is a repetition, or a variety of expression.

In comparison, Byron's *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers* appears to have a number of units of word pairs and well used phrases. Take for instance lines 179-181 with the words; 'toil in vain', 'gaze on Gold', and 'just reward'. A few lines further on in lines, 192-194, are the words; 'awe-struck', 'immortal Bard', 'thousand years', and 'from the face of the earth'. Again in lines 487-489 the words; 'bloodless hue' and 'mighty mind', are found; and line 569 has the words; 'common place' and 'common sense', placed side by side. For our enquiry we shall look at lines 835-838:

Oh! what a noble heart was here undone,  
When Science' self destroyed her favourite son!  
Yes! she too much indulged thy fond pursuit,  
She sowed the seeds, but Death has reaped the fruit;

The unit is made up of the word pairs; 'noble heart', 'self destroyed', 'favourite son', 'too much', and 'fond pursuit'; and the stock-in phrases 'sowed the seeds' and 'reaped the fruit'. The main proposition is that science has spoiled a good person, whom it admired.<sup>38</sup> This is subjoined by phrases which are synonymously parallel to the idea of Science's self-destruction in that it had too much indulged, and had, sowed the seed of destruction. Antithetical parallelism is contained within the contrast of the two phrases; 'She sowed the seeds' and 'but death has reaped the fruit'. The phrases express the nature of science in the ways in which it has injured a good person.

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<sup>38</sup> These remarks refer to Henry Kirke White who, according to Byron's notes, died of overexertion through studying, but had left great poems for the reader. The first sentence is reminiscent of Ophelia's remarks of Hamlet; "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown" (iii, 1, 158).

*The Corsair* also has frequent instances of units of word pairs and well used phrases. It is also interesting to note that, in the majority of instances, hyphenated words appear in close proximity to one another. For instance the words ‘rock-hewn’ and ‘watch-tower’ in I. 6. 124-125; the words ‘Worm-like’ and ‘adder-like’ in I. 14. 399; and the words ‘Falcon-like’ and ‘night-glass’ in I. 17. 592 and 595. There are, of course, instances of isolated hyphenated words such as ‘watch-fire’ in I. 2. 43 and ‘well known’ in III. 19. 587. The words ‘well known’ joins the word pairs ‘trembling hand’ and ‘heavy heart’ in the two previous lines, which go to make up a small unit of words. Having found a significant number of units of word pairs and well used phrases in *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, it is not surprising that *The Corsair* also has a significant number of units. However, what is surprising is that, considering the free nature of the heroic couplet in *The Corsair*, the units are more compact, than in *English Bard and Scottish Reviewers*. For instance, amongst many, are the phrases ‘set of sun’ and ‘day is done’ in I. 7. 158-159; the phrases, ‘winged the wind’ and ‘fanned the sail’ in I. 14. 372-373; the word pairs ‘Light toil’ and ‘frugal fare’ together with the phrase ‘plucked the fruit’ in I. 14. 422-423; and the words ‘Slow sinks’, ‘race be run’, ‘setting sun’, and ‘Northern climes’ in III. 1. 1-3. Although not an obvious example, the unit of word pairs in II. 6. 246-248 appears interesting and merits closer scrutiny:

Hopeless, not heartless, strive and struggle yet—  
 Ah! now they fight in firmest file no more,  
 Hemmed in—cut off—cleft down—and trampled o’er;

The last of the three lines have word pairs that appear side by side. They form a variety of expressions which correspond to the previous two lines. Each phrase in the unit expands upon and expresses the nature of the fight. The main proposition, that they no longer fight in a firm line, is framed firstly, by phrases which describe

the nature of the fight, then, by a list of word pairs. It is interesting also that Byron, who is keen on balancing structures, has a contrasting first phrase 'hopeless, not heartless', whilst the balancing phrase 'strive and struggle', is not. Although this unit is atypical of the patterns of parallelism which we have studied, I find myself persuaded that the word pairs together with the stock-in phrase of 'strive and struggle' form a parallelism because they form repetition in the differing ways the nature of the fight is described, even though they frame the main proposition, rather than being drawn underneath it.

The final discussion on the nature of parallelism concerns alliteration within parallelism. Because alliteration is clearly apparent within Byron's work, a comparison with Dryden's work would not serve to inform the thesis. I therefore propose to make a direct comparison between the use of alliteration within the Scriptures and Byron's work. An obvious example perhaps would be *Psalms* 137 and *Hebrew Melodies*, 'By The Rivers of Babylon we Sat Down and Wept'. One of the features of Hebrew poetics in Scripture is its use of alliteration. However, there would be little merit in discussing the Hebrew text as the alliteration would have been lost in translation and his habits of mind would have been generated through reading and listening to the English translation. A study of the first three verses of *Psalms* 137, reveals a unit of alliteration:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when  
we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in  
the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive  
required of us a song;

We find an alliteration of the letter 'w' in the first line, 'h' in the second, and 'th' and 'c' in the third. Although the actions, 'we sat down', 'we wept', 'we remembered', and 'we hanged our harps', are a variety of expressions describing



the nature of the captives, who are required to sing, I am not convinced that this constitutes parallelism. This is because to remember, or to hang a harp, is not a variation of the expression, to sit and weep. In Byron's poem 'By the Rivers of Babylon We Sat Down and Wept':

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

there is alliteration of 'w' in the first line, 'h,p, h,p' in the second line, 'd' in the third line, and a dominant 'w' in the words, weeping away, in the fourth. Again I am not convinced that the unit constitutes parallelism. The same reasons apply regarding the actions, to sit and weep and think, as in the psalm. Also, in Byron's poem, it could be argued that the phrases 'Made Salem's high places his prey' and 'were scattered all weeping away', both describe the consequences of the foe's actions and therefore, could merit consideration of parallelism. But, again, I am not totally persuaded that the phrases are repetitious and parallel. The phrase 'were scattered' refers to the people, whilst Salem refers to the place. It would appear to me that it might be more parallel if both phrases either referred to the place or the people.

Briefly therefore, in conclusion, our investigation into the structures of parallelism suggests that, although there are instances in Dryden's and Byron's work, it does not appear to be a significant feature of either. Our investigation into the nature of parallelism and units of words, however, suggests a different finding. Although units of words do not appear to form a significant feature in Dryden's work, this is not the case within Byron's work. There is evidence to suggest that there is, in

fact, significance in the units of conceptual words, word pairs and well-known phrases, within the work examined. It is at least plausible that this owes something to Byron's familiarity with the Scriptures. It is interesting, too, that this emerges strongly in a poem apparently less directly related to literary tradition, such as *The Corsair*. There are possible explanations for this. One is that it is written with some allusion to the 'oriental' style and is a version of oriental crowding. Another, more significantly, is that when Byron is writing *English Bards* he has very strongly in mind literary antecedents of the English literary kind. So, for instance, the first antecedent would be Gifford and beyond that it would be Churchill and beyond that Pope and Dryden. When Byron is writing *The Corsair* he is not trying to write Popeian couplets. It could be argued, therefore, that when Byron steps outside mainstream literary tradition he is more amenable to things which come from other sources, such as the Bible.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Harold Stevens in his thesis 'Byron and the Bible', p. 152, comes to a similar conclusion through looking at clusters of biblical images in the *Hebrew Melodies*. He says, "The reader leaves the *Hebrew Melodies* aware that Byron fails most when he tries to paraphrase the Scriptures. For the most part he is at his best when he allows his mind to develop a Biblical incident as the central idea and image (as, "The Destruction of Sennacherib"), when he works with a theme having its basis in Biblical thought ("When Coldness Wraps This Suffering Clay"), and when he associates a cluster of biblical images with a similar thought (as in "Oh! Weep for Those")".

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERICOPES AND DIVANS

At the time of Byron's writing, a revaluation of the Bible's historical authenticity was well underway. We could describe this as a turning away from the literary meaning and doctrinal impact of a text, to see what lay behind it as its originating conditions. This method of biblical interpretation became known as historical criticism.<sup>1</sup> Byron was undoubtedly aware of current movements in biblical criticism but had his own established methods of reading the Scriptures. How, therefore, did Byron read the Bible and in which ways did the tradition of Scriptural hermeneutics affect his writing? One way of answering this question is to ask certain questions of his texts relating to form, content, genre and the way in which it has been gathered and organised. Such questions constitute form criticism<sup>2</sup> which, although not in operation during Byron's time, is an ideal tool to use within this section because form criticism focuses on smaller literary units, or pericopes, and as we have already examined small-scale details of Byron's writing, it is my intention to investigate the slightly larger-scale details by looking the literary units or pericopes and divans within his work. As with previous sections where comparisons with other writers have proved most useful, I propose also to take into account other historical writings, written at approximately the same time, to see how they also compare with the Scriptures. I thus propose to

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of historical criticism and its emergence, read, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by William Klein, Craig Blomberg and Robert Hubbard (Dallas, Vancouver, Melbourne & London: Word Publishers, 1993), pp. 21-49. Also, Prickett, S., and Barnes, R., *The Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 80-108.

<sup>2</sup> Form criticism looks at form, content and genre in addition to focussing on pericopes. In addition to genre analysis and classification, form criticism is concerned with establishing the 'situation in life' in which the particular genres were produced, shaped and used. The phrase 'Sitz im Leben' originated through Hermann Gunkel in his writings on *Genesis*, and in particular his book *The Legends of Genesis* (1901).

compare certain of Gibbon's writings, such as *Outlines of the History of the World* and *Extracts from the Journal*, which like Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*, were composed over several years. That Byron was clearly influenced by Gibbon can be seen from his account of Gibbon in *Childe Harold*, Canto III, his use of Gibbon's *Antiquities of the House of Brunswick for Parisina*, and references in the letters.<sup>3</sup> Ernest Giddey writes in 'Gibbon, Byron and the Idea of Revolution' that Byron's emotional perception of French history between 1789 and 1815 was partly based on his reading Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.<sup>4</sup> Gibbon is the biggest single writer of history in the eighteenth century and his writing is a model of a history written about the process of a civilisation. It is, therefore, a secular parallel to the historical books of the Old Testament and, as Byron read both, they provide a useful comparison.

Before we can start our comparisons, however, we need to understand something of the scriptural hermeneutics that could have affected his writing. Although historical criticism was operating during Byron's time, he was undoubtedly aware of, and influenced by, previous ideas and attitudes to the Bible. Throughout history there had been a kind of ebb and flow between what we now call subjective and objective interpretations. Although this is obviously a simplification, a rough pattern is discernible. For instance, the early church fathers' emphasis on allegory and typology gave way to scholasticism and scholarly debate through questioning, knowledge, logic, speculation and disputation. Then the Reformation idea of 'Sola Scriptura' and interpretation through illumination by the Holy Spirit, gave way to the Enlightenment and, later,

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<sup>3</sup> See letter to Murray, written at Ouchy, near Lausanne, dated June 27, 1816; and letter to Moore, written at Pisa, dated March 1, 1822.

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Giddey, 'Gibbon, Byron and the Idea of Revolution', *The Byron Journal*, 18 (1990), pp. 50-59, p. 50.

Kant's idea of the primacy of reason. It is at this later time, however, with Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious feeling, that there is a marrying of what were now being distinguished as subjectivity and objectivity. The Enlightenment era, which helped to promote confidence in man's reasoning abilities and in a secular reading of history, gave added impetus to the birth of historical criticism and its seeking to discover sources that lay behind a text, and this is the criticism that was operating in Byron's day, though its influence was most pronounced in German-speaking countries.

This very rough guide to biblical criticism serves to highlight that Byron would have been aware of the differing trends in interpretation, throughout the ages. However, there are obvious dangers in presenting biblical criticism in such general terms and indeed biblical criticism does not fit neatly into periodisation. Different modes of thinking often overlapped. For instance, the use of typology can be found well into the nineteenth century and what we think of as the nineteenth-century conception of historical criticism can be said to have roots as far back as the seventeenth.

In 1678 Richard Simon, a French Oratorian, published his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*. Simon set out to counter the Protestant principle that Scripture alone was necessary for salvation by showing that the origins of biblical texts were complex and that careful guidance from the Church was necessary to understand their meaning. He challenged the traditionally held belief that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch and suggested that these books were more likely

to be the composite creation of scribes and 'public writers'.<sup>5</sup> Although the book was banned in France, a few copies were smuggled into England and it was translated into English in 1682.<sup>6</sup> Simon's *Critical History of the Old Testament* had a mixed reception in England. Some Church clerics, such as the Dean of St. Paul's, considered that it undermined the authority of the Scriptures, but both Locke and Dryden were deeply impressed by it. It is almost certain that Byron would know of Simon's book through Dryden's reference to it in *Religio Laici*. What is regarded as the period of historical criticism, however, emerged around the 1800's and had evolved through a number of factors. Firstly, there were radical advances in human science which created popular confidence in the scientific method. Also at the same time, but going back to the seventeenth century, archaeologists were discovering various written texts giving insights into other religions of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Palestine which were then compared to the Bible. S. Prickett and R. Barnes claim that Robert Lowth's work on parallelism was a major influential factor on the changing role of biblical criticism towards historical criticism.<sup>7</sup> Whilst this was particularly true in Germany, the principal effect of Lowth's work in England, was a literary one. Lowth argued that that the origin of parallelism, like the origins of European poetic form, lay in oral tradition and that because Hebrew poetry relied on parallelism rather than the traditional techniques of European verse, it was best translated into prose. This resulted in a blurring of the distinction between poetry and prose. Lowth says that:

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<sup>5</sup> See Françoise Deconinck-Bossard in *Reading the Text: Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory*, ed. Stephen Prickett, (Oxford: 1991).

<sup>6</sup> The debate regarding the written source of the Pentateuch was taken up by Jean Astruc in the eighteenth century, and was brought to the fore nearly two hundred years later by Julius Wellhausen in his monumental *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1878).

<sup>7</sup> Prickett, S. & Barnes, R., *The Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 95, referring to Lowth, R., *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Vol. I (first published in Latin in 1753, translated into English 1778).

a poem translated literally from the Hebrew into the prose of any other language, whilst the same form of the sentences remain, will still retain, even as far as relates to versification, much of its dignity, and a fair appearance of versification.<sup>8</sup>

This placed the Bible in a unique position because whilst there were difficulties in translating other languages without losing their tone and feeling, the prose rhythms of the Authorised Version were considered to be closer to the original than any verse translation could be.

In Germany, broadly speaking, the tendency for the interpretation of the Bible from the seventeenth century onwards was a tradition dominated by rationalism, but also by Lutheran faith readings. Historical criticism gave rise to a number of factors which involved reading the Scriptures, one of which was the use of vocabulary which influences literature and vice versa. It proposes the idea that any text of literature is disclosed by its original context. Such a view was at odds with a view, often voiced in the eighteenth century, that classical literature is timeless both in its form and in its moral content. For instance, Pope in his *Essay on Criticism* says "Nature and Homer were, he found, the same" (1.135). This view does not emphasise that we live in history, but implies that we live in a cyclical world, marked usually by barbarism, but also by brief times of enlightenment. Pope's *The Dunciad* embodies this assumption. Against that is an historical view that each culture is different because it progresses. Unlike the cyclical world, there is a sense that tomorrow will not be the same as the past, a view which originated with the prophets. Literature, including the Bible, should thus be interpreted as having time-bound, not timeless truths. Therefore, the questions asked of a text should not be what is its literary meaning, but what is it

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<sup>8</sup> R. Lowth, *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Vol. I, p. 71.

saying, or revealing, about the particular time when, and for which, it was produced? For instance, what were the social conditions that were operating for the writers of the text?<sup>9</sup> Also, the general movement of Enlightenment thought in the eighteenth century, which resulted in the assault on Scripture, had a double focus. Firstly, it was partly quasi-scientific, as a result of the generalising habit of mind and the empirical habit of mind, which were privileged at that time, and which would later be conjoined and thought of as science. Secondly, it was partly an attempt to debunk the Scriptures and religious traditions generally as history, by claiming that they are no different from the myths of other ancient cultures. This double focus meant that events in biblical history were explained in terms of natural laws; biblical miracles, were for instance, explained, in terms of the laws of physics, biology and chemistry, which denied them and thus saw them as myths.

One of the most influential works of the historical-critical period was by Julius Wellhausen, who brought to the fore the question of the written source of the Pentateuch, in his books, *Die Geschichte Israels* (1878), which was translated into English as *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* in 1885, and *Die Komposition des Hexateuchs* (1885). Of course, Byron would not have known this, but he might have well intuited the development which found its fruition here through the long running debate started by Richard Simon. Wellhausen claims that the documentary theory of the Pentateuch can be divided into four different sources, all thought to have originated at different times, several centuries after Moses. This theory was widely accepted and brought into question the Jewish and

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<sup>9</sup>The notion that literature was shaped and modified by the socio-historical circumstances of its time was a new idea for eighteenth-century readers, the impact of which can be noted from literature such as Madame de Stael's *De L'Allemagne* (London, 1813).



Christian tradition that Moses wrote the Pentateuch under divine inspiration. This helped fuel a growing distrust of the Bible's historical authenticity which had started back in the seventeenth century by Richard Simon and had been added to by a general enlightenment distrust of 'tradition'. However, the growing distrust of the Bible's historical authenticity was more of a problem for Protestants than for Catholics. In the Reformation a tension was set up between the Bible and tradition, the Bible being viewed as absolutely trustworthy, and tradition as something which owed much to Catholic invention. But now intelligent Protestants discovered that the Scriptures that they set against 'false' Catholic tradition, had their own transmission and tradition. They discovered that the Scriptures were not just 'there', but that they were themselves formed by a kind of tradition; being written over long periods of time, transmitted by various people with differing versions, and with Scriptures re-working earlier parts of Scripture, and reworking it very much as a tradition with modifications over time. So, the very concentration upon the Scriptures, which Protestants revered as the prime and independent source of truth, opens up the possibility that the Scriptures, which Protestants held to be free from the modifications of Catholic tradition, is, itself, generated and shaped by tradition. This could, of course, be used by free-thinkers in the eighteenth century to deny the special claims of the Bible. Byron, himself, was intensely interested in the character of literary and scriptural tradition.

Historical criticism eventually gave way to form criticism and although form criticism was in operation at a later period than Byron's writing, a working understanding of it would be useful because we shall be applying this kind of criticism to Byron's work. The reason I am going to use this model here is because form criticism is an attempt to re-grasp the Scriptures as a reading

experience. Byron is at the time when criticism is turning away from Catholic rhetorical and Protestant experiential ways of reading the Bible, to historical scholarship, but Byron is abreast of what we may call poetic ways of reading the Scriptures, which is both taking it seriously as fact, and also reading it poetically. Byron knows about the sceptical influences of his time, but is still in touch with what may be called a revived literary sense. Therefore, poets like Byron, rather than historical scholarship are, I think, closer to the form critical method. Form criticism was greatly influenced by Hermann Gunkel. His commentary on *Genesis*, as well as his *The Legends of Genesis* which appeared in England in 1901, maintained that the stories of the patriarchs were ancient sagas similar to other popular tribal and family stories of the Near East which had come from a long oral tradition and that in order to appreciate them the reader had to discern their original 'setting in life' or 'Sitz im Leben'. Form criticism, however, is a complex form of criticism whereby form, content, life-setting and function are all interrelated. It also recognises the discoveries made through historical criticism. It does not seek to overthrow the discoveries, but rather than always seeking the originating form, it is interested in how and why texts have been put together. In this respect form criticism is interested both in the individual pericope and also in the larger sense of why these pericopes have been edited together. Although these two things are of separate concerns, they both converge within the process of form criticism. The process of form criticism follows several distinct interpretative moves, which begins with an understanding that the Bible is composed of smaller literary units, which we call pericopes and divans that have been put together. I set these out schematically here:

1. Firstly, as the Bible is made up of different pericopes added together, the Bible should not be read in a linear fashion. The first move, therefore, is to identify the individual pericopes. A pericope can be said to be the smallest literary version of something, which stands on its own terms, and from which, other units can be added.
2. Attention is given to the genre and literary structure, or how the content is arranged and stated. For instance, does it form an 'inclusio', is it a list, or correspondence, etc?
3. The actual situation, or 'life-setting' in which a text originated and developed is investigated to try to discover how the text functioned in that setting. If we take a modern-day instance, that of advertising and selling a property, we are all fully aware of the estate agent's jargon and his emphasis on positive features. Because exaggeration is a built-in ingredient, we allow for this in our interpretation of house advertisements. Gunkel recognised different modes of writing in different psalms. Accordingly, he identified different life-settings for the *Psalms*. Some he considered were 'enthronement' psalms, some written for weddings, others as hymns, individual thanksgiving, communal lament, etc. The psalms were then grouped together according to content.
4. When certain pericopes have been identified and grouped together, certain literary units do not appear to belong. Additions and interpolations become evident. So the last phase of form criticism takes account of what could be called its final 'life setting', that of the author/compiler. The form critic, in this respect privileges the putative original author. He looks for coherence in the various strands and pericopes that have been put together. He is not so much interested in the larger unit which takes into account interpolations, because this privileges the later editor. Interpolations confer form because they produce

a more complicated form and destroy the simple more original form in which the form critic is primarily interested. Nevertheless, he recognises that pericopes have been edited to make an effect as they are. This stage of the criticism can invoke something prior to the first stage, namely the liturgical use of Scriptures in temple, synagogue and church, which puts units together too.

A study of how the editor puts texts together, which is called redaction criticism, and canonical criticism, which is the final form of the redacted texts by the final editor and which is declared canonical by the community ('Israel', 'The Church'), is closely linked to form criticism, but is much more interested in the total final shape of a book than is form criticism. A simplification would be to say that form criticism emphasises the significant fragment, whereas redaction criticism is concerned with the significant whole. We may ponder whether Byron, in any sense, read the Scriptures in the sense of form criticism. If we look at the model that identifies an original unit which has been combined with another unit, we see that it is historical. Something is delivered out of something which is traditional and put alongside something else. It is possible to say that Byron's work operates in a similar way, although not on the same time-scale as the Scriptures which were composed over hundreds of years. For instance Byron writes sections of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and then at a later stage he writes additional stanzas which are then interpolated. Although in Byron's case this operates within years or even months, (*Childe Harold* was begun in 1809 and Canto IV was published in April 1818 and *Don Juan* was begun in July 1819 and Cantos VI-XIV were published in 1823), nevertheless, the pattern is the same. That is defining it historically; something given by one bit of history is modified by something occupying another

bit of history. Although this comes close to redaction and canonical criticism, we can see that both form criticism and redaction criticism help.

The attacks on biblical truths always produced counter-assertions, just as Byron reasserted the historicity of *The Iliad*, in the face of new argument to the contrary. Eventually these counter-attacks led to the neo-orthodox movement.<sup>10</sup> Although this is essentially a twentieth-century movement, and obviously applies to a much later period than Byron, I am including neo-orthodoxy within the brief outline of biblical criticism for the following reasons.

Firstly, although there are various modern-day criticisms, neo-orthodoxy practically brings us up to date. Secondly, neo-orthodoxy is dialectically latent in the assault on orthodoxy earlier, and Byron, however ironically, is prepared to take up the stance of orthodoxy. We note the shift towards orthodoxy in the latter parts of *Don Juan*, for instance the narrator's comment in Canto XI. 5 & 6, which is clearly ironical, but not simply ironical:

The truth is, I've grown lately rather phthisical:  
I don't know what the reason is—the air  
Perhaps; but as I suffer from the shocks  
Of illness, I grow much more orthodox.

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;  
The fourth at once established the whole Trinity  
On so incontrovertible a level,  
That I devoutly wished the three were four  
On purpose to believe so much the more.

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<sup>10</sup> Neo-orthodoxy is a title applied to 20<sup>th</sup> century development in theology, which is 'orthodox' inasmuch as it emphasises key themes of Reformed theology, but 'neo', i.e., 'new' inasmuch as it has taken serious account of contemporary cultural and theological developments. It originated with continental theologians: Barth, Brunner, and Friedrich Gogarten (1887-1967). For further details see the 'Neo-Orthodoxy' entry in the *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 456.

It is interesting to note how motifs in Byron's work will later be taken up by the neo-orthodox movement, though, of course, this is something that only a thesis of this kind is likely to suggest or be aware of.

The neo-orthodox movement began after the First World War when there was an increasing interest in the existentialist philosophies of people like Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). In particular Kierkegaard influenced the work of Karl Barth (1886-1968)<sup>11</sup> and Heidegger influenced Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976), who applied form criticism to the gospels. Barth and Bultmann, together with another Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner (1889-1966), spawned the new theological movement called neo-orthodoxy. Neo-orthodoxy is born from a reaction to nineteenth century liberal Protestantism. It is orthodox in that it tries to reassert, and not in the least diminish, the traditional claims of orthodoxy against liberal Protestantism. Liberal Protestantism ditches history by claiming that the fundamental doctrines and dogmas of Christianity, such as the Trinity, are not trustworthy and tries to make Christianity primarily into an ethical and moral religion. Neo-orthodoxy, on the other hand, whilst recognising the discoveries of historical criticism, and whilst not wishing to overthrow them, reasserts fundamental doctrinal beliefs such as the Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection. It does so by saying that although they may not be historically verifiable, the truth of the Bible does not stand on the literal historical accuracy of biblical narrative, but in faith which comes from personal encounter. Also, because the Bible speaks of transcendental things, it has no comparative language and so uses stories to convey its truth. Furthermore, they

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<sup>11</sup> Karl Barth's work included a commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1919), which established his theological reputation. His *Kirchliche Dogmatic* (4 vols. 1932-1967, *Church Dogmatics*, incomplete), renewed interest in Protestant systematic theology and constitutes the weightiest contribution to Protestant theology since Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

see truth as ultimately paradoxical in nature and so there is no reason to reconcile conflicting biblical statements. Therefore, opposite biblical ideas are accepted as paradoxes. Byron is aligned with neo-orthodoxy inasmuch as he knows about sceptical things, is influenced, but not wholly won over by them, and intuits a possible orthodox reply to them, either Protestant neo-orthodoxy or Catholic, which is less psychologically based. However, Byron is, overtly, more concerned with historical accuracy rather than poetical truth and so is in the middle of orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy.

This, very roughly, is the history of scriptural hermeneutics, which began with the allegory and typology of patristic theology; then the scholarly debate of scholasticism; the Reformation idea of Sola Scriptura; the Enlightenment emphasis on reason; and historical criticism which seeks to discover sources that lay behind the text. With historical criticism comes a growing reaction against traditional institutions and beliefs and a challenge to the Bible's authority and historical authenticity. These, then, are the scriptural hermeneutics which could have informed Byron's writing. Following Byron's death, came the idea of the four strands of the Pentateuch, followed by form criticism, which we shall be applying to Byron's work, and finally neo-orthodoxy, the re-emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures with the historical discoveries in mind. Obviously, we cannot claim that criticisms following his death affected his writing, but it is important to take trends into account as well as already articulated positions. J.J. McGann, for instance, in *Don Juan in Context*,<sup>12</sup> sees Byron as a version of

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<sup>12</sup> McGann, J.J., *Don Juan in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and London: John Murray, 1976).

philosophies of language articulated in the twentieth century, and Mazzini read Byron as a spokesman for mid-nineteenth century liberal rationalism.<sup>13</sup>

Firstly, we notice the great importance Byron places upon historical fact, that events actually happened where and when they are described. This is obvious, for instance, in his writing of the historical tragedies. Before he begins, Byron takes care in describing the way in which he tries to uncover the sources behind a text and attaches much importance to historical artefacts and archaeological discoveries. He makes this clear in his mentioning of Gibbon's *Antiquities of the House of Brunswick* in the 'Advertisement' for *Parisina*, and in the Preface to *Marino Faliero* and the 'Advertisement' for *The Lament of Tasso* where he makes the reader aware that he has made himself aware of the historical facts. This is important even though, of course, Byron often knowingly modifies history.

Secondly, we note that the historical tragedies demonstrate, in particular, Byron's wish not to step outside certain boundaries of historical fact. For instance, Marino Faliero, Hugo and Parisina are not allowed to escape. Marino Faliero and Hugo are beheaded because that is what history dictates and Christian Fletcher and the mutineers are caught and punished for the mutiny. Byron tries to keep within the historical framework of the Bible when he uses it as source and although the motivations of his characters are sometimes debatable, their ultimate actions and consequences are usually scripturally accurate. For instance in *Cain*, although there is much discussion over Eve's motivation for eating the apple and Cain's motivation for killing Abel, nevertheless Eve is still tempted by the serpent which results in the banishment from the Garden of Eden; and Abel is murdered by Cain

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<sup>13</sup> Giuseppe Mazzini's essay entitled 'Byron and Goethe' (1839) admires Byron's poetry and the love of freedom it expresses. He calls Byron a pretended sceptic and sees in him true Christianity manifested through actions, rather than what he describes as the so-called do-good Christian socialites.



who later receives a protective mark on his brow.<sup>14</sup> Byron also wants to defend the Bible's history just as he wants to defend the historicity of *The Iliad*. He knows, for instance, the debate as to whether Job is historical or not. In his Preface to *Cain*, Byron says that he has adopted the notion of Cuvier, and adds that Cuvier's notion confirms rather than contradicts the Mosaic account. This also suggests Byron's sensitivity towards historical criticism, but that he was not fully party to it. This is because although the new archaeological and formal discoveries had undermined many peoples belief in the accuracy of the Bible, as can be seen from his comments on Cuvier and the Mosaic account, this was not simply the case for Byron. Byron was also aware of the interest in myth and the attempt to debunk the Scriptures as history, by likening Scriptural myths to myths from other literature.<sup>15</sup> However, we have already noted that Byron did not wish to debunk the Scriptures and furthermore, Byron enjoyed the Scriptural myths and legends of the Bible and considered them both attractive literary sources and guides to truth. For instance in *Heaven and Earth*, Byron uses the clearly mythological story in *Genesis*, 6:2 "That the sons of God saw that the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose". Lastly, we notice that Byron's often surprisingly orthodox reply to attacks on fundamental Christian doctrine places him between orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy. Neo-orthodoxy is interested in Scriptural paradox. The emphasis on paradox in

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<sup>14</sup> Wolf Hirst's essay entitled 'Byron's Reversionary Struggle with the Bible' demonstrates how Byron imposes upon his scriptural characters, episodes and images, meanings that are often far removed from the Bible, without ever contradicting or radically changing the biblical stories themselves. He adds that even in his non-biblical works, Byron retains complete control over his scriptural images. In *Byron, The Bible, and Religion*, pp. 77-100.

<sup>15</sup> The Enlightenment attempts to discredit the Scriptures as history by comparing Scriptural myths to ancient cultural myths, helped form the roots for the nineteenth-century German Liberalism movement, with writings of people such as Herder (1744 -1803) and Hegel (1770-1831). Stauss's *Life of Jesus*, (1835), obviously later than Byron, claimed the supernatural elements of the gospel history were unhistorical myth. For further details see the 'German, Liberalism' entry in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Sinclair Ferguson, & David Wright (Leicester, England & Illinois, U.S.A: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), pp. 386-7.

Byron's work is crucial to it. Byron is interested in the tension between writing with a sense of fidelity to occurrence and being free from irreducible historical facts. This is like the scriptural paradox of a God who acts in history and a God who is free from all restraints. For an example of paradox in Byron's work, we can see how, in *The Island*, he explores the paradox of time; a wholly formed European history meeting with an equally absolute potentiality in a myth-bound island, and he holds the two impossibilities together. He looks back at the Fall of Man with its ongoing guilt and retribution, at the same time as he looks forward to the potentiality of a millennium paradise, which, of course, is a biblical paradox of time.

It is possible to argue then, that both the actual character of Scripture implicitly and the character of constantly changing scriptural hermeneutics explicitly influenced Byron's writing. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Byron, in some respects, although aware of the history of biblical criticism, and influenced by biblical criticisms operating during his time, intuits the possibility of an orthodox response to those criticisms. We have already investigated the way in which the Scriptures influenced the small-scale details of his work, in such things as performative utterances and parallelism and so now I propose to investigate the larger scale influence by asking form-critical questions of Byron's writing. To do so will involve us in applying the terms 'pericope' and 'divan' to his text.

I propose to make my comparisons taking examples from the Scriptures, Gibbon and Byron, in that order and relating both writers separately to the Scriptures and then to broaden the argument by including Pope. The comparisons will be made in three sections. Firstly, the general effect of the style will be examined and

compared, looking for instance at the nature of the narrative. This will be followed by close readings of random examples comparing specific language usages. Lastly, because form criticism has been instrumental in identifying the grouping of pericopes according to content within the Scriptures, an enquiry shall be made into the gathering or grouping of smaller pericopes, called divans. As Byron's and Gibbon's work form a good parallel, noting and comparing any Scriptural influence of both writers will test the hypothesis that Byron's writing is particularly influenced by his habit of reading of the Scriptures.

We begin our comparisons by looking at the general way in which the Scriptures represent history. We shall take for our example the history of King David, the most obviously historical figure from the most obviously historical section of the Scriptures. There are two points, when studying the history of King David, of which the reader becomes quickly aware. Firstly, the accounts of David are not found in one place, but in various Old Testament books. The main sources are *1-2 Samuel*, *1 Chronicles* and the *Book of Psalms*, as well as certain sections within the Prophets. Also, references to David as the dynastic founder and the exemplar for monarchical rule in Judah are threaded through *1-2 Kings*. Secondly, where they are to be found, they do not appear to have been recorded in any strongly ordered fashion. For instance, although some sections are in chronological order, this is not generally the case. Neither are they neatly segmented into personal and monarchical detail. The various aspects of David, his personal problems, his spiritual life, his strengths and weaknesses, his kingship, are all mixed together. In this respect they appear to be narratives which have been gathered and stitched together. For instance, in *2 Samuel*, we see that in chapters 8-10, the narrative deals with a number of different aspects. The text can roughly be divided into

pericopes that deal with, or could be headed, 'David's victories', 'David's officials', 'David and Mephibosheth' a story which portrays David's great magnanimity, and 'David defeats the Ammonites'. A closer study of these pericopes, however, reveals two further striking features.

The first is the way in which narratives are interpolated into larger narratives. Take for instance the story of 'David and Mephibosheth'. It is a pericope of thirteen verses which deals with the character of David and is interpolated into the larger narrative regarding his military achievements. However, also interpolated into the text and running alongside 'David and Mephibosheth' is a pericope of four verses (8: 15-18), which although still military in tone deals with David's personnel, rather than his achievements. It is self-evidently an independent piece of writing:

And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgement and justice unto all his people. And Joab the son of Zeruah *was* over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, *were* the priests; and Seraiah *was* the scribe; And Benaiah son of Jehoiada *was over* both the Cherethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

The narrative then carries on with the 'David and Mephibosheth' story.

The second feature is the way in which narratives are added to. For instance the narrative of *Samuel* records the monarchy as an enigma at the heart of Israelite society. On the one hand the Davidic reign was associated with a measure of imperial success and splendour, but on the other hand it seems to present a sorry spectacle of human failure attended by elements of divine mercy and judgement. This narrative continues on into *1 Kings* 1-2, but is interrupted by what could be called the '*Samuel* appendix', chapters 21-24. In these chapters, the larger

narrative is interrupted by events and information belonging to various periods of David's reign which have been gathered together and added on. The appendix can be divided into such pericopes as; 'The appeasement of Gibeon'; 'Defeat of the Philistine giants'; 'David's victory song';<sup>16</sup> 'David's last words'; and 'The census and the plague'. The pericopes deal, as the earlier chapters, with the problems and weaknesses that beset King David. However, interpolated into the middle, is a pericope which can be regarded as David's victory song, and is a psalm of deliverance. Therefore, we not only find that the larger narrative is interrupted by a number of pericopes which act as an appendix to the book of *Samuel*, but also that the interruption is also interrupted.

Our investigation into the way in which the history of King David has been recorded has revealed five significant features:

1. The account is not confined to a single book, but is spread throughout various biblical books.
2. The narrative is not confined to chapters, which is a later division, but runs through into following chapters.
3. The narrative does not follow a clear pattern or order, but is made up of various pericopes that have been gathered and stitched together.
4. The larger narrative is interpolated with smaller ones, with even the interruptions being interrupted.
5. There are additions to the narrative, in the form of an appendix.

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<sup>16</sup> David's victory song, 2 *Samuel* 22, is virtually identical to *Psalms* 18, and can be compared with Moses' song in *Deuteronomy* 32.

Although the above points suggest that the Bible gives an impression of incoherence, this is simply not the case. The Bible achieves coherence through multiple and diverse images, which helps to give an all-round, or '3D' picture rather than a simple or 'flat' one. King David may not be portrayed as someone like Hector, or Achilles is portrayed, but nevertheless we have a strong sense both of his character, his multiple significance, and the sequence of his life.

For our comparison with Gibbon, we shall use Gibbon's *Outlines of the History of the World*.<sup>17</sup> We shall directly compare each of the five significant features of the biblical recordings.

The first noticeable point regarding the Scriptural recording of King David is that:

1. The various accounts are not gathered into one specific book. This is significantly different to the way in which Gibbon records historical accounts. The most striking feature of Gibbon's work is his organisation; the way in which he gathers information together to record it as efficiently as possible.
2. Within Gibbon's work, each century is precisely divided into chapters and each chapter is subdivided in the margins with the relevant years. This means that the narrative is confined to a specific chapter and does not run through into following chapters.
3. The way in which Gibbon plans and organises his writing means that everything is set out in a very orderly fashion. The narrative runs in strict

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<sup>17</sup> Gibbon, E., *The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq., with Memoirs of His Life and Writings, composed by himself*, illustrated from his letters with occasional notes and narrative by John, Lord Sheffield (London: B.Blake, 1837). *Outlines of the History of the World*, pp. 599-625.

chronological order. In fact, Bond says in a discussion of the structure of Gibbon's work, that the way in which Gibbon brings "into harmonious relation and clear patterns such a gigantic mass of confused and disparate material", has never been equalled.<sup>18</sup>

4. Because the historical details of Gibbon's work are planned and organised into rigid patterns, with each year and each country being dealt with in turn, there are no interpolations.
5. Again, due to the precise planning and organisation of Gibbon's work we do not find additions or appendices.

A comparison of each of the five significant Scriptural features does not reveal any scriptural influence as form in Gibbon's work. On the face of it, the above points seem to suggest that Gibbon's main concern is to gather together historical data and record it in a clear and efficient manner, whilst the Scriptures are less concerned with making things clear, easily readable or even unambiguous. Also, whilst Gibbon's style is fixed, rigid and easy to categorise into chapters, the Scriptures appears disorganised, flexible and resist confining or categorising into chapters or even into individual biblical books. This is, in a way, true, but Gibbon's main aim is to present his own version of history, which is both sceptical and anti-Christian and which he controls by the mode of irony. The ordering shows his 'objectivity', against religious systems, but it also impresses upon us, (as it is supposed to), that the author is in charge. Michael Bentley in *Modern Historiography* argues for the importance that irony plays in Gibbon's work. Bentley cites P. Gay's comment in *Styles of History* (1975) that Gibbon

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<sup>18</sup> Bond, here, has specifically in mind *The Decline and Fall*, but this method of working is common to all his writings. Bond, H.L., *The Literary Art of Edward Gibbon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 67.

“compels the reader to become his accomplice and to draw the generally cynical, inference for himself”.<sup>19</sup> The impression that Gibbon wishes to give is that he is knowledgeable and reliable, because he has sifted his evidence. His use of irony is to give a sense of the superiority of wit and to be an intimidation against those who might detract from his view. Therefore, Gibbon’s writing is not primarily to give an objective account, but it is to ensure that his version of history is accepted. Although it is objective in one sense, inasmuch as it contains many facts and sources, nevertheless, it is Gibbon’s version and a modern version, not a version of its own time. Gibbon’s writing tries to give the impression then, that history has been mediated through a trustworthy author, who is a modern person and who is sceptical, objective, informed, rational and argumentative. Whereas, in the Scriptures, the primary objective is not one of concern over who actually wrote the text, but that the text comes from God. On the other hand, the Scriptures gives the impression that history is very bewildering, accidental, even bizarre, comes through different reportings and is not very edifying. Nevertheless it does have meaning and although the human author is not in charge, God is in charge, not only of the writing of the text and the history it reports, but also of the reader and the reading.

For our comparison with the way in which Byron writes history, we shall use *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, both of which were written over relatively long periods of time. To make a more accurate comparison, we shall, as with Gibbon, directly compare each of the five significant biblical features.

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<sup>19</sup> Bentley, M., *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 14.



1. It seems a false comparison to consider the first significant biblical feature, namely that accounts of King David are to be found in various biblical books. For instance, although a fictional version of Newstead Abbey is in both *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*, it is not very likely that we are going to read about Harold in *Don Juan*, or Don Juan in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. However, the comparison about gathering together information to record in one specific place, can be usefully made. Like the Scriptures, Byron's main concern does not appear to record data in a clear and efficient manner. His sources of information can often be found scattered through his writing. For example, we could look at the way Byron writes about Ada in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which can be found both at the beginning and end of Canto III. The opening and closing remarks about Ada form an 'inclusio', a technique not infrequently used in Scriptures to mark the limits of a pericope, or a larger section, or poem.<sup>20</sup> For instance, in the book of *Ruth*, the word 'return', 1: 6 and 'returned' 1: 22, forms an 'inclusio', bracketing the thematic section about Naomi's return to Bethlehem (1: 7-8 and 10-11); and *Psalms* 8 opens and closes with the inclusio, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!" Byron's use of this linguistic formula exactly corresponds to the Scriptures.
2. Like the Scriptures, Byron's subject matter is not restricted to clearly defined chapters, or cantos. For instance, in *Don Juan*, the larger narrative of Canto I deals with Juan and Julia, with Juan leaving Julia for the last time towards the end of the canto. This seems a natural end to the Juan/Julia narrative and the rest of the canto, indeed, has a variety of topics. However, rather than

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<sup>20</sup> For a fuller account of inclusio and its uses, see Schokel, L.A., *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, translated from the Spanish by A. Grafty, (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1988), p. 78.

beginning Canto II with a new subject, the narrative continues for a few stanzas with Juan and Julia, by picking up with Donna Inez's resolution to send Juan away, and Juan's lament for Julia.

3. The most significant difference between the way in which Gibbon and the Scriptures records history, is in the precise order and rigidity of Gibbon, compared to the apparent disorganisation and flexibility of the Scriptures. Byron's writing, however, is much like the Scriptures in this respect. Again, we could take for instance, towards the end of Canto I from stanza 189 in *Don Juan*, where we find, as so often throughout his work, a mixture of pericopes. These pericopes could roughly be entitled 'Resolutions' of Juan, Julia and Donna Inez; 'Organisational Intentions' of the writer for the poem; 'Appeal to historical facts'; 'Parody of the ten commandments' and 'Philosophical entreaties'. As with the Scriptures, Byron's narrative does not follow a clear pattern or order, but is made up of pericopes that have been gathered and stitched together. It is perhaps interesting to note here, Byron's declared 'Organisational Intentions' in stanzas 200 and 201 to divide the poem into twelve books and to follow the literary style of Homer and Virgil and to adhere to Aristotle's rules. This form of organisation and precise division is, of course, in the style of Gibbon. We also know that Aristotle's theory of narratives emphasised the continuity from beginning to middle to end. The middle was generated from the beginning and the end was generated from the middle. This is, of course, a huge oversimplification, but, nevertheless, it is possible to say that, at least, from the comparisons above, that Byron more nearly follows the Scriptures in this regard, than either Gibbon or the classicists.

4. A significant feature of Byron's work, like the Scriptures, is the way in which the larger narrative is interpolated with smaller ones. For instance, in Canto I of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in the midst of the discussion on Spain we suddenly find ourselves reading, without any warning, about Mount Parnassus of central Greece. Byron's notes indicate that this stanza, 60, was written in Castri (Delphos), at the foot of Parnassus in 1809. Also the previous stanza was written whilst he was in Turkey. These stanzas were later stitched together and interpolated into the narrative of Spain. There are many examples of interpolations in both *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold*. A small number of instances in *Childe Harold* would be; in Canto I, between stanzas 84 and 85, a farewell song of nine verses directed to Inez is inserted; also a 'Dear Nature' address in Canto II, 37; a poem of four verses, between stanzas 55 and 56 in Canto III, and so on.
5. In the King David account, at the end of 2 *Samuel*, the larger narrative is interpolated with a mixture of pericopes which acted as an appendix, which interruption is also interrupted. Significantly, if we take the previous example from *Don Juan*, the end of Canto I, we see that although Byron is writing 'tongue-in-cheek', his writing operates in precisely in a very similar way to the Scriptures. At stanza 188 Juan leaves Julia for the last time and the narrator says, "Here ends this canto", but adds a further thirty four stanzas, before picking up again with the larger narrative in Canto II. The thirty four stanzas are, like the Scriptures, a mixture of pericopes, and also like the Scriptures, act as a type of appendix. Furthermore, and strikingly similar to the Scriptures where a psalm was interpolated into the appendix, interpolated into the middle of the *Don Juan* appendix is a small divan, a collection of 'thou shalt/not' sayings which acts as a parody of the Old Testament Ten Commandments. So,

as with the Scriptures we see the interruption being interrupted in precisely the same manner.<sup>21</sup> Of course, we could not say that the Scriptures operate in a tongue-in-cheek manner but their diversity and reflexivity provide a model for what, in a different context, becomes irony.

The histories of Childe Harold and Don Juan, therefore, are recorded much as in the Scriptures, through various acts of editing, such as additions and interpolations which take account of new historical circumstances. The comparisons of Gibbon and Byron with the Scriptures has revealed that, with all five significant biblical features, none were found to operate within Gibbon's work, but all five were found to operate in Byron's work, with some startling similarities. Comparing Gibbon's work with the Scriptures, we found that Gibbon's text is egotistical inasmuch as it foregrounds the 'I'. The history he writes is a 'Gibbonite' version, with the author being in charge of his own text. This is not at all like the Scriptures where the writers are not foregrounded and appear almost irrelevant. The relevancy of the Scriptures does not lie with who transcribed them, but with the fact that God inspired the Scriptures and is also in charge of history, the text and the reader. Byron, on the other hand would appear to be half way between the two models. Although there is much of the 'I' in Byron's work, it is not written egotistically, inasmuch as the place from where the text is written is not a single or stable one. All the different 'I's in Byron's work are brought together by an 'I' which, in certain respects is unsure of itself, is multiplied or fragmented and changeable. J.R. Watson also notes this when he says in his book *The English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* that:

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<sup>21</sup> Vassallo in his *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, p. 155, says that the first few cantos of *Don Juan*, and in particular the parody of the Ten Commandments have a distinctly Pulcian flavour. Sacred themes are treated in a light-hearted way, but are not intended to be irreligious.

Byron's poetry varies a great deal, but it is not enough to say that it is a poetry of masks and that he has a different persona for every poem. That persona is part of his shifting self.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Rutherford, in his discussion on Cantos III & IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, asserts that:

In Canto IV of *Childe Harold* there is no one style. The tone is neither governed by a firmly held conception of the narrator's character, nor by a singleness of feeling in the author. Byron could pass at this time from gloom and despondency to a delighted interest in the world around him, and these contradictory emotions are reflected in the poem.<sup>23</sup>

Byron's 'I', in important respects, is not unlike the shifting authorial perspectives of the Scriptures, but it is not at all like that of Gibbon.

This investigation into the pericopes and divans of Byron's work has so far concerned itself with the general style. In order to make a thorough examination of form and content, we need to isolate certain pericopes for a closer study. To do this I propose to make use of the liturgical usages that were in operation in Byron's time, and of which Byron was certainly aware, and which still inform liturgical practice. That is, the reading of pericopes, whereby two quite different passages are read alongside one another and each is meant as a comment or to act as an interpretation on the other. For our Scriptural example we shall use two of the shorter pericopes from the *Book of Common Prayer for use in the Church of Wales*, Vol. I, which is currently in use. *The Book of Common Prayer* that was in use in Byron's day was the 1662 Church of England Common Prayer book. The

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<sup>22</sup> Watson also gives an example at this point on the difficulty that Byron's, 'fragmented, shifting 'I' creates for the reader, by citing Andrew Rutherford's *Byron, A Critical Study* (Edinburgh, 1961), which he sees as often severe on what Rutherford regards as superficiality, shoddy workmanship and flashy paradox, and Bernard Blackstone's *Byron: A Survey* (1975), which is much more accepting. Watson, J.R., *The English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Harlow: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1992), p. 261.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Rutherford, 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Cantos III & IV', in *British Romantic Poets*, ed. by Shiv Kumar (London: University of London Press Ltd., & New York: New York Press, 1968), pp. 158-178, p. 177.

passages of Scriptures used in the Liturgy in that book tends to be much lengthier. As we do not know which passages Byron would have heard, but as the liturgical principle is the same, I propose to use two of the shorter pericopes currently read on Saint Mary Magdalene Day. The first is a passage from *Hosea* 6:1-13, which reads:

Come let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

This is read alongside *2 Corinthians* 5:14-17:

The love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no-one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.

From a study of the juxtaposing of these two quite distinct passages, five particular Scriptural features are suggested:

1. Both passages comprise a pattern of exhortation alternated with reassurance. The *Hosea* passage begins with an exhortation to return to the Lord for healing, followed by a reassurance of his restoration, a further exhortation to know the Lord, followed again by a reassurance of his forthcoming providence. The *2 Corinthians* passage begins with a reassurance of Christ's redemption and its purpose, followed by an exhortation for Christians to have a new understanding, and ends with reassurance of his redemptive powers.
2. Both passages juxtapose suffering with salvation. Within the book of *Hosea*, suffering is divided into personal and national, and is juxtaposed one with the

other. The prophet's personal suffering through his wife's infidelity is juxtaposed with that of God's suffering through Israel's infidelity. In addition suffering is linked to judgement, (which is generally the case in the prophetic corpus), through Hosea's predictions.

3. The juxtaposing of suffering and salvation and suffering and judgement in *Hosea* are discussed in von Rad's book *The Message of the Prophets*. von Rad remarks that Hosea was aware of the paradox of how the struggle between wrath, which gives rise to suffering and judgement, and love, which gives rise to salvation, came to be resolved in God's own heart.<sup>24</sup>
4. Form critics have long noted that the reasons for judgement consistently accompany the prophetic threat. Although there is a heterogeneity of genres employed where Yahweh's wrath is mentioned, there is a consistent role for the place of divine wrath. His wrath always comes at the end of a clear legal procedure that makes it the implementation of judgement. There is often a summons, presentation of evidence, (which uses a variety of means such as accusation, lament, disputation and so on), verdict, (or pronouncement of judgement), and finally wrath, which always implies Yahweh's action. Narrative literature follows the same pattern.<sup>25</sup> Yahweh's wrath is justified with motive clauses; however there is a debate whether all pericopes can be justified.<sup>26</sup>
5. Reading the two pericopes together highlights the Scriptures bid to live directly out of time. This is because whilst the *Hosea* pericope is concerned with healing and restoration through the Lord's suffering, the *2 Corinthians*

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<sup>24</sup> Rad, G. von., *The Message of the Prophets*, translated from German, 1967 (London and Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), pp. 110-117.

<sup>25</sup> For examples see *Isaiah* 42: 18-25, *Jeremiah* 6: 9-15, *Zechariah* 7: 8-14 and *Hosea* 11: 1-11.

<sup>26</sup> Contrast A.T. Hanson, *The Wrath of the Lamb*, 1959; with B. Baloiian, *The Aspect of Anger in the Old Testament*, 1988; where the former sees more of the traditio-historical development in the understanding of the rationality of Yahweh's wrath.

pericope is concerned with redemption through Christ's death. Therefore, although both passages deal with suffering, in Christian and liturgical perspective, the New Testament adds to the Old, because in the New Testament there is an entirely new beginning rather than merely restoration. What is relevant in the Old Testament times, is relevant in the New, and seeks relevance for the present and future.

From our study of the above pericopes we can see that although they are two quite different pericopes, their form and content are similar. Whatever Byron's beliefs, this practice of parallelism would both be clear and familiar to him. A quick recap of the features that have emerged will help us with our comparison with Gibbon:

1. A pattern of exhortation alternated with reassurance.
2. The juxtaposing of suffering and salvation and the linking of suffering to judgement.
3. The paradox of divine love and wrath contained in one heart.
4. The consistent role for God's wrath.
5. The Scriptures bid to live directly out of time.

For our comparison with Gibbon, it would seem appropriate to study a pericope involving suffering, judgement or wrath. Although there appears to be very little in the way of anger in Gibbon's work, I propose to look at a section from his *Extracts from the Journal*, in which he makes judgement upon a ceremony which uses a sacrificial horse:

The ceremony practised in the Regia, bears, in my opinion, all the marks of the highest antiquity: a people desirous of representing the god of war, but who were incapable or unwilling to imitate the



human figure, and therefore adored him under the form of a spear; a horse sacrificed in the field, whose bloody head was carried in the procession, and fixed to the wall of the Regia; everything in these rites point to a Scythian origin, and indicates the manners of wandering barbarians. Even the military sports of the inhabitants of the Via Sacra and Suburra date their origin from a period when society was yet in its infancy. The Via Sacra leads to the Temple of Peace and the Coliseum, two of the finest monuments of Rome, which that city owes to the most avaricious of its princes. Happy the people, whose princes, by habitual economy, are capable of executing great undertakings!<sup>27</sup>

Once again, it is helpful to invoke our five categories:

1. The narrative does alternate in a way, but does not form as strong a contrast as the alternation between exhortation and reassurance in the Scriptural pericopes. The Gibbon narrative roughly alternates between judgement and information. For instance, judgement, in that it is an antiquated ceremony performed by people wanting to represent the God of War; information, the horse's head is carried on a spear and fixed to the Regia wall; judgement, indicates a Scythian origin of barbarous people; information regarding the origins of the military sports of the Via Sacra and Suburra; and further information regarding the Temple of Peace and the Colosseum; ending with the judgement on the people and the princes who built the monuments.
2. The suffering of the horse is not juxtaposed with either its salvation or the peoples' salvation. In fact, the blatant irony of the last sentence which suggests that the people are to be pitied because they have hypocritical rulers who do not care about peace, or the peoples welfare, is Gibbon's way of controlling the reader's response by wit and of distancing himself from the text. Although satire and irony may work through parallelism, as it does in the Scriptures, generally it does not, because irony, and certainly Gibbon's irony, distances

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<sup>27</sup> Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works* (1837), *Extracts from the Journal*, pp. 427-448, p. 478.

rather than joins. Although the suffering of the horse is linked in a way to the judgement of the writer, the satire distances the writer from it. This is in no way the same as the Scriptures where suffering is linked to judgement as a type of divine discipline.

3. There is a paradox in that a war-like ceremony is practised in a place which leads to the Temple of peace, but Gibbon does not maintain this paradox. Rather he suggests that this happens because the Temple has been built through the hypocrisy of Rome's most avaricious prince. For Gibbon, then, the Temple of peace has been tarnished from its conception and so there is no paradox. Gibbon also has no interest in the enigma of why a horse's head is used. Rather he suggests it is because the people are incapable or unwilling to imitate the human figure. Both these instances suggest that Gibbon has no interest in paradox, but makes the facts fit his pre-existent ideas and values.
4. In the Scriptures there is a consistent role for divine wrath which runs in the following order. First there is a summons, followed by evidence, judgement and finally anger. In Gibbon's pericope, there is no order with the evidence and judgement being mixed together. For instance in the first sentence, the judgement, that the people are following the habits of barbarians who were unable to use the human form, and the evidence of the horse's severed head, come together. The ironical and satirical comments which come at the end of the pericope take the place of anger.
5. Unlike the Scriptures, the text is not a bid to live directly out of time. The text is a comment upon events that date back to a radically different antiquity, but does not seek any relevance for the future. The writer is in a neutral spectatorial position outside time altogether.

It is again clear that Gibbon does not follow the Scriptural style in any of the five points, except for a very tenuous comparison of the first point regarding the alternating of the narrative. The pericope is unlike the Scriptures in both form and content.

It seems appropriate to compare Gibbon's Regia ceremony, which is linked to the Coliseum, with Byron's Coliseum curse in Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byron himself, presenting himself as Byron and speaking in his own poem, curses his attackers. The curse is in the form of forgiveness and is made by the interpolation of three stanzas 135-138:

That curse shall be Forgiveness.—Have I not—  
Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven!—  
Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?  
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?  
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven,  
Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away?  
And only not to desperation driven,  
Because not altogether of such clay  
As rots into the souls of those whom I survey.

From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy  
Have I not seen what human things could do?  
From the loud roar of foaming calumny  
To the small whisper of the as paltry few,  
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,  
The Janus glance of whose significant eye,  
Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,  
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,  
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.

But I have lived, and have not lived in vain:  
My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,  
And my frame perish even in conquering pain,  
But there is that within me which shall tire  
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;  
Something unearthly, which they deem not of,  
Like the remembered tone of a mute lyre,  
Shall on their softened spirits sink, and move  
In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love.

1. Although the narrative does alternate, this alternating happens between stanzas rather than sentences, as in the Scriptures. For instance we could say that the first stanza regards the victim, the second regards the perpetrators and the third goes back to the victim. Or we could say that the stanzas alternate between the personal suffering of the first and third stanzas and the general suffering caused in the second.
2. As with the Scriptures, Byron's Coliseum curse links suffering to judgement. Much of the suffering of the poem has led up to this eruption of anger which results in the curse. Harold has been exiled and has been made to endure unfair hardships. All the arguments, accusations, laments, disputations, etc., that has run throughout the poem becomes distilled into the Coliseum curse. It is as if every injustice that has been suffered is brought to the fore and can no longer be contained. His voice must 'break forth', but it is not merely a burst of anger, it is also a cry for justice and for the implementation of judgement, which is very much like the way in which suffering is linked to judgement in *Hosea*. The way in which time enters into writing, articulating human judgement and this call for future judgement, unites Byron's text with the Scriptures.
3. The paradox of forgiving and cursing at the same time, or of love and anger being contained in Byron's heart is very much like the Scriptural paradox of love and anger being contained in Yahweh's heart. However, within Yahweh's heart it is resolved, whereas it is not fully resolved in Byron's, because although the curse is turned to forgiveness it remains a curse. In fact, it has the effect of being a double curse, because not only has Byron's attackers had burning coals heaped on their head by being undeservedly forgiven, but the burden of needing to forgive has passed from Byron to his attackers. Paul

(*Romans* 12: 20-21) comments that heaping burning coals upon the enemy's head is a way of avoiding being overcome with evil and overcoming evil with good:

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

These two verses correspond with two verses found in *Proverbs* 25: 21-22:

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.

It is interesting that the New Testament verses re-interpret those of the Old. In the same way, Byron writes the Coliseum curse, which turns the curse into forgiveness, as an addition and it is also interpretation of the Scriptures, in exactly the same way as *Romans* interprets *Proverbs*. Byron overcomes evil with good because by forgiving his assailers, he no longer feels the weight of resentment. Therefore, he has avoided being overcome with evil. In turn he has overcome his enemies, because not only have they been undeservedly forgiven, but they also now need to forgive Byron for cursing them. However, Byron's forgiveness is not an act of mercy; it is a curse which is not meant to take their guilt away, but to add to their guiltiness. The curse is unending, because it will be too late when they experience the remorse of love. Love and remorse will be felt together and remain unresolved.

4. Byron's wrath, like the Scriptures, takes a clear order with judgement and evidence separated. It is also very similar in that it has identical categories, i.e., summons, evidence, verdict, anger. It is most interesting to note that there is almost a complete reversal of the order role of the role of Yahweh's anger. Rather than summons, evidence, verdict and lastly anger, Byron's anger comes first with the wish to 'pile upon human heads the mountain of my curse'. The

verdict comes next with, 'That curse shall be forgiveness', followed by the summons, 'Hear me, my mother Earth', and the evidence in the form of accusations, 'Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?' and the final judgement that something within him will 'tire/Torture and Time', whilst his attackers will feel 'the late remorse of love'. The exact reversal of the role of anger, together with Byron's unresolved unity of love and anger, makes the comparison of the anger in the prophetic corpus and the anger in the Coliseum curse striking, because whilst they are identical in some ways, they are also exactly opposite.

5. We have already noticed that the Scriptures are an implicit and sometimes explicit bid to live directly out of time, inasmuch as the words, especially of the prophets, set the future in motion. The words in the Coliseum curse, 'But there is that within me which shall tire/Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire', also emphasises Byron's bid for his words to live directly out of time. The curse, as forgiveness, is almost a prophetic attempt to interpret history. This is a way of ensuring that the text will win and control the future. Another way in which both Byron's text and the Scriptures make a bid to live directly out of time, is by the way in which they both edit and re-edit, using such techniques as additions and interpolations. The interpolation forces us into acts of connection which find coherence within the text, but they remain an interpolation. Classical literary models do not operate in this way, even if we consider Pindar or Pope's *The Dunciad*. *The Dunciad*, like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is written over time, as is the Scriptures, only on a vastly smaller scale. It is a time with gaps, a time that is represented in its composition as well as an object of attention and that consequently it is produced by an act of editing which belongs to the composition as such. Although *Childe Harold* is

written in the same way as *The Dunciad*, the editing procedures of *The Dunciad* are in part a parody of the secondary procedures of scholarly editing and are not, as in the case of *Childe Harold* and the Scriptures, a bid to live directly out of time.

So far we have considered the general effect of the Scriptures upon Byron's style and have also isolated certain pericopes for a close reading. However, form criticism was instrumental in noting the grouping of pericopes according to their content. For instance, Gunkel, in particular, advanced the study of the Psalter by noting in his comparisons of the petitions and praises of the psalms with other ancient near east hymnic literature, striking similarities of their common content, mood, expressions, motifs and structure. By comparing these criteria he was led to distinguish at least five different types: 1. Lament of individual (also called petitions). 2. Lament of community. 3. Thanksgiving. 4. Praise. 5. Royal (such as anniversary and wedding, etc).<sup>28</sup> The idea of an editorial grouping according to form and content within the Scriptures is also in evidence on a smaller scale than the grouping of psalms. Separate, smaller, pericopes are gathered together into little 'complexes' or what von Rad terms, 'divans'.<sup>29</sup> He takes for his example *Isaiah 5:8-24* which consists of a series of oracles each beginning with the words "Woe unto". He adds that this divan was certainly not delivered consecutively and that the connection of the 'woe unto' pericopes is editorial, as is Jeremiah's oracles against the false prophets (*Jeremiah 23:9*) and the royal house (*Jeremiah 21:11-14*). von Rad also instances divans which the editor has grouped on

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<sup>28</sup> Gunkel, H., *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, tr. by T.M. Horner, 1967; idem (*Einleitung in die Psalmen die Gattungen der Religiösen Lyrik Israels*, Göttingen: 1933).

<sup>29</sup> Rad G. von., *The Message of the Prophets*, tr. *Die Botschaft der Propheten* (New York: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), p. 21.

different grounds, such as *Isaiah* 6, on chronological grounds, and *Ezekiel* 4-5, which is a collection of the prophet's so-called symbolic actions.

If we take a closer look at *Isaiah*'s 'woe unto' divan, we notice that it combines a series of 'woe to' oracles with sentences of judgement. In verses 16-30, distant nations, which probably refers to Assyria, are summoned to execute the judgement of God on Israel. Each pericope follows the same formula. It has a warning, an accusation and a coming judgement. For our example however, we shall examine a 'woe to' divan found in *Habakkuk* 2:6-20. This divan is similar in both form and content to the *Isaiah* divan.

As with the *Hosea* and *Corinthian* pericopes, both the 'woe unto' divans link suffering with judgement. In the *Habakkuk* divan the oracles are directed against Babylonian greed, violence, drunkenness and idolatry; against, 'that increaseth *that which is not his!*' (v.6); 'that coveteth an evil covetousness'(v.9); 'who buildeth a town with blood' (v.12); 'that giveth his neighbour drink...and makest *him drunken*' (v.15); and 'that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!' (v. 19). Each pericope within the divan follows the same formula. The pericope starts with the words 'woe unto', or 'woe to' which act as a warning followed by an accusation and the coming judgement. For instance verses 9-12:

Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.



The pattern becomes more striking when the pericopes are read as a divan because of the strong pattern and lack of deviation. Also, each pericope which goes to make up the divan is of a similar length. They are all three verses long, with the exception for the fourth oracle which comprises four verses. Towards the end of the divan, interpolated into the personal references to “him”, we find a universal reference to ‘the people’ the comment, “Behold, *is it* not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” Although originally directed at the rapacious, unjust, iniquitous, violent and idolatrous nation that has plundered many people, in verses 18-19 the condemnation has a universal reference, indicting all human tyranny.

It has proved difficult to isolate a divan within Gibbon’s work for comparison. This may be expected not only because Gibbon is a rationalist writing in prose, but also, and mainly, because he wants to give the impression of writing forwards, is in control of his own text, and so hides his gathering. The closest example of Gibbon compiling a divan that I have found is in *De Mes Lectures*, in his *Miscellaneous Works, Vol. V*, where he says, “I shall collect my scattered thoughts, with the reflections of every sort that occur in my search for truth”. However, the text continues with a list of diary entries, the first three of which begins “I read”.<sup>30</sup> This is not a divan because although it is a collection, the entries are listed separately under different days. It is a diary with a list of the books read with his comments upon the books. We can also consider a pericope in *Extracts from the Journal* where he says:

I shall collect, therefore, not in the order of time, but according to the distribution of subjects, the new ideas which I acquired during

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<sup>30</sup> Gibbon, E., *The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq., with Memoirs of his Life and Writings, Vol. V, ‘Miscellaneous’* (London: John Murray, 1814), p. 215.

my residence in Paris. These subjects may be made under the following heads: 1. My own personal concerns; expenses, connexions, friends. 2. The state of literature in France, the men of letters, academies, theatres. 3. Detached observations; military, political, and moral. 4. The public buildings and works of art.<sup>31</sup>

Again, it is difficult to say that this is in any way a divan, and neither would we expect it to be. The rationalist eighteenth-century agenda is set against ancient literary habits of mind which collect together fruitfully. We can see this from Gibbon's writing. Firstly, the headings are all unconnected. In this way they are a list rather than a grouping of the same subject matter. Secondly, the text, once again, follows on in the form of diary entries and are separated out into different days, unlike a divan which gathers together from separate days and then groups them together. This cannot be considered a divan and so we cannot make any useful comparison between this and the Scriptural divan. However, the divans highlight the importance of the authorial 'I' in the text, which, as we have already noted, is mostly absent in the Old Testament.<sup>32</sup>

We can more directly compare the *Habakkuk* 'woe unto' divan to what can be called Byron's 'what am I?' divan, at the beginning of Canto III in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. I am inclined to call it a divan because it is a collection of thoughts of the same subject, brought together and interpolated into the text.<sup>33</sup>

The little complex of thoughts called the 'What am I?' divan begins at stanza 2.16 with, 'I am as a weed'; and is added to with the thoughts in stanza 3. 1 of, 'I did sing of One'; stanza 6. 50, 'What am I? Nothing'; and in stanza 7. 55-56 & 61, 'I have thought too long and darkly' and 'Yet am I chang'd'. This collection is

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<sup>31</sup> Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works* (1837), p. 462.

<sup>32</sup> *Luke* and *John* of Patmos and most of the Epistles have an 'I', but the other Gospels do not and neither does the Old Testament apart from the Psalms.

<sup>33</sup> This structure is found in classical Milton too, as in *Ubi Sant*.

interpolated into the main text. At the end of Canto II the question is asked 'What is the worst of woes that wait on age?' (II. 98. 1). As if to answer that question Byron begins Canto III with a lament for his daughter Ada, and then interrupts the poem to speak as himself in what he calls, 'this world of woe'. This is self-evidently an interpolation because the narrative continues with the words in stanza 8, 'Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last'. Also, we can also compare Gunkel's groupings according to content, mood, motifs and structure. We note that the content of each pericope corresponds to thoughts about himself and the mood in each relates to his 'world of woe'.

Having thus established that this is, in effect, a divan, we can begin to make our comparisons:

1. The suffering in Byron's divan, as with the Scriptures, is linked to judgement, but it is Byron's judgement upon himself, rather than judgement as a form of discipline. Byron's judgement for his 'world of woe' is outlined in stanza 7: 'I *have* thought too long and darkly... And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame'.
2. Each pericope in the divan, although not as discernible as in the Scriptural divan, does loosely follow the same formula. Each pericope starts with a declaration of what he is, or verdict upon himself, followed by the judgement, or reason for that verdict. Byron's divan is unlike the most striking feature of the Scriptural divan whereby each pericope begins with the same words. None of Byron's thoughts begins with the same words.
3. The pericopes vary considerably in length, which is unlike the Scriptures which are all three verses long, except for the last, which is four.

4. Like the *Habakkuk* divan, in Byron's divan the personal references are interpolated with a universal reference. For instance, interpolated into the middle of the thoughts about himself in the Byron divan, is the reference to, 'He, who grown aged in this world of woe' (5. 1).
5. The divan clearly shows that 'I' in Byron's writing is non-egotistical, but is unsure, changeable, multiplied or fragmented. Although he gathers his 'I's, the gathering itself is not an 'I'.

Our comparison has revealed some similarities. For instance, suffering is linked to judgement, although in a different manner; the pericopes follow the same formula and a universal reference is interpolated in personal references. These similarities, apart from the interpolation of a universal reference into personal ones, are not as striking as in the two previous comparisons. When we consider that we were unable to compare a divan in Gibbon's work, the findings become relatively much more significant. Certainly Byron's poetic habit of mind and habits of agglutination is quite unlike Gibbon's.

Thus far we have been following a main line and the main line in biblical criticism is the type we have described, but relating this to lines of literary criticism is a harder task. We have noted that Byron's relationship to biblical criticism may, in some respects, be considered as neo-orthodoxy. I would like now to take a deeper look into that, and, in some ways, to complicate our findings by introducing Byron's relationship to Pope into the argument. Byron's great admiration for Pope is well known and it would be useful to see Byron's relationship to Pope as evidence that he is simultaneously writing in the present moment, and yet, at the same time, traditionally. So Byron's relationship to Pope is what you might call

neo-orthodoxy. At the time when many of his contemporaries were attacking Pope, Byron is concerned to defend the 'orthodoxy' of Milton, Pope and Dryden. This is parallel to his biblical position where he wants to defend an aesthetic order and he wants to defend it, not as something in the past, but something that is operating in the present. So, although we have set up Gibbon against the Scriptures, we shall complicate this by another eighteenth-century model, Pope, who, in some ways is like Gibbon and in some ways like the Scriptures. This sets Pope as a mediating model between the eighteenth-century rationalism of Gibbon and the Scriptures. We have been applying form criticism to Byron, Gibbon and the Scriptures, which privileges the fragment. Form criticism, as we have said, leads on to redaction criticism which is more concerned with how and why the fragments have been made into the whole, and so privileges the editor. Pope acts as his own editor in that he does not write straight out. He kept little bits of paper around him, which he used to keep putting fragments of writing, or pericopes, together in various combinations.<sup>34</sup> How you get from pericope to another, the transition, was of great importance to the eighteenth-century writer and is something they practised with care. Byron, of course, was heir to eighteenth-century thoughts on transitions. Geoffrey Tillotson in his books *Augustan Studies* and *On the Poetry of Pope* has done some excellent work on eighteenth-century transitions. Although his thoughts on transitions is not structural to the thesis, they should prove helpful, so before we begin applying form criticism to Pope's work, we shall reiterate what Tillotson has to say about eighteenth-century transitions and in particular, Pope.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Sherburn, G., *The Early Career of Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 190.

<sup>35</sup> References to Pope's writings are taken from *Pope: Poetical Works*, ed. by Herbert Davis (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Tillotson says that in the eighteenth century, writers considered transitions as a grace that had to be mastered and took Ovid as their model. Even though the poems are designed with care, they have a necessarily strong sense of continuity within the sentence and when the transitions act as molten metal, there is a strong continuity with the poem. In order that transitions which combine paragraphs do not fall back into parts, they need firstly, to be strong and secondly, to be pleasurable, otherwise the readers would think of them, as Gray did, as “a string of transitions [in a poem of Tickell’s] that hardly becomes a schoolboy”.<sup>36</sup>

Paragraphs and their transitions made up the design of a poem.

According to Tillotson, Pope seems to have noted three stages in the history of a poem as inspiration, control and design. The importance of design is implied between the lines which counsel the control of the imagination: the subject of good art is nature:

Poets like painters, thus, unskill’d to trace  
The naked nature and the living grace,  
With gold and jewels cover ev’ry part  
And hide with ornaments their want of art.  
True Wit is Nature to advantage dress’d,  
What oft was thought, but ne’er so well express’d; (*An Essay on Criticism*, 293-298)

Although the design of an *Essay on Criticism* and of *Essay on Man* is meticulous, it is in making the transitions and not in the design of the poems where the difficulty lies. Pope’s masterly and various use of transitions can be seen especially in his *Imitations of Horace* and his *Moral Essays*. He perfectly handles both the local transitions which applies to the formal grammatical arrangement and the transitions regarding content; the local transitions often by means of

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<sup>36</sup> Tillotson, G., *Augustan Studies* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1961), n., p. 130.

syntax and with his frequent use of ‘thens’ and ‘buts’, and the more largely by a deliberate shift of subject matter. His transitions are sometimes achieved through the sense alone. Take for instance:

From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.  
Soft were my numbers; (*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 145-147).

Here the change may be seen as much in the change of discord to harmony, as in the sense.

Tillotson adds that Pope also noted that even the shorter pieces of the ancients were ‘written by a plan’.<sup>37</sup> Although Pope paid a great deal of attention to the design of a poem, it sometimes seems as if he wishes to present all the materials to hand for the poem, at once, as for instance does a painter, or an architect. This can be seen when Pope uses the word ‘Lo’, which for him articulates the suddenness of seeing something as in a picture:

Lo! where Mæotis sleeps, and hardly flows  
The freezing Tanais thro’ a waste of snows, (*Dunciad* III, 87-88)

This is, of course, a calculated later literary use of the biblical and archaic word ‘Lo’:— “and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them” (*Matthew* 2: 9). In Pope’s day, by and large, the materials for a poem were considered to lie ready to any hand and there was no premium placed on original thought. It was better to say in some peculiarly telling way “what oft was thought” (*Essay on Criticism*, 297 (1711)). Therefore, it seems that there is some connection between the way Pope designed a poem and the philosophy and ‘natural philosophy’ of the time. Pope’s view of things, widely admired, was that things were separate but related. Pope delights in listing:

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<sup>37</sup> Tillotson’s *Augustan Studies*, n., p. 130.

But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,  
The strong connections, nice dependencies,  
Gradations just, (*Essay on Man*, 29-31)

Pope sees this in a quasi-religious way in his *Essay*. Tillotson argues that Pope's interest in literary transition, links with wider interest in him, and in his time, as in cosmic and moral gradations.

According to Tillotson, the idea of design co-existed with the idea of continuity and although the eighteenth-century poets talked about design, they were also aware of recurrent lengths of unbroken movement. For instance, Johnson was aware of the automatic continuity of human life when he writes in *Rasselas* that men glide along the stream of time and the story leaves Imlac 'contented to be driven along the stream of life'.<sup>38</sup> Whilst a characteristic nineteenth-century emphasis was on continuity whilst at the same time there was an awareness of design. The grace of transitions became less important, because things were viewed in terms of one long transition. Change was considered as something that was happening all the time and because the discovery of this was over such a long period of time, it was hardly noticeable. The reasons for this change can be found by looking at why eighteenth and early nineteenth-century poets kept returning to *The Faerie Queene*. Pope, for instance, in his 'Imitation' of Spenser shows that he saw *The Faerie Queene* as composed of pictures,<sup>39</sup> as did Keats and also the old lady to whom Pope read Spenser, who saw a gallery of pictures. Wordsworth, however, saw movement in *The Faerie Queene*:

Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, S., *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, ed. with an introduction by D. J. Enright (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959), p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> Tillotson's *Augustan Studies*, n., p. 137.



With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace, (*The Prelude*, iii, 283)<sup>40</sup>

This history of musical transitions seems to run a parallel course. We could say that the design of Pope is like that of Mozart, whereas Beethoven is more like progressive, unbroken narrative.

Tillotson argues correctly, I think, that the great poets of the nineteenth century prefer continuity to design and claims that Wordsworth can have a dogged sense of continuity. The change from the design of Pope and Johnson to the continuity of Wordsworth is, Tillotson suggests, effected mainly by Gray. He directed that the printing of the *Elegy* should be done with even the slow stanzas having no interval between them 'because the sense in some instances continued beyond them'.<sup>41</sup> Matthew Arnold in his essay on Gray, commended the 'evolution' of thought in the two big odes. De Quincy had already noted such evolution in Dryden's poems, whereas Pope thought 'in jets'.<sup>42</sup> Gray, like Pope and Johnson thinks, but he does so on the move. Though he begins with a description and continues with a narration he snatches thought as he goes. Pope and Johnson had come to the conclusion of their thoughts well before putting them on paper, but for Gray the interest lies in the occasion and process of arriving at the thought, as in the thought itself. It is this interest that he passes over to Wordsworth and Keats.

I have set out Tillotson's argument at some length because he is one of the few to address the cult of transition in poetry and relate it to wider matters. It gives us a

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<sup>40</sup> *Wordsworth: The Prelude — Or Growth of a Poet's Mind 1805*, edited from the manuscripts with an Introduction and Notes by Ernest De Selincourt, corrected by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Tillotson's *Augustan Studies*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> Tillotson's *Augustan Studies*, n., p. 139.

model to use. We shall now briefly apply the same form critical questions to Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, as we have to Byron, the Scriptures and Gibbon's work. Although the *Rape of the Lock* is the exception because Pope mainly presents the events in chronological order, rather than breaking the chronology up and rearranging the bits, as in his other writings, I have chosen it for two reasons. Firstly, we know that the Scriptures are written in discrete sections and Pope also writes this way, but it would be too easy simply to say that Pope writes in bits, which is like the pericopes of the Scriptures, but his satire and irony clearly control the reader, which is like Gibbon. It is important, too, that the poem consists of five small cantos, and a major part of our form critical questions is directed to whether a particular subject matter is confined to individual chapters or cantos. The exercise then, is to look at the ways in which the literary structures of Pope's writing may be seen as a mediation between the Scriptures and Gibbon and also to look at the relationship between the literary structures used by Pope and Byron. If Byron is sensitive to the way in which the Scriptures jumps from one literary unit to another, he must have been also been sensitive to the fact that Pope, his favourite author, did the same.<sup>43</sup> We have seen that, in some ways, Byron is quite close to Gibbon, but structurally, he is not close to him at all. Structurally he is far closer to the Bible. By also looking at Pope's writing, which is a complicated model for Byron, we can broaden the view of Byron's structural models for writing, from one of simply setting Hebrew forms against those of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

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<sup>43</sup> McGann's *Don Juan in Context*, p. 95, insists that transitions between styles, lines, stanzas and tones not only do not present a problem for Byron, but that they are the locus for his opportunities.

We begin our very brief comparison by applying the same form critical questions to the general way in which Pope writes:

1. Like the Scriptures and Byron, but unlike Gibbon, Pope's main aim, not surprisingly, does not appear to record data in a clear and efficient manner. For instance, although his *An Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man* may be didactic in purpose, the witty utterances invite the reader to respond to their 'dulce' as to their 'utile' properties.
2. Unlike the Scriptures, but like Gibbon, Pope, in his *Rape of the Lock*,<sup>44</sup> sets out a clear demarcation of cantos. For instance the first canto ends with the sylphs attending to Belinda's dressing. The second canto begins with comparing Belinda to the rising sun and then continues with the way she interacts with other people. Similarly Canto II ends with the spirits guarding Belinda, while Canto III begins with a description of Hampton Court Palace and the activities of people there, before continuing with Belinda's game of cards.
3. There is a mixture of pericopes within the poem. For instance in Canto IV we have pericopes that could be entitled 'Belinda's rage', 'the spirits' response', 'the Cave of Spleen', 'Umbriel secures a bag of emotions', 'Thalestris's speech', 'Sir Plume's interjection', 'the Baron's reply', and 'the vial of sorrows poured upon Belinda'. It is likely, of course, that Pope's mixture of pericopes is, in the first instance, exploiting a medley model which he gains from Horace, in his satires and epistles, and which Byron also picks up on. It is interesting that Byron uses the word 'medley', (from the word 'satura'), to describe *Don Juan*, and that the dedication is a quotation from Horace —

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<sup>44</sup> The second five-canto version of *The Rape of the Lock* interpolates and extends the original two canto version in the way that both Byron and biblical editors expand the text.

“Difficile est proprie communia dicere”. It is Horace’s satire and epistles that are most associated with the idea of ‘medley’ as a forum of writing. A medley, from a certain point of view, seems similar to the Scriptures, but also opposed to them. For instance, we can say that classical tragedy is the antithesis of ‘medley’ for it concentrates on its single subject matter, and so to that extent the Scriptural narrative is more like Horace’s medley than tragic form is medley. But on the other hand, although the Bible, taken as a whole, has elements of medley, for instance it has such things as psalms, proverbs, prophecies, etc., yet this medley is suggestive of a deep unity. The *Don Juan* dedication suggests that it is difficult to talk in an appropriate way about common things. Yet much poetry is made out of common things, out of everything we know, and only some verse is made out of elevated life in the manner of an epic poem. This is a sort of prescription for *Don Juan*, that it is made out of the common things, appears as a medley and yet, however humorously, invokes the status and character of epic too. The Bible is made out of common things too, but it also has the idea of a single history and depends on the idea of a single God. It is not epic concentrating on a single matter, it talks about everything and yet it invites readers to see it as unified. It does not have the representations for diversity of human life as its object, on the contrary, it wills to bring the diversity of human life into the supreme salvation history of God. Byron is half-way between the two models.

4. The interpolations in *The Rape of the Lock*, are not quite the same as in the Scriptures or Byron. For instance in Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* we suddenly find ourselves, without warning, reading about Mount Parnassus in the middle of reading about Spain. In the *Rape of the Lock*, we find that the sylphs, the card game and the Cave of Spleen which were added after the first

version (1712), in 1713, and Clarissa's speech added in 1717, are skilfully integrated into the original poem so that you would not know by reading the poem that they are, in fact, additions. It is significant that, when Pope interrupts the narrative of the text, this kind of interpolation can act as a transition. For instance, we find at the beginning of Canto III, the discussion regarding Belinda is interrupted by pericopes describing the activities at Hampton Court Palace followed by an additional pericope of the general events that take place at that time of day. The end of the last line of the interpolation, however, serves as a thread to pick up the story line and transposes Belinda from her dressing routine to the card game at Hampton Court:

Mean while, declining from the noon of day,  
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;  
The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,  
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;  
The merchant from th'Exchange returns in peace,  
And the long labours of the Toilet cease.  
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites... (III. 19-25)

5. We found in the Scriptures, *2 Samuel*, and the end of Canto I in *Don Juan*, additions and appendices to the chapters, where the interruptions are also interrupted. We have already discussed above a simple addition to an interruption to the narrative in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, but obviously this is nowhere near on the same scale as the Scriptures or Byron.

Again, for our brief look at the specific language usage in *The Rape of the Lock*, we shall apply the same criteria to the writing as we have previously done to the Scriptures, Gibbon and Byron:

1. There is an appreciable sense of alternation between the mortals and the spirits in parts of the narrative. The first canto begins with mortals, largely talks about

the spirits, but ends again with mortals. The second canto, similarly, begins with mortals, but largely talks about the spirits. The third and fourth cantos, however, alternate quite regularly between mortals' actions and the consequences for the spirits. A large part of the fifth canto is taken up by the mortals' quarrel, then to the actions of the spirits to secure fame for Belinda's lock.

2. Within the Scriptures and Byron's section on the Coliseum we found suffering linked to judgement. Gibbon, however, controls the reader's response by using wit to distance himself from the text. It could be said that Pope, in a way, does both. Firstly, his obvious wit and satire, makes him apart from the narrative. But Belinda's suffering is also linked to judgement, both in terms of punishment and in terms of others' opinions. Belinda's vanity is punished by her suffering. If she had not been so vain, then she would not have suffered so. Also her suffering is judged by those around her; Clarissa, the Baron and Sir Plume. It is also possible to say that her suffering is in a very tentative way, linked to an image of salvation. Through her great suffering, Belinda's name becomes immortalised as the lock is taken up to the stars to become a new constellation.
3. Both in the Scriptures and in Byron's Coliseum curse we found the paradox of anger and love being contained in one heart. In *The Rape of the Lock*, this is not the case. Belinda is totally consumed by her anger, resorting to violence and the use of her bodkin to exact revenge. It is Clarissa who, separated from Belinda's emotional processes, recommends a flexible moderation linked to forgiveness rather than the fixed stance of revenge.
4. We found in the Scriptures a consistent order for divine wrath. Firstly, there is the summons, followed by evidence, anger and lastly judgement, which was

almost exactly reversed in Byron's work. Within Pope's work, however, we see the same order as the Scriptures. Firstly, there is the summons of the people gathering together for the card game, then the evidence of the cut hair, followed by Belinda's wrath and finally judgement in the form of her suffering and the opinions of those about her.

5. Within the Scriptures and Byron, but not in Gibbon's work, we find a bid for the text to live in the immediacy of present time. Within *The Rape of the Lock*, although the hair is made into a constellation, it is not so much a bid to live out of time; it is not a prophetic utterance of the future, but rather it adds to the timeless effect of the poem. The sylphs, sylphids, gnomes, gods, goddesses, etc., will always be around to help the mortals, just as the stars will always shine in the sky. However, the poem does belong to time insofar as it was an attempt (as was Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*) to alter the uncompleted history which is its subject matter. Both texts however, dramatise a sort of closure.

There is nothing we could call a *divan* in *The Rape of the Lock*. Pope does, however, repeat words and phrases to add to an argument. For instance, in Canto IV we read Thalestris's indignation regarding Belinda's injured pride:

Was it for this you took such constant care  
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?  
For this your locks in paper durance bound,  
For this with tort'ring irons wreath'd around?  
For this with fillets strain'd your tender head,  
And bravely bore the double loads of lead? (IV. 97-101)

This is similar to Julia's feigned injured pride and indignant speech when Don Alfonso accuses her of having an affair, in *Don Juan*, Canto I, stanzas 147-151:

'Is it for this I have disdain'd to hold  
The common privileges of my sex? (147. 1169-1170)

**'Was it for this that no Cortejo ere  
I yet have chosen from out of the youth of Seville?  
Is it for this I scarce went any where,  
Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?  
Is it for this, whate'er my suitors were,  
I favour'd none—nay, was almost uncivil?  
Is it for this that General Count O'Reilly,  
Who took Algiers, declares I used him vilely? (148. 1177-1184)**

**'Was it for this, you took your sudden journey... (151. 1201)**

**It is interesting that although Byron uses the same phrase "Was it for this" as Pope, and in the very similar situation of injured pride, yet his use of the phrase more resembles the structure of the biblical divan. The phrases "Was it for this" and "Is it for this", head separate literary units. They form a collection of thoughts of the same subject, grouped together into a little complex. It is not a divan because the little complex of questions is not interpolated into the text, but runs concurrent with it. We could say, however, that the structure is divan-like.**

**Our comparison with Pope has indeed shown that in some ways his writing can be likened to the Scriptures, but that it is better seen as a mediating model between the Scriptures and eighteenth-century Gibbonian rationalism. We have also found that when Byron uses Pope as a model, (the 'Was it for this'/'Is it for this' questions), Byron's structure is closer to the biblical structure of divans, rather than to the listings of Pope.**

**Our investigation into pericopes and divans has, therefore, revealed substantial evidence to support the hypothesis that Byron's writing is strongly influenced by his habit of reading the Scriptures. Our comparisons with the historical writings of Gibbon serves to emphasise the significance of the influence. In particular the comparisons reveal that:**



1. Byron's structural methods are analogous to Scriptural structural methods and Gibbon's are not. The resemblance between Byron's and the Scriptures' structural patterns are striking to such an extent that we can almost certainly say that, given Byron regularly read the Scriptures, they are a major contributing factor.
2. Scriptural hermeneutics, about the historicity of biblical events, affected the way in which Byron places emphasis on historical fact; the way he wishes not to step outside historical boundaries which includes biblical historical boundaries and his defence of the Bible's historicity.<sup>45</sup>
3. It is interesting to note that Byron's interest in biblical stories and his incessant use of paradox is more aligned with neo-orthodoxy, a twentieth-century movement, which accepts the non-historical nature of much biblical material and the effects of transmission and editing on the final text but asserts the intelligibility and historicity of the Scriptures taken as a whole.
4. Byron's frequent use of an 'inclusio' as a structure within the text, corresponds to the Scriptures in clear ways.
5. The 'I' in Byron's writing, however peculiar and Byronic, is dispersed through juxtaposed passages like those of the Scriptures, rather than reins overtly controlling, in the manner of Gibbon.
6. Byron's narrative in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan* follows the style of Scriptural narrative in that it is not confined to chapters; does not follow a clear pattern or order, but is made up of various pericopes

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<sup>45</sup> Something of this can be seen in Byron's letter to Dallas dated 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1811, regarding a Mr. Townsend's books on 'Armageddon'. Byron states that Townsend's anticipation of the 'Last Day' appears, "a little too daring: at least, it looks like telling the Lord what he is to do..." Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 135.

which have been gathered and stitched together; has various acts of editing like additions and interpolations, with even the interruptions being interrupted.

7. The study of the Coliseum curse pericope reveals that Byron's bid for the text to live directly out of time is strikingly similar despite huge differences of context, to that of the Scriptures.
8. Byron maintains the Scriptural paradox of anger and love remaining together in one heart.
9. There are some striking similarities in style and content between recording Yahweh's wrath and Byron's anger, both with a clear pattern of summons, evidence, verdict, anger and both containing the paradox of love and wrath being contained in one heart.
10. The Coliseum curse which is turned to forgiveness, is an addition and an interpretation of the former text, which acts in a strikingly similar way and in the same context as *Romans* interprets *Proverbs*.
11. Byron's divan suggest only a modest influence. Within the 'What am I' divan, each pericope does follow the same structure and as with the Habakkuk divan, personal references are interpolated with a universal reference. However, when Byron appears to be influenced by Pope's writing, i.e., he uses the same phrase as Pope in a similar situation, then, paradoxically, the structural influence of biblical divans becomes more apparent.

The finding regarding the divans is surprising mainly because the Scriptural divan is striking in both its form and content and I would have assumed that this would have had more of an impact upon Byron. However, the findings, in a way, concur

with the findings of our enquiry into parallelism. It was surprising to discover that parallelism occurred within *The Corsair*, but not within the *Hebrew Melodies* where it might be expected. It appears that where Byron openly acknowledges the model of the Scriptures, then his style seems to have less of a Scriptural influence in its inner workings. However, when Byron is engaged in a subject and form which seems quite unlike biblical models, then his style seems to be significantly opened up to their influence. We must presume, and this is of course highly likely, that Byron did not consciously set out to model his local and larger structures on biblical forms, but that his intense interest in, and sympathy with, Scriptural sequence strongly affected his aesthetic choices, structural presumptions, and also his sense of how a text relates to time. Consciously he had been educated in classical models and through the accepted paradigms of Augustan verse but, less consciously, his imagination was fired by Scriptural narrative and poetic patterns.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE STRUCTURE OF A BOOK

We begin this chapter by some kind of appreciation of the idea of a book as opposed to books. Here we shall look at the way in which the Bible is a single book, a unity, whilst it is also a collection of individual books. In the same way Scripture is also known as the Scriptures. It is this doubleness which we shall explore — Scripture as a book made up of many books and the organisation of all these books into a single thing called The Book. Firstly we shall look at the Bible as a whole, sometimes referred to as *ta biblia*, i.e., the books. The origin of the word ‘Bible’, indicates the tension between singularity and pluralism, coming, as it does, from the French *bible*, which derives from the late Latin *biblia*, a feminine singular noun meaning simply ‘the (single) book’. However, the earlier Latin *biblia*, was taken to be the neuter plural form which followed on from the Greek, *ta biblia*, which means ‘the (individual) books’. So right from the start, however accidentally it came into being, we have a sense of the doubleness of the Bible, because it is considered both in singular and plural terms and also as both unified and diversified. Diversified, in that it is a collection of individual books which appear to have been strung together without any common or coherent strand, and yet at the same time unified, if taken in a Christian sense that the individual books are the collective and overriding work of the single Holy Spirit, or the Jewish sense that the Hebrew Bible is a simple declaration of God to a single people.

The origin of the book itself lies in its relationship with its antecedent, the scroll. The scroll can be of individual books, such as the book of *Isaiah*, a copy of which

was discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, or a single scroll which corresponds to a number of individual books, such as the Pentateuch, or Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> In Jewish tradition there is a scroll for the Torah, or the Law, and then others for separate writings in groups, i.e., the writings and the prophets. The scroll is honoured, particularly by late Judaism. As the Torah was highly venerated, this sets up the possibility of the other scrolls which made up the Bible, being considered less important. The Christian equivalent of this in Orthodox and Catholic custom is that the Gospel has been treated ritually as more important than the rest of the Bible, and in early Christian liturgy, which has been continued in subsequent Catholic and Orthodox liturgy, the book of the Gospel was a separate book which was revered and kissed and given other liturgical salutation such as incense and candles. Hence there is on the one hand a total book and on the other hand a group of books like the Torah, or the four versions of one Gospel, and a tradition of separate books. Then the possibility of one book, or a collection of books being considered more important than the others, is brought into view. Whereas if the Bible is considered as a single book, a Protestant single printed book of the sixteenth century, for instance, the implication may be that every word is of similar significance.

From as early as the fifth century BC, there is evidence of the earliest forms of the use of the codex, (which probably originated from writing tablets), instead of the scroll.<sup>2</sup> Although the Latin word for multi-leaved tablets was codex, and Seneca, Cato and Cicero all used the term, the word codex did not, until much later, mean

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<sup>1</sup> The Torah was originally a single book though some argue that the book of *Judges* was part of it too, known collectively as the Hexateuch.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the development of the scroll into codex form, see *The Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. I, From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. by P.R. Ackroyd & C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

a book. The poet, Martial, writing around AD 85, without using the term, described literary publications in codex form, but they were still considered curiosities, and for at least two hundred years more, pagan literature continued to be written on scrolls.<sup>3</sup> It was a Christian writer who first used the word codex for a book, in the third century AD, which is highly significant because it is Christian literature that began to use the codex form, made from papyrus leaves and written in Greek. It is rather striking that it is not until the fourth century, roughly at the time when the Roman Empire became officially Christian, that we find the codex form normally used for non-Christian literature. There are a number of theories why the codex was preferred by Christians, but the most obvious one for Christians is that they could cross refer between the New and the Old Testaments much more easily than is possible in a scroll. The early Church Fathers were the first to claim the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, namely that the key to the Old Testament is the New. The Old Testament, on this view, carries implicitly what the New carries explicitly which makes cross referral paramount for a complete understanding.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the reason, our notion of the book today, must have Judaic Christianity largely behind it. The story of the book's shape and construction cannot be separated from the early record of the propagation of the Gospel and its transmission in the form of a book. Jasper and Prickett emphasise this point in the introduction to their book, *The Bible and Literature — A Reader*:

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<sup>3</sup> For an interesting account of the way in which the codex evolved from the use of scrolls, including the views of Martial see, Foot, Mirjam.J., 'Bookbinding and the History of Books', *A Potencie of Life*, The Clark Lectures 1986-1987, ed. by Nicholas Barker (London: The British Library, 1993), pp. 113-126.

<sup>4</sup>Foot, in his essay, 'Bookbinding and the History of Books', suggests that a contributing factor may have been the wish of the early Christians to emphasise the break with the pagan cultural tradition; pagan literature being written on scrolls, like the formal Jewish law, while the new Christian literature was to be written on tablets or notebooks.

... that the Bible holds a unique status in the religious history of the western world is obvious enough; what is less obvious, but no less true, is that it holds an equally unique status in literary history and even in what might be called our collective psyche. To begin with we owe to it much of our notion of what constitutes a 'book'. ...any discussion of the relationship between the Bible and literature must start by recognizing the degree to which our notion of 'literature' is biblically based.<sup>5</sup>

In early Judaism<sup>6</sup> the Torah was placed beside the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.<sup>7</sup> Christianity does not have a Holy of Holies where the scroll is kept, and so we find that the book moves in to assume a new role and takes on a different, elevated position.<sup>8</sup> With its new elevated position, the book itself becomes the sign of God's presence and becomes, even more so than the scroll, an object of reverence and worship. Christianity takes over late Jewish and parallel Jewish kinds of reverence for the Scriptures, but there are new factors specific to the new religion. We find what may be called 'a cult of the materiality', such as reverence for the relics of dead martyrs and the veneration of icons, which is linked to the doctrine of God being incarnate in a material body as opposed to Gnostic denials of this materiality. Byron was fascinated by and sympathetic to the materiality of Catholic worship in Italy, but was brought up to reverence 'The Book'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Bible and Literature – A Reader*, ed. by David Jasper and Stephen Prickett, assisted by Andrew Hass (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p. 2. The general introduction contains a concise account and discussion of the history of the Bible, pp. 1-11.

<sup>6</sup> Judaism originated from the beginning of the postexilic period (538 BC).

<sup>7</sup> *Exodus* 16: 34; *Numbers* 17: 10; *Deuteronomy* 31:26. The Ark symbolised the presence of God with his people and as such indicated the impossibility of representing God in the form of an animal or human being. The two cherubim of gold which stood at each end were also symbols of the presence and unapproachableness of Yahweh, who, as King of Israel in the midst of his people, was said to dwell between the cherubim (*Exodus* 25:10; 30:6; *Numbers* 7:89; *Samuel* 4:4).

<sup>8</sup> From the twelve hundreds onwards, but more especially from about the fifteenth century, Catholics have a tabernacle on the altar where the sacrament is kept, and to some extent it is equivalent to having the Holy of Holies or a book, the Holy of Holies being displaced onto the Eucharist host. So there is a connotation between bread and book, and sacrament and book.

<sup>9</sup> See Byron's letter to Murray dated 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1917. Moore T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 350.

Early Christians understood the Old Testament as essentially prophetic, foretelling the coming of the Messiah, and attesting the apostolic witness of the New Testament Scriptures. For orthodox Christians, the incarnation of God as disclosed/revealed in the New Testament meant that God could be touched and seen. Since Christ is the Word, and the Scriptures are the Word, then the idea of the tangibility of the Word as, in a certain manner, physically present in the book, as well as spiritually, comes into being. This idea of the Scriptures as an ordinary book, which nevertheless is a quasi-sacramental substantiation of God's presence, parallels the sense of the Eucharist looking like bread and wine, but actually being divine flesh and blood. Reading the Scriptures then, for Christians, could be understood as an encounter with the resurrected and incarnate Christ. In other words they were theophanic, 'the Word made Flesh'. Origen (c.185-c.254) talks of reading the Scriptures, as an encounter with God; and Maximus (c.580-c.662) drew direct parallels between the Word made flesh as a human being, and the Word expressing himself in 'syllables and letters', Christ's teaching in parables.<sup>10</sup> A common depiction of Christ in the Orthodox Church is Christ holding a book, not of the Scriptures, but the book of the Gospel. It is a picture of the Word in both senses; of the Word holding the Word.<sup>11</sup> Byron, in Greece especially, must have seen many such icons.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A discussion on Origen's comments in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, and a discussion on Maximus and the Byzantine tradition can be found in Louth, A., 'The Theology of the Word made Flesh', *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. by John L. Sharpe III and Kimberley Van Kampen (London & N & S America: The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 1998), pp. 223-228.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance a portrait of Christ holding the Gospel in folio 32v of *The Book of Kells*. The date and place of origin of *The Book of Kells* have long been subject of controversy, but investigations focus mainly on the isle of Iona, Scotland, and Kells, County Meath, Ireland and is thought to have been written around 807. Meehan, B., *The Book of Kells: An illustrated introduction to the Manuscript in Trinity College Dublin* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> Byron would have seen such icons when he spent the night at the monastery at Zitsa, for instance, on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1809, on route to Tepelene, Albania. See Page, N., *A Byron Chronology* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1988), p. 16; and also Byron's letter to his



In Christianity, the cult of the Book also comes about through a kind of sleight of hand. This happens because the Jews increasingly insisted on a single authorised text (the Massoretic text) and begin destroying other versions of the Scriptures. On this view, if the words were 'God given', God has written every word, then there could only be one version and not lots of different versions. Christianity, of course, does not have a theoretical equivalent of this. On the other hand, because the Jews attached a special reverence to the Greek Septuagint reinforced by the legend of the seventy translators who independently came upon the same text, the text becomes shrouded with having a sacred authority equivalent to the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>13</sup> With the rise in popularity of Christianity which privileged the Septuagint, the Jews increasingly insisted that the Hebrew text is the real sacred text and not the Greek Septuagint. Similarly, they begin to exclude from their canon books which were preserved in the Greek but not in the Hebrew text, irrespective of whether they were Hebrew or not.<sup>14</sup> Although Christianity has the Septuagint, and the New Testament is in Greek, so the Orthodox Church has a single text, for most of Christian Europe the Bible has always been a translated book. As the Vulgate, which was completed by 405 A.D., gained in popularity, it too, began to acquire the same sort of quasi-canonical status as the Septuagint. In a similar vein, and although at first not popular, the Authorised version, also

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mother, dated 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1809, letter no. 40, Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> The Septuagint is the earliest complete translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, probably made to satisfy the needs of the Greek-speaking community of Jews who no longer understood Hebrew. It is also known as LXX after the 70 translators reputed to have been employed on the Pentateuch in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-246 B.C., and as such the LXX represents a pre-Massoretic Hebrew text.

<sup>14</sup> All the books collected into the canon of the Jewish scriptures were written and presented in Hebrew, with the exception of parts of *Daniel*, which was written in Aramaic. For formation of the Jewish and Christian canon, see *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), ed. by John Gabel, Charles Wheeler & Anthony York (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 93-107. Also *The Bible and Literature – A Reader*, pp. 1-10.

known as The King James Bible, in time, acquired a quasi-canonical status. It has been treated as though it is not a translation, but the actual words of Scripture, and this, despite the Protestant emphasis upon Hebrew and the insistence in early editions of the Authorised Version in putting into italics any translated words that were not in the original.<sup>15</sup> So this gives us a kind of Christian cult of the Book diversified into Septuagint, Vulgate and Authorised Versions. It is a cult which depends upon cross-reference made available by the physical form of the book and the tendency of Christianity to sacralise customary versions. On the other hand, the existence of versions, because every Greek reader of the Septuagint knows of the Hebrew text, and every Latin reader knows of the Hebrew and Greek texts, does remove some authority from all of those versions because they can always be compared to a text which precedes them.

The switch from the Codex to the printed book in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which coincides, and not accidentally, with the Renaissance and Reformation had far reaching effects. Firstly, it makes possible the printing of very many copies of the Bible, so the book then ceases to be associated primarily with liturgical performance and scholarly devotional study ('lectio divina') in monastic centres. The Bible, which had tended to be communal property, something which had been copied by monks in scriptoria and read aloud to the people, becomes instead, a possible private possession.<sup>16</sup> At first, the printed

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<sup>15</sup> It is called the King James Bible after King James I, who, following the proposal of the president of the Corpus Christi College to make the Authorized version, ordered on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1604, "that a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant can be made to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all Churches of England in time of Divine Service". This quotation, plus a full account of different versions of the Bible can be found in *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by Henry Snyder Gehman (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), entry on 'versions', pp. 971-983, p. 981.

<sup>16</sup> Although there is a real shift towards the Bible as private possession in the sixteenth century, in the Rule of St. Benedict (500 AD), monks are told to take a particular whole book (usually thought

bibles were not for private use, but were meant to duplicate the big chained manuscripts. Rather than for reading, they were more highly regarded as sacred status symbols.<sup>17</sup> When the Bible became more affordable and more accessible there came a demand for cheaper vernacular versions. This meant that ordinary people could own and read the Bible in their own homes. Reading was no longer the domain of the learned cleric, but of the gentleman and, in Protestant countries, of every Christian. The internalising and searching of the Scriptures, for Protestants, at least, was presented as a necessity for salvation.

Although the printing of the Bible meant, on the one hand, that with all the variation and uncertainty in tradition, scholars doubted whether the text could be fixed at all, on the other hand, and in another sense, stabilised the text. With printing, the inevitability of different versions through copyists' errors inevitable in Manuscript transmission disappeared and, for the first time, scholars could study from the same text. Printing also meant the standardisation of spelling and, moreover, new words, phrases and concepts had to be introduced to cope with an inadequate vocabulary. Luther's translation of the Bible produced practically a new German language and scholars date 'High German' from the publication of his Bible. Although the English language, by the sixteenth century, was already undergoing a rapid expansion of vocabulary, the biblical translations of Tyndale, Rogers, Coverdale and the King James Bible added together with the works of Elizabethan writers such as Shakespeare and Jonson, contributed both to the vast vocabulary of the seventeenth century and to an idea of language stabilisation. In

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to be from the Scriptures) and read it privately during Lent. So this monastic practice is a precursor of Protestant habits.

<sup>17</sup> See Saenger, P., 'The Impact of the Early Printed Page on the Reading of the Bible', *The Bible as Book: The First Printed Editions*, ed. by Paul Saenger and Kimberley Van Kampen (London, Delaware & Michigan: The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 1999), pp. 31-53.

the printed book, at least, are the origins of a new way of stabilising a text as the Massoretes tried to stabilise the scroll text by strict rules of copying, and this will produce yet another history of the history of the Book. However, the whole plethora of translations in the 1960's and 1970's has had the effect of destabilising the biblical text, much as the abundance of different printed and electronic versions of literary texts has supported post-modernist dismissal of authoritative texts.<sup>18</sup> Via computer screens, the vocabulary of scrolling is once again invoked.

There is another sense of the individual book, which attaches ownership to the author as if that had always existed. Paradoxically the inscription of prophetic books of single named authors such as *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* is one of the earliest ways where particular importance is attached to the apparently human source from which a book derives, and in the same context, importance is attached to the traditional insistence that the *Psalms* are written by David and the Pentateuch by Moses. With early writings, the ideas of printed words being the sole property of their author did not exist as it does today. Existence of the professed author, accurate information and author's consent could not be relied on. It is not until the eighteenth century with court cases over pirating, that such things as ownership of author and copyrights try to become established. In the eighteenth century ownership and authorisation were new ideas.<sup>19</sup> Once these ideas get underway from the eighteenth century onwards, then the Bible begins to

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<sup>18</sup> The translations that have made the greatest impact are; The Jerusalem Bible (1966), The New English Bible (1970), the Living Bible (1971), which is a paraphrase, Today's English Version (1976), (popularly known by its American title the Good News Bible), the New International Version, (1979), and the New Revised Standard Version (1989). Byron of course translated little known versions of the Scriptures in the appendix to *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* I and II, but read only the Authorised Version.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account of the history, culture and credibility of the printed book see, Johns, A., *The Nature of the Book: Print and knowledge in the Making* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). In particular chapter 5 'Faust and the Pirates', pp. 324-379, relates to piracy and the cultural construction of the printing revolution.

be viewed in those terms as well. There is a tendency to want to see the individual books of the Bible as having coherence given to them by their authors analogous to modern kind of literature and ideas of ownership. But the evidence accumulating in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, indeed from Richard Simon onwards, is that biblical books are not like that. Simon concluded that the Pentateuch, rather than being written by Moses, was a composite work. Biblical books may appear to some to be written by an author in the same sense as, for instance, *Tom Jones* is written by Henry Fielding, but they have come together over a long period of time, with transitions and juxtapositions, which makes for scepticism as to a single originating source. Curiously, the attack on individual authors can be seen as part and parcel of the attack on God's ultimate ownership or authority, because you might think of God as working perfectly, as opposed to making mistakes through secondary sources. Certainly, the notion of the individual book, as we later view it, goes with the idea of authorship.

However, the idea of author as owner of his book has famously been called into question. Roland Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' (1968), argues that the individual author is not significant, claiming that the author should not be regarded as the origin of his text or the authority for its meaning and that the term 'scriptor', as someone who is impersonal and simply writes for others, should be used instead. Later, disputing the idea of the author as owner of a book, Adams and Barker in their essay, 'A new Model for the Study of a Book' bring into focus all the other people involved in the history of a book from its inception by the author, through the publishers, printers, binders, suppliers to its readers. We could add to the list such people as translators, illustrators, photographers, cover designers, etc. Adams and Barker also take account of the book's survival beyond

the life time of the author or indeed current reader.<sup>20</sup> The other side of the argument of author as owner, is that a book is a material rather than an intellectual entity. The inscription on the inside cover denotes to whom it belongs and the owner can further personalise it by having it embossed, or leather bound, etc. However, in the eighteenth century, people had just begun to think of an author 'owning' his book and looked for coherence and structure derived from the author's intentions within the text. On the other hand, the notion of the unity of the Christian Bible as a whole will only be given if you think of the Holy Spirit as the author. If the Holy Spirit is not considered to be the author, then the Bible becomes a collection of individual books. For a Christian of traditional views this can be only half true, because a Christian considers the Bible to be both a unified whole and a collection of individual books.

We can hazard then that from Byron's point of view, the idea of the book is reinforced by the presumption of authorship since the Renaissance and accentuated by eighteenth-century insistence of books as materially owned things, owned by an author and, even, making a profit for him. That idea co-exists with the sense of the Scriptures also having a sort of shadowy human authorship behind each individual book. But biblical writers are not accessible in the way in which modern authors are. For instance, when Johnson wrote *The Lives of the Poets*, in the eighteenth century, there is a presumption that if you read the book, you can read the lives of the poets and there is some correlation between the two. But we do not know the lives of biblical writers such as Isaiah, or Jeremiah, apart from brief narrative fragments. Moreover those books are not conjoined in the same

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas R. Adams & Nicolas Barker, 'A New Model for the Study of a Book', essay in *A Potencie of Life*, pp. 5-43. Adams & Barker calls for a radical rethink of our idea of the book, referring to books along with other printed material as 'bibliographical documents', which takes into account the whole social and economic history of the book and of its continued survival.

sort of clear way as, for instance, the essays of Montaigne, in that they do not have a recognisable single speaking voice, or an identifying owning style, or even a clear structure. This might be a problem from the standpoint of a naive reader who wishes to have a clear image of God behind, say, Isaiah or Jeremiah, but from the standpoint of writers like Byron, books like *Isaiah* or *Jeremiah* offer a much more open, fluid model of what it is for an author to stand in relation to a book, than any classical text. So, if we look at the text of *Childe Harold*, for instance, in relation to some of the charges made against Byron that he is incoherent and inconsistent, and place the text not alongside such books as *Tom Jones*, but alongside biblical texts such as *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, or *Exodus*, it is possible to see in *Childe Harold*, as in the biblical books, kinds of models of unity which although existent are much less insistent. We can say then that Byron's idea of the book is reinforced by Renaissance, eighteenth-century ideas of the book in terms of authorship, ownership, coherence and emerging literary criticism, but he is also influenced by another model of a book, biblical books such as *Isaiah*, *Exodus*, the Law, the Gospels and the total book of the Bible which represents different models of structure of unity and form, in which he was patently interested and to which he was long and deliberately accustomed.

Having looked at how the Bible came about, we shall now take a closer look into how one of Byron's works came into being. We shall take for our example *Childe Harold*, because the most obvious thing to notice is that, like the Scriptures, it is written over time and is subject to modifications.<sup>21</sup> Byron starts writing *Childe Harold* on the last day of October 1809, inspired by his travels through Portugal,

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<sup>21</sup> Details of the *Childe Harold* chronology are taken from, Marchand, L.A., *Byron: A Biography*, Vols I & II (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1957, & Canada: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1957). Also, Page, N., *A Byron Chronology* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1988, & U.S.A. & Canada: G.K. Hall & Co., 1988).

Spain, Gibraltar, Malta, Greece and Albania, which had begun in June of the same year. The style of the Spenserian stanza that he adopted no doubt came from his reading parts of the *Faerie Queene* in *Elegant Selections*, an anthology he had carried over the mountains of Albania and eighteenth century poems in Spenserian such as Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* (1748). In the following weeks he added to the poem whenever his journey would allow. By December 30<sup>th</sup>, Byron, now in Athens, had finished the first canto and almost immediately began the second canto on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1810. Towards the end of February that year Byron wrote the stanzas in Canto II on his experiences of Albania. In March, before setting off for Constantinople, he finished the first draft of Canto II. His experiences in Turkey did not inspire him to continue with the manuscript which he laid aside until early 1811 when he slightly enlarged and revised it. Back in England, in July 1811, although, at first refusing to alter any of the stanzas expressing scepticism in religion and politics, he acquiesced to Dallas's persuasion, after which the first two cantos were submitted for publication.<sup>22</sup>

Having reluctantly consented to having his name on the title page he increasingly realised that he would be identified with his hero and this probably influenced him to modify his harsh pronouncement on the Convention of Cintra<sup>23</sup> and to omit the

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<sup>22</sup> Moore argues that Byron intended to add a note regarding scepticism to *Childe Harold* II, stanzas VIII & IX saying, "Let it be remembered that the spirit they breathe is desponding, not sneering, scepticism". The stanzas, for Moore, suggests a kind of belief, saying that whoever feels pain in doubting, has still within him the seeds of belief. Moore, T., *The Life Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 152.

<sup>23</sup> See Marchand's notes, Vol. I, pp. 280-1 & 295. Byron took the general Whig view that the war against Napoleon had been bungled. But he was particularly bitter in denouncing the generals who signed the Convention of Cintra, namely Kellerman and Wellesley, who agreed that the defeated French general Junot would be allowed to withdraw all his troops, artillery, equipment and cavalry with a safe convoy into France. Byron was particularly angry at the English court of inquiry which had whitewashed and exonerated the generals and approved of the Convention. The stanzas as Byron had written them in 1809, went beyond the current views of the opposition Whigs in condemning all parties concerned. (Marchand refers to Borst, pp 17-18). LJ. II, 47-48 Letter 26 Sept, 1811.



stanza referring to the 'unnatural' love practices of Beckford.<sup>24</sup> Byron eventually cut out three stanzas of personal attack on the generals and altered three others to a broader criticism of the Convention of Cintra.<sup>25</sup> His final addition was a stanza written as a tribute to Edleston, who had recently died. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* were eventually published in March 1812. It is not until May 1816 that Byron begins writing Canto III, having left England en route for Geneva the previous month, because of public animosity towards him, following his failed marriage. By 27<sup>th</sup> June he has completed 117 stanzas which had been written on scraps of paper as and when the inspiration struck him. By the 4<sup>th</sup> July he had completed rearranging and correcting the accumulated stanzas. Canto III was published on the 18<sup>th</sup> November of that year. Byron began Canto IV in June 1817, whilst he was living near Venice, and told Murray that he has completed it in 126 stanzas, but by 17<sup>th</sup> September, he told Murray the length was 150 stanzas. Canto IV was published on the 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1818. We can see from the above that Byron regularly revised his text. Yet, at the same time, he assumed that the various things he writes about could, in principle, be held together as single, even though they appear disparate. This could be thought of as a scriptural habit of mind, because from Byron's point of view the Scriptures is the largest literary example of the fundamental question for him which is whether everything is random or held together in some way. Although others, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, have a similar interest in the relationship between diversity and unity, they relate it to the unifying power of the imagination; the Scriptures matter far less to them. However, for Byron, the Scriptures always remain some kind of governing model.

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<sup>24</sup> See Marchand Vol. I, n., p. 295. The stanza containing the innuendo on Beckford was suppressed and did not appear during Byron's life. It was first published with the title "To Dives. A Fragment" in the Murray edition of Byron's works in 1833 (XVII, 241).

<sup>25</sup> Marchand, Vol. I, n. p. 295 refers to LJ. II, 47-8. Letter 26<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1811 and also refers to Dallas: *Correspondence*, pp. 181-3; and *Poetry*, II, 38-40.

The 'auld book' might be the best possible collection of words and it might, despite apparent incoherence, just hold together to show what reality was like. Byron is both sceptic and believer who is fascinated by the Scriptures, never denies that they might be true, and always, in any case, reads them.

Byron's great reluctance to change the stanzas in the early part of *Childe Harold* which suggests religious scepticism reveals his uncertainty, but, for Byron, uncertainty has a base in religious as well as sceptical procedures. Take, for instance, the four different versions of the Gospel. We could say that from a Christian perspective each is true because although there is a sacred truth, there is no definite way of getting at that sacred truth. However certainty must be uncertain about its own uncertainty and the tendency of the Scriptures to give multiple, not always consistent versions of the same narrative or doctrine is more linked to polysemy than the single-view scepticism of Gibbon or Hume.

Curiously, therefore, it is the Voltairian sceptic who is more likely to argue that Christianity holds a singular viewpoint and then try to destroy this by showing that the Scriptures present incompatible and diverse emphases. A Christian might argue that there would not be the multifarious, secular world that sceptics invoke, unless God was simultaneously One and Three. If the world is single, how are we to account for its diversity? If it is simply diverse, how are we to account for its intelligibility? It is not that Scriptures give a single view, whereas secular reading gives multiple views, because the Scriptures themselves simultaneously give a single view embodied in multiple views.

My larger point, of course, is that it is not too unlike reading *Childe Harold*. In this respect there is no hard and fast distinction between reading the Scriptures in

a literary way and reading them in a religious way. Of course, there is a distinction of whether the reader brings a religious belief and context to the text, but the actual reading of the text does not have a distinction because, like any text, it is shifty. It has differing perspectives, such as historical and transhistorical perspectives, and it substantiates that shiftiness. The fact that Byron edits his own text and allows you to see the previous version which he has modified, is, in this respect, quite like the Scriptures. Doubtless, it has something to do with his extremely self-conscious personality, but also, we hazard with some confidence, it has something to do with biblical models. Byron believes that it is reasonable to leave an altered model which cannot be fully read in a new version and yet, equally, neither can it be fully read in the old version. He leaves his text somewhere in-between and it is the model of the Scriptures primarily that authorise that slightly awkward phasing, or the crossing of territories. Byron, however, would not have been fully aware of this. Just as when he was writing *Cain*, for instance, although he would know that he was doing something religious in a sense, he would not consider too deliberately whether he was writing in a religious form or a literary one. In a similar vein, when reading the Bible, Byron, as with other readers, whether a believer of the Scriptures, or not, would look towards literary modes of understanding, simply because the Bible is literature and is text.

Naturally, within the Scriptures, belief is singularly important, nevertheless, the norm of belief in and through the Scriptures, is to be informed by human ways of understanding words which will be brought about by sophisticated models of interpretation. For the Christian believer, the Incarnation is the clue to reading the divine as flesh, who is in words, sentences, structures, literary metaphors, and so

forth. Incarnation is God coming into the world where he has become accessible to human modes of thought whilst, at the same time, lying outside them. From more of an orthodox Catholic viewpoint, the Incarnation authorises the sense of an intermediate world, where paint and colour and light and so forth can be a means of exposing the divine; a God who is manifest in the human pictorial realm. So, in that case, it is natural that history has produced Eastern icons and Western artists such as Fra Angelico, whose brilliant pictorial images illuminate and represent divine worlds. Protestantism, however, tends to focus on the Redemption, rather than Incarnation, and to place much less trust on the intermediary. However, if the Incarnation is left out of view, and simple belief only is needed to contemplate the divine, then the human realm can feel like an abandoned territory. It is as though God has to be taken out of it altogether, because there is nothing in the human territory which can be rendered sufficient or symbolic. That, in principle, leaves an unimaginable gap between the human world and the divine world. In this respect Byron is both Catholic and Protestant. He is Protestant in that he has a strong sense of that unimaginable gap, which he does not like and complains about, in *Cain* and elsewhere and yet, at the same time, he has a Catholic sensibility which sees meaning in the intermediate, in shadowings. It is as though Byron is a Protestant feeling his way into a Catholic sensibility. Byron is Protestant in that he genuinely feels the gap between the human order and the divine order and as though there are only two things in creation, the individual, human consciousness and God's consciousness, and yet, at the same time, he has a real sense of the intermediary world; a feminine generating world in particular, iconic, aesthetic, sculptural, but also material and historical world, which mediates the divine. He is interested and energised by both those different territories and although he does not fully articulate it and is not interested in doing so separately

since he distrusts all 'systems', he is constantly showing the form in his writings.<sup>26</sup>

It would be difficult to say the same about any of his British contemporaries.

Having set out in brief, the history of the idea of the book, I am now going to set up some notion of what a particular book is like. To do this I shall take two different models of Scriptural books, *Ezekiel* and the book of *Kings* and apply the formal models of those books to Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*. I have chosen *Ezekiel* because it is prophetic and Byron sometimes represents himself as a prophet, particularly, for instance, in the *Prophecy of Dante*; and, compared to many other biblical books, it is relatively coherently structured. It has a similar tone throughout, is written over a short period of time and discloses where it has been written in contrast to a book such as *Isaiah* which has been edited by a series of agglutinations and has a much less clearly identifiable owning voice. I have chosen to look at the four books of *Kings* as they are recorded in the Septuagint, that is the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> *Samuel* and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> *Kings*, because it is an historical narrative and that is the other side of *Childe Harold* in Byron's imagination, and because of Byron's continual interest in representing history. The structural problem that the book of *Kings* presents is pertinent. Is it to be regarded as one or four books? This presents similar problems of unity as *Childe Harold*. For instance, as we have noted, *Childe Harold* first existed as Canto 1 and II, then III, then IV and then the whole book is reissued as a four-canto poem. So both *Childe Harold* and the book of *Kings* have four parts and each one of those has some kind of unity, but each one is interconnected with the other and together form a larger

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel Watkins in his essay entitled 'The Ideological Dimensions of Byron's *The Deformed Transformed*' argues that religion serves essentially the same ideological function as art. It is a structurally coherent system that mirrors society's noble principles and at the same time creates social attitudes. Watkins says that the play captures the vital connection between religious belief and social reality. Essay in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 347-362.

kind of unity. I have chosen *Don Juan* because it is another of Byron's major works which has been written over time with modifications. Byron began writing *Don Juan* in July 1818. Cantos I and II are published in July 1819, Canto III in August 1821, with great success, after Byron had decided not to continue writing it. In July, 1821, he had already completed Canto V of *Don Juan*, and began writing Canto VI in April 1822 and completed Canto XII by the end of the year. He finished Canto XVI in May 1823 and, of course, never completed the work.

I am going to look briefly at the idea of the book of *Ezekiel* as it is presented firstly in the patristic criticism of Gregory the Great, then Calvin from the Reformation period, and lastly a modern critic, Brevard Childs. The ideas and notions generated by these three models of interpretation will be compared to the notion of *Childe Harold* as a book. Then I shall try out certain notions and ideas regarding the unity of a book in relation to the book of *Kings* and also compare those with *Childe Harold*. Although we shall be comparing text with text, i.e., *Ezekiel* and *Child Harold*, we shall also be comparing Byron as a poet, not with other poets, but with the biblical criticisms of Gregory an allegorist, Calvin an intelligent literalist and Childs a self-proclaimed canonical critic. We shall do this, however, because Byron read the Scriptures and is heir to a tradition of reading which was, as it came to him, originally allegorical and then Protestant (specifically Calvinistic in his case) and he knows about these models of historical criticism which are going to privilege putative distant source over actual text. He reads the text through a mixed tradition of criticism which is in a state of flux and tension as he writes. Childs, of all modern critics, is the one who has most restored credibility to the act of reading a biblical book as such rather than dissolving it in to sources, fragments, and socio-historical origin. He attends to

the text as such though he knows of objections to doing so, and this is what Byron does too.

The prophecy of *Ezekiel* is easily outlined by subject matter and chronology. It is the most coherent of the major prophetic books. The subject matter can be divided into Ezekiel's call (1:1-3:21); prophecies of judgement against Israel (3:22-24:27); oracles against the nations (25:1-32:32); and proclamation of hope (33:1-48:35). Chronologically the book is divided before and after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Chapters 1-24 cover the pre 586 ministry of Ezekiel, whilst chapters 33-48 cover his post-586 ministry. Although the structure of the book is easily defined, this does not mean that *Ezekiel* is an easy read. The content can pose difficulties with regard to comprehension or appreciation. Its fantastic visions are often obscure and there is a great deal of symbolism and allegory which will invite further allegorical interpretation. Some critics consider that the visions are often so obscure they become almost meaningless.<sup>27</sup> It is clear that they exercised a direct and powerful influence on such later works as the book of *Daniel*, the book of *Revelation*, Dante's *Paradiso*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the prophetic books of William Blake, and Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*. The effect of this particular book is less evident on Byron though he certainly knew it and Ezekiel's overwhelming interest in the Temple finds many echoes in Byron. But I choose it primarily as a model of a certain kind of book.

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<sup>27</sup> See *The Bible: Designed to be read as Literature*, Vol. I, ed. by Ernest Sutherland Bates (London: The Folio Society, 1958), p. 455.

We begin by looking at Gregory the Great.<sup>28</sup> Like all the early commentators, Gregory is an allegorist and uses allegorical interpretation extensively. Again, like most early commentators, he is an exegete so he interprets word by word and line by line. In that line by line commentary is the totality of the Scriptures which can, in Gregory's practice, be related morally to one's own life and also typologically to other parts of the Scriptures, especially the Gospel. His commentary on *Ezekiel* is presented in 22 homilies which cover chapters 1, 2, 3 and 40, only. Gregory's work is so detailed, that it would not be possible for him to cover the whole book, but this also suggests that he is not primarily concerned with the total shaping of a book. Gregory is used to a style of criticism across the Scriptures, where a verse is extracted from one text, say from the *Psalms*, and put alongside a verse from another text, which goes against the idea of the coherence of the controlling text in which the quotation is found. There has been much discussion about this kind of criticism. Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.350-428) an opponent of allegory says, in effect, that if you read, for instance, the *Psalms*, it is illicit to extract a verse and say, for example, that that verse refers to Christ, because it is simply an individual verse that may be referring to Christ. He asserts that you can only get the meaning through the context of the whole poem or, in this case, the whole psalm. However, other critics assert that the Church takes the position that interpretation can be made, both from reading the psalm as a whole, and from taking out individual verses and comparing them with other parts of the Scriptures as Christ Himself does. This argument in literary exegesis suggests that, on the one hand Gregory's biblical exegesis disregards the book because he takes out individual verses to comment upon, but on the other hand, his

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<sup>28</sup> All references to Gregory's commentaries are taken from *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great: On the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, translated by Theodosia Gray, introduction by Bishop Chrysostomos of Etna, ed. by Juliana Cownie (California: Centre for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990).



commentaries most famously on *Ezekiel* and *Job*, by their direction and title, presupposes the significance of a book. Attention given to the book of *Job*, with its central thrust of the ethical life in relation to the experience of suffering, is quite different in character to the book of *Ezekiel*, where the central interest lies in the temple as a model of inner and outer relationships.

Gregory is interested in the threshold and relationship between inner and outer modes. He was a monk who became a Pope, and so, in particular, he is concerned with the relationship between the call of a monk, or the inner, contemplative life, and the life of a Bishop, or the outer, pastoral life, which is the subject of his *Cura Pastoralis*. His interest in the relationship between inner and outer modalities is clearly evident in his commentary on *Ezekiel*. For instance, he takes what has now become the customary interpretation of the four living creatures in *Ezekiel* chapter 1 as the four Gospel writers. For him, their faces and wings represent their inner life. Their faces relate to their faith and their wings to contemplation. Their outer life is shown by their hands under their wings, which relate to their active life as preachers. A balance between their inward, holy desires and their outward, pious acts is maintained because the creatures go and return. He explains this as the evangelists, having studied the desire to do good works, find it is necessary to go out and put those thoughts into action, and having done so return, once more, to contemplation. Gregory suggests another sense in which the creatures go and return. The evangelists go out to preach in order to attract the faith and return by rendering these virtues to God, not to themselves. The fact that Gregory allows for different interpretations shows that he sees the text as polysemous and multivalent. We can see this again in his different interpretations of the various aspects of the temple in *Ezekiel* chapter 40. For instance, in Homily

VIII, he sees the gates as holy preachers, with the inner gate signifying the Church, as one of the preachers. In Homily IX, he suggests that the inner gate could be taken as the New Testament and the outer as the Old. Later, in Homily X, he draws attention to his two differing interpretations, returns to his original interpretation and expands upon it.

Although Gregory's interpretation of the temple is extremely detailed, when he talks about the construction of the temple, in essence, he sees the outer walls as the intersection between the inner world, a citadel of God's presence, and an outer world which faces it. He takes for granted that the reader will make a simple connection between the literal sense which sees the temple as a physical building to the typological idea of the temple as Christ's body which is inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Since Christ's body is the Church, the reader makes a simple leap from the physical building as Christ's body to the Church and to the individual body of an ordinary Christian. So then, anything describing the temple becomes a model for an innerness and outerness with many implications. Thus, Gregory is really the heir to the depiction in the Bible of the symbolic temple, because the relationship between inner and outer is one of the main things that the temple comes to symbolise, particularly for the Christian reader who knows Christ's identification of the temple with the body. There is, of course, the external, the historical, first temple, a building which is destroyed, but Ezekiel takes for granted that the temple is an extra-temporal image of the meeting place between the divine and the human. Because Gregory sees Ezekiel's temple as a model for innerness and outerness, he is not concerned with how the book develops, its structure, or its unity. From Gregory's point of view, he can comment on any part of *Ezekiel* and

he will straightway be at the heart of the book. This is one model for attending to the structure of a book.

Calvin takes a different approach.<sup>29</sup> Like Luther, Calvin rejects allegory in favour of a more historical approach. He, like Luther, stresses a subjective element of interpretation, which he says is the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Calvin claims that this witness serves to confirm within a Christian that his interpretation is correct. This way of thinking, however, reveals within Calvin an anxiety which attaches to tradition. For if the Holy Spirit, as the highest possible authority, has confirmed the interpretation, then there is no room for alternative ideas. However, Calvin has to protect the idea of individual inspiration guaranteed directly by the Holy Spirit and not needing the Church's tradition, but at the same time has to prevent any incorrect readings that he would not like. Paradoxically, therefore, unlike Gregory, he does not think one text has several possibilities. Calvin takes a hermeneutical rather than an exegetical approach to interpretation, to the extent that he sometimes homogenises different versions, puts them together and then commentates on that. As a result he will talk about a whole, sometimes of his own invention. For instance he does not give a commentary on *Genesis* or *Deuteronomy* separately, but gives a commentary on a single history, insofar as he has assembled it into a coherent, chronological history. This recalls Augustine, for instance, who wished to produce a single homogenised text from the different versions of an event in the Gospels. In this respect Calvin is someone who recognises the multiplicity of the Scriptures yet at the same time tries to make them more coherent than they actually are.

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<sup>29</sup> All references to Calvin's commentaries are taken from Calvin J., *Commentaries on the first twenty chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, now first translated from the original Latin and collated with the French version by Thomas Myers, Vols. I & II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948).

Calvin's commentaries on *Ezekiel* are particularly interesting because it is his last work. Due to sickness, he was unable to complete the commentary, finishing at chapter 20. We find that, in his commentaries, Calvin looks for certain of his concerns as hooks to which he can hang certain basic ideas. One such hook is predestination, or the doctrine of the elect.<sup>30</sup> Calvin stresses this arbitrariness of God in 'choosing the elect' when he talks about Ezekiel's calling as a prophet. He argues that there was nothing special about Ezekiel to make him commendable. He was one of many exiles, with rough speech and outward appearance, but what makes Ezekiel different is that he was called to become a prophet. It is his calling only that separates and elevates Ezekiel from the rest of the exiles. The arbitrary grace of God towards elected individuals is just one point that Calvin argues, at times, quite forcibly, within the commentary, usually in opposition to certain Roman Catholic doctrines. In some respects this is another way in which he denies the multiplicity of the text, because he is denying the fact that the surface of the text moves about, changes and can appear different things to different people and yet still retain its overall meaning. We can say then that Calvin's strong sense of history and of doctrine interferes with his alertness to the given text of the Scriptures. Gregory, like Calvin, has his own pre-occupations but is much less concerned with historical chronology and more open to multiple meanings. He does not attend to the whole book, but would not presume to alter it as Calvin does.

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<sup>30</sup> Predestination is the arbitrary will of God to save an elect individual. The subject is extremely complex and through the ages the church, especially in the West, has laboured to understand the Apostle Paul's doctrine of predestination in the biblical books of *Romans* 8 & 9 and *Ephesians* 1. A definition of predestination can be traced back to Augustine, and Calvin was among leading Protestant reformers such as Luther and Zwingli who taught the Augustinian doctrine of predestination. For Calvin it was an integral element in Christian experience. Calvin went further than Augustine in arguing the doctrine of reprobation.

For our final model, we shall look at Brevard Childs,<sup>31</sup> whose extensive writings, particularly in the 1970's, were instrumental in formulating the school of canonical criticism. Although canonical criticism developed as a reaction against historical criticism, Childs does not reject the reconstruction of modern historical criticism. He accepts its use in showing how various documents developed, but he sees little merit in this method as a true hermeneutic in itself. He asks the Christian community to accept the wisdom and Spirit-led authority of its ancestors in shaping the canonical books and to interpret the Bible in its final canonical shape. Texts come from the past, but speak in and to the present. In this respect he is like Gregory, but he is not an allegoriser. The Bible is treated as a unified whole and disagreements are neither rejected nor homogenised, but simply set aside. Instead a common thread is looked for by calling upon other relevant parts of Scripture in order to find links between them, unifying the text. Childs sees a close continuity between the originating oracles of *Ezekiel* and the final canonical shape of the book. Certain features in Ezekiel's prophetic role were, he argues, easily adapted by the later canonical process for its own purposes.

Childs sees the book of *Ezekiel* as radically theocentric and so when Ezekiel talks about God's plans for Israel, he does so in ways which goes beyond the general notions of time and space. Even though what he says is placed within a chronological framework, our temporal understanding is transcended. Similarly, Ezekiel's role is described as a watchman. He speaks entirely of what God has said to him. He is not asked to intervene in God's judgement. Childs refers to

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<sup>31</sup> All references to Childs commentary on Ezekiel is taken from Childs, B.S., *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1979).

him as moving in an atemporal dimension of divine decision. Because of these atemporal features, Ezekiel's message, that of God's challenge for Israel to 'know that I am Yahweh', serves equally well for successive generations and so is easily adapted for later canonical purposes. But because of the atemporal nature of his message, it is delivered in terms of symbolic actions, visions, allegories and analogies. For instance, in chapter 17, Zedekiah's politics were condemned by means of an eagle allegory, and Jerusalem's unfaithfulness in chapter 16, is figured as an ungrateful foundling. In chapter 20, the Exodus, wilderness and conquest became grouped into typological patterns of the past and of the future. But this does not mean that Ezekiel's message is an unreal idealisation of history. Reality is not the issue. What is at stake is that Yahweh's message concerning divine matters should be conveyed in ways that people could comprehend. His use of analogy helped Ezekiel portray a divine message, the unchanging will of God, both to present and future generations.

A study of the structure of *Ezekiel* reveals that the editor has expanded the original text to include new historical events and to refer to other passages of Scripture. Childs agrees with Zimmerli<sup>32</sup> when he says that this later expansion has reshaped the text by means of interpolation, further commentary and by reorganising the structure. Where Childs differs from Zimmerli however, is that Zimmerli sees the expansion as an enrichment to the text, whereas Childs sees it as an integral part. Perhaps it is best summed up by Child's comment that a literary entity has an integrity of its own which is not to be identified by the sum of its parts. Childs cites three ways in which the text of *Ezekiel* has been expanded.

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<sup>32</sup> Walter Zimmerli was interested in showing the form-critical method for Old Testament theology. His writings, during the 1960's and 70's included numerous articles and a massive commentary on *Ezekiel*. He attempted a continual critical dialogue with all his predecessors and also presented his own thorough solutions to the book's problems.

Firstly, and one of the most remarkable features of *Ezekiel*, is the way in which Ezekiel's message quite often depends upon interpretation within the Bible itself. This comes about because *Ezekiel* was not only influenced by Israel's ancient traditions, but also by its sacred writings. So when *Ezekiel* portrays the message, it interprets it by looking at other parts of Scripture. Childs cites many instances, but one such instance is *Ezekiel's* portrayal of Gog and Magog, chapter 38-39, which is influenced by *Isaiah 5*, *Jeremiah 4* and *Psalms 46*. The expansion is not just an aid to understanding, but forms an integral part of the message itself.

Another instance of Ezekiel calling upon other parts of Scripture is in the way he re-uses images. Although the images sometimes take on a different meaning, they still have the echoes of other parts of Scripture. Secondly, the original text has been expanded by making use of later events, as in chapter 12, where Ezekiel's sign-act has been expanded to include references to Zedekiah's attempt to escape. The editor uses this historical instance as a way of confirming Ezekiel's prophecy of imminent judgement. Lastly, the reorganisation of the structure itself can have an interpretative function. For instance, Ezekiel's role as a watchman appears to originate in an oracle in chapter 33. But in the present structure this oracle is combined with a section from chapter 18 and placed in chapter 3, where it is used to introduce Ezekiel's ministry. This reordering of material helps describe Ezekiel's role by placing it in an overarching category which in turn helps us to interpret Ezekiel's ministry as a whole. Childs, therefore, can confidently accept the unity of a Scriptural book which has come about through dispersed processes and this unity is directly bound up with his interpretation of the text. Unlike historical criticism therefore, which tends to dissolve a book into various historical layers, Childs attends to the whole book as it is and does so, perhaps, more than

some of the other figures that we have mentioned. Doubtless the more complex kinds of unity associated with Romantic and Post-Romantic criticism have, however indirectly, influenced Childs.

Having looked at the way in which Gregory, Calvin and Childs attend to the structure of a book, we shall now compare this with the way in which Byron writes *Childe Harold*. We begin with Gregory. We noticed that Gregory was happy with the multiplicity of the text. Also, that he was not so much interested in the way in which the book progressed or its chronological structure. The whole point of *Ezekiel*, for Gregory, is that it depicts a relationship between inner and outer modes, particularly concerning the temple as symbolising the inner body. We can certainly see something of this in *Childe Harold*. For instance, in the Coliseum stanzas, Canto IV, starting at 128, he is standing in the Coliseum, at the centre of a vast, round building at night. He projects himself backwards in time to the Gladiator, who is suffering, surrounded by a hostile crowd, parted from his wife and children and unable to take revenge. In stanza 143, he draws parallels between the Coliseum as a structure, a ruin, and the Coliseum as a body, a skeleton. Growing around the ruined walls of the Coliseum are leafy branches and he describes these in stanza 144 as, "The garland-forest, which the grey walls wear,/Like laurels on the first Caesar's head". He sees the Coliseum as a gigantic skull, so he is putting the skull, the head and the huge building together. This is not unlike Ezekiel because he takes for granted that the temple is an image of the human or, to put it another way, is an image of consciousness and that there is a balance between inner and outer worlds. So we have the same kind of thought, the building as consciousness, in *Ezekiel* as it is in *Childe Harold*, and a kind of allegorical attitude which reads the one as the other. Again, Byron has similar



ideas about the Parthenon, when having contemplated it, in Canto II, stanza 5, he looks at the skull amongst the ruins and says, "Remove yon skull from out the scatter'd heaps:/Is that a temple where a God may dwell?" This is exactly the same idea as in *Ezekiel* where the temple and the skull are put together. The temple is that which is inhabited by God, the skull is that which is inhabited by consciousness, or intelligence, but both are ruins and both are parallel. That is like Christ's temple as a building, and as a body where the Holy Spirit lives, which is parallel to *Ezekiel* where he reads the temple primarily in terms of God's inhabitation of an interior. Doubtless Byron must have been influenced directly here by Scriptural ideas and traditions of scriptural interpretation, but these find expression in new but comparable forms. The fundamental image, and the ease of movement from building to consciousness and back again in Byron's thought is Hebraic. It is also not far removed from thinking of a building as a body to thinking of a book as being like a body. It can be thought of as an organic model, having a single life, from writing, through publishing to readership to 'life after the text', in its various forms. It is interesting, therefore, that Ezekiel is instructed to eat a book (*Ezekiel* 3:1-3) so that his body and the book become a single entity.

Although not necessarily directly applicable to the way Gregory attends to a book, it is nevertheless fascinating to note, whilst we are discussing Gregory's regard for the relationship between inner and outer worlds, that both Gregory and Byron are concerned with a balance between inner and outer modalities. Gregory is concerned in delineating the idea of a proper balance between the two and sees *Ezekiel* as imaging this proper balance. For instance, the creatures go and return. What they think is balanced by what they do. Byron, however, delineates an imbalance between the inner and outer. We can see this in the number of times he

discusses his inner thoughts and feelings as being unable to match what he sees and what he says. For instance, in Canto IV, in stanzas 153-159, when Harold/Byron is at St. Peter's, Rome, twice he talks about the inner mind having to expand enormously to fully appreciate the implications of the things that it sees.

In stanza 155 when he enters the building he says:

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 later, in stanza 158:

Not by its fault—but thine: Our outward sense  
Is but a gradual grasp—and as it is  
That what we have of feeling most intense  
Outstrips our faint expression; even so this  
Outshining and o'erwhelming edifice  
Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great  
Defies at first our Nature's littleness,  
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate  
Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate.

Here it takes time for the inner life to adjust to the outer and be in balance with form. In Canto III, stanza 97, there is an imbalance because his inner thoughts cannot find an outward expression; and in Canto IV, stanza 93, everything is under a false sense of balance:

What from this barren being do we reap?  
Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,  
Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,  
And all things weigh'd in custom's falsest scale;

These words are substantially, in fact, taken from Cicero. In his notes Byron comments that, although eighteen hundred years have elapsed since Cicero wrote this, the imperfections of humanity still remain, and that the words apply equally well to the time of his own writing. The text goes on to say that people do not like to think too much about their actions or even the opinions they have formed, in case they see them for the wrong they really are. In other words, the inner world

of thoughts and feelings is deliberately kept in false proportion to the outer world of reality.

Our enquiry into the way Calvin attends to a book found that he sometimes, like certain Gospel readers, homogenises differing versions and also that he does not allow for other interpretations. In doing so, he denies the multiplicity of a text. In a sense it is true that the Scriptures are showing a single thing, but the actual surface of the script is not like that at all, as it is always giving multiple versions of things, most obviously in the four versions of the single 'Gospel'. Although Byron is happier with the multiplicity within the Scriptures unlike Calvin, nevertheless, Byron, like Calvin, values lucidity in writing, although he is not always lucid. He can make many different utterances on a single subject and this gives rise to the accusation that he is inconsistent. This charge of Byron's authorial inconsistency, his view of the world as multiple, is not the same, although it is related to, the reader's act of interpreting a single text in multiple ways.

Byron's authorial inconsistency can be seen, for instance in *Childe Harold*, Canto III, stanzas 2-7, which we have looked at in some detail in the previous chapter. We noted that in these stanzas when the narrator addresses the question 'What am I?', the 'I' is much like the Scriptures inasmuch as it is unsure, changeable, multiplied and fragmented. Firstly, he is as a weed that has been flung from the rock at the mercy of the sea; he is someone who sang in his youth; he has had days of joy as well as pain; he considers himself to be nothing; he has thought too long and darkly, and he is someone who has changed. There are many such instances, for example at the end of Canto III, stanzas 113 & 114, Byron repeats the phrase

“I have not loved the world, nor the world me”, yet at the beginning of Canto IV, stanza 9, when he thinks back to where he was born he says, “Perhaps I loved it well”.

This authorial inconsistency is not the same as Byron altering or modifying the meaning of his writing. In this respect Byron’s writing is less like the Scriptures than other poets, such as Blake, or Wordsworth, or even Pope. For instance the Scriptures are put together by intermediate and final editing, when new sections of the text get added. In the final editing there is a tendency to go back to earlier parts and modify the meaning. Although Byron always has multiple opinions, he is quite happy to write straight off and write poems that seem to represent a single stance. Hence, however single in intention, Byron would not be disconcerted by finding other meanings in what he proposes. This is unlike Blake, for instance, who can return to his poems and alter their meaning, moving poems from ‘Innocence’ to ‘Experience’; or Wordsworth who revised the whole of the *Prelude*; or even Pope who writes the first three books of the *Dunciad*, then later book four, and then reissues the poem going back over the first three books, in an attempt to make the whole work homogenous.

We noted that Calvin looks for certain of his concerns as hooks to which he can hang certain basic ideas. One such hook is predestination and hence Calvin focuses on the arbitrariness of God in calling Ezekiel to become a prophet. It is interesting to note that when Calvin talks about Ezekiel’s calling as a prophet he uses the term “common herd” (p.110), to describe the exiles, from whom Ezekiel is exalted. Similarly, Byron’s Childe Harold, thinking of himself as an exile in Canto III, stanza 12, says that he “knew himself the most unfit/Of men to herd

with Man; with whom he held/Little in common". Byron's sense of aristocracy here joins with Calvin's sense of an elect. In a way, it is a double moot to Byron's formulation of being part of an elite. One comes from a kind of Jewish Calvinist election and one comes from the sense of being an aristocrat, and both separate themselves from the common herd. So, apart from his aristocracy giving him a sense of elitism, his pose of disdain is partly also of one who, in his earlier years, is used to hearing the idea of himself being part of the elect, which, of course, he transfers negatively. If he is damned, he is elect as damned, which gives him a sort of elitist status amongst the damned because of this certainty and his maintained style in the face of it. In both cases he is elevated from part of the common herd. There is a certain parallel here between *Ezekiel* and *Childe Harold* then, because in both texts the main characters are elevated from the 'common herd'.

*Ezekiel* is also much about the personality of Ezekiel, who, as an exile, suffered while making a prophetic stand about the condition of the world. Ezekiel is author of the text, but he is also a character who acts symbolically within it. *Childe Harold* has, similarly, the Byronic Harold, a mix of the author's personality and a projection of it who, in Canto IV particularly, becomes a prophetic personality in a way formed by calamities, who talks both about himself and the condition of the world. Further comparisons can be made between the text of *Ezekiel* and that of *Childe Harold*. For instance, Ezekiel's message is much about the temple and the city of Jerusalem and of their destruction. At the end, he visualises a new temple and a new city of Jerusalem and the restoration of the people. This can be compared with Canto IV stanzas, 154 and 155, when Harold/Byron is contemplating St. Peter's, Rome, he thinks back to the old temple

of *Ezekiel* and its destruction and the destruction of Jerusalem. His language is biblical. He refers to Zion, a term used to describe both the temple, the city and in eschatological terms, to the new, heavenly city of Jerusalem and the restoration of the people before God.<sup>33</sup>

But thou, of temples old, or altars new,  
Standest alone—with nothing like to thee—  
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.  
Since Zion's desolation, when that He  
Forsook his former city, what could be,  
Of earthly structures, in his honour piled,  
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,  
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled  
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

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  
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.

In the first stanza, Byron is imagining the destruction of the second temple in AD70 and wondering where it could recycle itself and hence thinks of St. Peter's as, in effect, the third temple. This is a way of thinking which is in continuity with *Ezekiel*, because Ezekiel is present at the destruction of the first temple and imagines an ideal form of the second, even though he did not see its actual construction. Byron adds to Ezekiel's prophecy by articulating what Ezekiel did not see, which is the destruction of the second temple and imagines the temple now being transmuted into this different form of St. Peter's. So, this, in a way, is Byron seeing himself continuing a sort of prophetic history. In the second stanza,

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<sup>33</sup> Zion is one of the hills on which Jerusalem stood. It was the seat of a Jebusite fortress which David captured and renamed the city of David and to where he brought the Ark. The Ark was later taken by Solomon to the temple which he built on Mt. Moriah and the name Zion came to comprehend both the city and the temple. In eschatological passages Zion becomes the equivalent of the heavenly Jerusalem. The text reveals that Byron refers to Zion in all three senses.

Byron, again, joins together different orders of modalities. Earlier we noted Byron joining together a scriptural, biblical, Judaic, Calvinist elect and an aristocratic one; in this instance Byron joins together a Romantic aesthetic of the sublime, where the mind expands to fill the spot, and a Judaic Christian image, the Mosaic/Sinai image, of face-to-face encounter.

Lastly, we looked at Brevard Childs. Childs does not dissect *Ezekiel* into parts, but treats the text as a unified whole, relevant to today's readers and the readers of any 'today'. Although *Ezekiel* adheres to a chronological framework, much of its substance appears incoherent. Childs argues that the reason for this is that Ezekiel talks of things beyond our own understanding of time and space and that the local historical reality of what he is saying is not important. To enable Ezekiel to articulate these things, he talks in terms of allegories, visions and analogies. How then does this compare with the way in which *Childe Harold* is written and how should we read it?

Firstly we see that *Childe Harold* is also written in a chronological framework. It can be thought of as a sort of travelogue. Like Ezekiel he is exiled, but he travels the world, describes what he sees and discusses his thoughts and feelings as he goes. Despite this he takes a transhistorical stance, and talks of transcendent things, as when he contemplates St. Peter's, Rome, or even at the end of the Coliseum where he says:

But there is that within me which shall tire  
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;  
Something unearthly, which they deem not of,  
Like the remembered tone of a mute lyre,  
Shall on their softened spirits sink, and move  
In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love. (IV. 137. 1229-1233)

There is a kind of parallel here in that Byron wants his text to have a quasi-salvific effect, to modify future history after he is dead. This is not what prophets intended, but it is how prophetic writings were received. Like Ezekiel, Byron is trying to describe things that go beyond our notion of time and space. To try to articulate these things *Childe Harold*, like *Ezekiel*, uses allegories, analogies and visions, although Byron avoids the Keats/Shelley type of vision, where something is actually transcended in front of you, whilst in a trance-like state. Rather, he uses the rhetorical 'visio', where something directly in front of you is addressed. The prophets use the rhetorical visio, such as when they imagined the future collapse of Babylon. Byron uses it when he says, for instance, in the penultimate stanza of the poem, "and my visions flit/Less palpably before me". We can further compare this with Ezekiel, whose role is defined as a watchman, who uses an allegory of an eagle, and whose initial vision begins with a windstorm, an immense cloud with flashing lightening and four creatures, which has amongst others, an eagle's face; with *Childe Harold's*, Canto III, stanza 96:

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.  
But where of ye, O tempests! is the goal?  
Are ye like those within the human breast?  
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

There is the same sort of ingredients that we find in *Ezekiel*, the tempest, the cloud, the lightening and the soul, Byron as a watchman, and an eagle. The image of a watchman is also found in *Psalms* 130, where watchmen wait for the morning. The eagle in *Ezekiel* forms part of a political allegory, but in the above text Byron is fusing a biblical image, that of a dove flying away to find rest (*Psalms* 55), with quite a different image, that of an eagle in a storm seeking rest in a high nest. The



charge made against *Childe Harold* that it is, at times, incoherent, is the same as the charge made against *Ezekiel*, and yet, in both cases, they are trying to articulate things that often go beyond our understanding of time and space, or using new collocations of images. Also, Byron's work may be considered incoherent, because it is held together in implicit, rather than explicit kind of ways and structure. For instance, Byron's use of the rhetorical 'visio' is different to the Romantic type of vision, and in this way Byron is not really like a German Romantic. Rather, he has older and looser models of unity in mind. His models of construction belong to rhetorical, classical and Scriptural models and yet, at the same time, he may be influenced by such models of construction like Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, for example — a kind of fusion of constructional models.

Childs sees a common thread, or overriding message emerging in *Ezekiel*, that of God's challenge to the Israelites to 'know that I am Yahweh'. He argues that it doesn't matter, therefore, how the text has come about, because the central meaning remains the same throughout and is easily adapted for successive generations. When *Childe Harold* is read in the way that Childs advocates for reading *Ezekiel*, that is, as a unified whole, then a common thread does emerge. The historical and especially the prophetic books of the Bible, show a succession of disasters to Israel and to the surrounding great empires of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, against this they put the everliving being of Yahweh and his saving, constructing purposes for Israel. This is a fundamental message of the Scriptures and is also the message in *Ezekiel*. *Childe Harold* shows exactly the same sequence of empires coming and going, of history as ruin, but against this Byron does not put a creating God, or indeed a revolutionary hope, but he asserts

himself. He believes that there is something within him which is beyond 'Torture and Time' and he associates this with great pictorial and tragic Art. Byron sees this poetic elegiac record of human destruction in *Childe Harold* as rooted in all previous texts (the moral of all tales) classical and Christian, which has been mediated to him especially by Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), which is itself a translation of Juvenal's tenth satire. In other words, when Byron writes history as ruin, he is subconsciously drawing upon the Scriptures, but he is also subconsciously drawing upon writers like Johnson and Juvenal, so that his writing becomes a version of theirs. That is not unlike the way *Ezekiel* picks up on previous passages of the Scriptures, reiterating them in a slightly changed context, whilst at the same time maintaining the central meaning. The unity of the book of *Childe Harold* is, to that extent, like the unity of *Ezekiel*, and finds foundations in ancient habits of allegorical reading.

Byron also uses a different model of aesthetic unity, one of a pattern of parallel images which bind the whole together. It may be in small words and phrases such as in *Childe Harold*, where Byron re-uses the image of a reed to depict the fragility of life; Canto II. 3. 27, "Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built on reeds"; and Canto IV. 22. 196, "And perish on the reed on which they leant". It can also be found in more extensive patterns of parallel images. For instance, when we read of the gladiator's suffering and death for the sake of the Romans' amusement and being unable to take revenge, we are also reading of the dying bull, slaughtered for the crowd's amusement, in the Spanish bullfight in Canto I; and at the same time we are also reading of the hurt and suffering of Byron who was unable to take revenge, parted from his wife and child and attacked by a hostile English crowd for amusement because they revelled in social

gossip. These instances are not just closely related, they are directly parallel.

Whether we are reading about the bullfight or the gladiator, Byron is representing his own experience of suffering. We can interpret each one by reference to the other. This kind of aesthetic unity which comes from a sort of interlocking of images is, of course, completely different to the aesthetic unity which Brevard Childs identifies, such as message, theme, stance, proclamation, but both are apparent in *Ezekiel* and *Childe Harold*.

Childs also identifies within *Ezekiel* the interpolation of sections forming an interpretative role which unites rather than disrupts the text. The interpolation of the mount Parnassus and Houris stanzas in Canto I of *Childe Harold* has exactly the same effect. Initially the reader is taken aback by suddenly reading about Greece and about Houris in the middle of a discussion on Spain and in particular on the merits of Spanish women. The Houris stanza however serves to provide the writer with the interpretative role of being an international connoisseur of women and the mount Parnassus stanza serves to confirm that the text is written from first-hand knowledge and experience, which fuses the imaginary world of the ruins with actual Greece, is the way that the Scripture fuse transcendent truths and historical circumstance. Read in this way, rather than regarding the interpolations as a disruption to the text, they serve as an early introduction to aid the interpretation of the rest of the text. In this instance disruption can be seen to have a unifying effect.

It is interesting to note, however, that fragmentation, disruption and not obvious connection, is tolerated in works that is trusted to have a single author, because the single author gives it some kind of unity. This applies both to the Scriptures and

to *Childe Harold*. For instance, if the Bible is considered as one book, it is so because the Holy Spirit is considered as the single author. In the case of *Childe Harold* it is because whatever is going on in the text, the inconsistencies, disruptions, fragmentation, and so on, is considered to be authorised by the author, which is parallel to God authorising the writing of the Scriptures. This is different from such works as Keats' *Hyperion*, for example, where Keats is at great pains not to stress himself as the author. In such a case, paradoxically, the thrust of the emphasis must be on the unity within the work itself, in some demonstrable fashion, whereas, if you emphasise the self in the writing, as Byron does in *Childe Harold*, then there are going to be arguments over authorship, about how much is to be attributed to Byron and how much is Childe Harold. However, Byron's foregrounding of the projective personality allows and congruates kinds of fragmentation and also invites cross referral of apparently disconnected things, trusting (as Childs does) that somehow or other they will be connected after further reading and that seemingly disparate attitudes belong together. So, the idea of a single author gives a kind of unity, to both *Childe Harold* and the Scriptures, which, in other respects, are very loosely unified.

Our comparison has found that there are certain parallels between *Ezekiel* and *Childe Harold*. Both have main characters that have been forced into exile. Both contain despair and destruction, wars, tyrannical rulers, but towards the end, both look towards a prophetic future state where love prevails over the once hard-hearted people. Moreover, Byron sees himself as continuing a sort of prophetic history and wants his text to have a salvific effect. Against the notion of history as ruin, he asserts himself, (rather than Yahweh), which he associates with art. In writing history as ruin, Byron is drawing upon both Christian and classical texts

and in this respect the aesthetic unity of *Childe Harold* is like *Ezekiel* in that they both draw upon previous texts and reiterate them in a slightly changed context, whilst at the same time maintaining the central meaning. We noticed also that Byron fuses different orders of modalities. He fuses biblical modalities with completely different ones.

However, there are times when Byron is influenced by certain specific scriptural motifs that they take on comparable forms. A good example is the placing of the skull and the temple together when considering the relationship between inner and outer modalities. In the light of our comparisons, if we consider the charges often levelled against *Childe Harold* that it is inconsistent, and, at times, almost incoherent, and place this text alongside *Ezekiel*, which has the same charges levelled against it, we see that both are assembled, in some respects, in strikingly similar ways. Both use the same techniques to describe atemporal notions, such as the use of allegories, analogies and the rhetorical 'visio', and both books have the same openness, fluidity and multiplicity, with apparently disruptive interpolated stanzas actually forming an interpretative role. We can suggest then that in *Childe Harold*, Byron's model of structure of unity and form, do not so much come from the usual models, such as the classics, with which we have been taught to identify, but, at least in the large part, from an altogether different model, that of the Scriptures, where the structures of unity and form, although existent, are much less insistent.

We have been discussing in the previous paragraphs models of unity within a prophetic book, what structures operate to hold a book together. With this in mind we shall now look at the historical books of *Samuel* and *Kings*. *Samuel* and *Kings*

are a good example because whilst we are looking at the structures or the glue that holds a book together, we are also aware that these books, once considered a unity, have been divided into separate books. The books of *Samuel* have varied in name and shape throughout their existence. Originally they formed a single book, which was mentioned by both Jerome and Eusebius. They were divided into two books around 70 A.D., and were then called 1 and 2 *Kingdoms*; and 1 and 2 *Kings* were called 3 and 4 *Kingdoms*. The Vulgate in the beginning also referred to them as 1, 2, 3 and 4 *Regnorum*, which in time gave way to *Regum*. Since the fifteenth century, Hebrew manuscripts and printed editions have followed the practice of presenting the original single unit as 1 and 2 *Samuel* and 1 and 2 *Kings*.<sup>34</sup> So the emphasis, as registered in the title, shifts from the place, a kingdom, to the person, a king, which appropriately highlights the fact that the business of 1 and 2 *Samuel* is firstly the supervision by Samuel of the introduction of the monarchy to Israel and his anointing its first two kings, Saul and David. The books of 1 and 2 *Kings* tell the history of Israel from the end of King David's reign to the fall of the kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians and the exile of a significant number of Judeans to Babylon. *Kings*, therefore, tells a story of approximately 400 years of Israelite history and it is the nature of the kingship that appears to be the glue that holds the books together, rather than the events themselves.

The way in which the book of *Kings* records Israelite history is, roughly speaking, a co-operation of three things. Firstly, there is a loyalty to contingency, both in the actual mess of history, which does not appear to be sacred or under divine control, but is an apparent haphazardness of events. Loyalty to contingency also

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<sup>34</sup> For a further discussion on the title of the books of *Samuel*, including dating, author, composition and theology, see *The Jerome Biblical Commentary, Volume 1, The Old Testament*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (London, Dublin, Melbourne: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., 1968), pp. 163-165.

takes the form of the mess of what is recorded about history, the muddle of material available to the scribes. Secondly, there is a patterning which comes from literary device, namely the regnal formulae giving details of various reigns and the judgement formula with their evaluation of the individual king's religious performance. These formulae tie things together and make things repeated in various kinds of ways. It allows also for patterns in history, which to some extent are found in the main Deuteronomic pattern where good or bad things will happen according to the religious performance of the king. Thirdly, the writer trusts that there is a pattern in the chaos. This pattern may come from outside the chaos through Yahweh's direct intervention. Hence, though Israel's history is chaotic where everything appears to go wrong, yet at the same time Israel has survived and there is the sense that, come what may, God's purposes, however strangely, will persist.

There are, of course, different models of contingency. The story of King David, for example, is open to contingency, but is not a story about contingency. It is a story about an outsider who becomes king and who presides over Israel through a combination of astuteness, luck and providence. The point of the story is his success in action. If we compare this with Byron's Don Juan, for example, we see that he is not a figure like that at all. He has no end in view, he does not wish to establish an empire. He would be quite happy, for instance, just to stay with Haidee. So contingency in this respect does not exist in history exactly. It is historical in the sense that it is outsiderly, but it is not historical narrative contingency. Rather it is narrative fictional contingency because Byron allows, for example, Lambro to return. So it is contingent from the point of view of Juan. But fictional contingency points in two directions. On the one hand it points to

the fact that it is unexpected, arbitrary, but in another way it is not contingent at all because from the reader's point of view it does exactly what is expected in fiction. The reader expects that things will not go well at Juan and Haidee's wedding festivities and that Lambro will return just at the wrong moment. So Byron runs together a sense that things are unexpected and also from a fictional point of view, things are predictable and expected. In *Childe Harold*, however, the contingency is partly to do with the act of writing. Byron allows you to see the way he puts in additions to his text and thus modifies the original. He does not try to smooth things out. But contingency in *Childe Harold*, as in *Kings*, also exists in the history itself. For instance, at the Ball at Waterloo, suddenly a canon is heard which means the battle is begun unexpectedly early and many people at the ball are going to die. We are suddenly reminded that history is the history of established things being overturned, and the text itself is a site of disruption. Of course, *Childe Harold* is genuinely contingent because the poem depends upon not knowing what is going to happen in the life of the author. For instance Byron is in Greece when he is writing about Spain and he doesn't know then that the poem will, five years later, continue with his travels to Belgium. When he stops at Canto II he doesn't know that he is going to stay for a certain period of time in England and then go down the Rhine to Geneva and he doesn't know at the end of Canto IV that he would not be able to pick the story up again in some future canto.

*Don Juan*, however, is less contingent than that. Whereas no-one knows how *Childe Harold* is going to end up, or what happens to him, because he is a product of Byron's imagination, *Don Juan*, on the other hand, comes as a completed story. He is neither contingent, nor a contingent character. He is a character who defies contingency by taking that area which is most open to the contingent, sexuality,



and taking it to predetermined conclusion. The traditional Don Juan takes advantage of accident, but is a self-conscious seducer. He wishes to control things, to be the master of women, master of escape and master of the next event. It is not a story about contingency, it is a story about escape. When Byron picks up the story he inverts it by making his Don Juan seduced rather than seducing. He does not have a plan like the original Don Juan, so he sets it up as a model of contingency in an area where the text seems interested in the opposite and indeed in the finality. Don Juan, then, is less contingent than Childe Harold, because he is a character handed down from tradition and in a sense he will have to come to an end. Nevertheless Byron displaces this pattern and, in this respect, *Don Juan* is as contingent as *Childe Harold*.<sup>35</sup>

The contingency emphasised in the incoherent narratives which constitute the text in *Samuel* and *Kings* where the narrative does not flow smoothly can be considered as a model for risk taking. The history of the Jews is such that although they are considered the elected race, things constantly go wrong, things do not happen as they should, and Scripture is endlessly trying to work things out. For example, at the beginning of *Samuel*, Hannah, the more loved, but barren of Elkanah's two wives, is mistaken for a drunk by the priest whilst she prays for a son; twice Samuel mistakes God's calling for that of Eli; the double defeat of the Israelites leads to the Philistines capturing the ark of God and taking it back to the temple of Dagon of Ashdod and when things constantly go wrong for the Philistines including the humiliation of Dagon, they try to rid themselves of the ark. It is also difficult to give a clear and coherent account of the beginnings and

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<sup>35</sup> McGann argues that the key to the form of *Don Juan* is the episodic method, "where fortuitousness, not probability is sought, and where plans and designs operate only in restricted ways." McGann, J.J. *Don Juan in Context*, p. 103.

rise of King David. Scriptures record that in the whole of Israel's history there is no-one better than David, he is the one who brings the Ark back to Jerusalem and who conquers Israel's enemies. Yet the actual history does not correspond to that. It is much more haphazard. For instance, when Samuel seeks to anoint the son of Jesse, all the wrong sons are brought forward and it is not until Samuel asks if there are any further sons that David, the youngest, is brought in from outside the house. This, of course, is a patterned fiction, a 'Cinderella' story, where the youngest one eventually triumphs and is at odds with other versions of David's rise. The Scriptures, and what we have come to call literature, could be regarded as having become used to building the contingent into fictional patterns, so the surprising thing is really expected. With other aspects of David's rise, there is no attempt upon the part of Scriptures, as one might expect, to tidy up the untidiness of history. It still records David capturing his enemies by subterfuge, his killing of Uriah and his son rebelling against him and these events sound more like unpleasant fact. So the Scriptures remain loyal to the contingency of events whilst at the same time remaining loyal to different kinds of pattern, which means that the text itself is tolerant to kinds of disruption.

We can ask then, how far and in which way is Byron's work genuinely contingent in this fashion and how far it is influenced by Scriptural models? One way in which I propose to assess this is to look at the story of Absalom and Achitophel in *2 Samuel* and compare this with the Shipwreck episode in *Don Juan*. I have chosen to look at Absalom and Achitophel because the story is mediated to Byron through Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, which he knew well and loved. So Byron sees the story as a poem and in a sense as a continuance of Scripture. Because Dryden's poem provides a decisive model and shaping for the treatment

of contingency and pattern in history, we shall also compare this with the Scriptures and with Byron.

The most serious development, as the Scriptures present it, because it was the most dangerous for David and his kingdom, was the rebellion of his son Absalom, who played upon certain administrative weaknesses of his father. His wooing of disgruntled elements in his father's kingdom forced David to flee Jerusalem and withdraw to Transjordan. The rebellion began through Amnon's rape of Tamar and the inability of David to discipline his children. However, because of David's earlier adultery with Bathsheba, which led to Nathan's prophecy that the sword would never leave David's house, the reader is instructed to feel a sense of foreboding. The Absalom and Achitophel story is one of utter chaos, treachery, conspiracies, accidents, misjudgements, and of things happening that should not. Lawless lust and lawless vengeance were manifest in David's family which led to David, separately presented as the heroic giant-slayer who had defeated all Israel's enemies and been chosen as the Lord's anointed, being forced, by his own son whom he loves, to flee Jerusalem. David, the mighty king, in *2 Samuel* 11-12, becomes a pitiable and contrite character and more akin to the fugitive figure described in the second half of *1 Samuel*. As a fugitive, David feigned madness and made himself despicable. The rebellion is crushed only because Absalom took Hushai's advice, falling for his flattery and an absurd scheme to trick him, rather than taking the proven good advice of Achitophel.

Ironically, Absalom is killed because his long hair, of which he was so proud, had become entangled in branches and had left him dangling from the tree, alive, but helpless to defend himself from David's followers, who goes against David's

orders and kills him. The description of Absalom being killed by his hair is striking and raises the question of why the detail is included. Could it be for instance that there was an historical Absalom to which that peculiar accident happened? Or, perhaps it is a peculiarly grotesque and vivid way of showing that accidents catches up with the wicked, that he was not caught by the machination of his enemies, but that God works in the accidents of nature? Whatever the reason, the narrative is striking and it is difficult to find such a high degree of contingency even in a poem that tries to represent contingency, such as *Don Juan*. Perhaps the nearest equivalent is, in fact, the shipwreck scene where, although there is a storm, there is no good reason for the ship sinking.

The shipwreck episode in *Don Juan*, like Absalom's rebellion, originates through an illicit affair. Juan is sent away from home because of his affair with Julia. Shipwrecked, he finds himself cast off in a small boat where the people indulge in cannibalism.<sup>36</sup> Although cannibalism was, of course, a very familiar motif in shipwreck accounts in the eighteenth century, Byron is certainly trying to shock to some extent. The language and imagery would be repugnant to poets of a different aesthetic such as Keats, but it is more like the customary frankness of the Scriptures which has no sense of classical decorum, than it is like Homer's treatment of shipwreck. It is interesting to compare the cannibalism scene with certain imagery in the book of *Micah*, which is strongly linked to Absalom and the book of *Kings*. Micah, a prophet, lived in Judah during the reign of King

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<sup>36</sup> Byron was accused of plagiarism by the *Monthly Magazine* (August – September 1821, 12-22, 105-109) with regard to his shipwreck passages. But he had made it clear that he relied on others for his historical material. Almost all Byron's data comes from various parts of *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea*, ed. by Sir. J. G. Dalyell (Edinburgh, 1812) and from Byron's own experiences of a near shipwreck off the coast of Albania. See McGann's notes to *Don Juan* in *Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, Vol.V, p.688. Vassallo comments that the shipwreck episode is strongly reminiscent of the description of the storm at sea in the twentieth Canto of Pulci's *Morgante* where he describes the plight of the despairing sailors. Vassallo, *Byron: The Italian Literary Influence*, p.154.

Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-21).<sup>37</sup> It was a turbulent period, in which Judah and small neighbouring states were trying to resist the expansion of the Assyrian empire. In preparation for a major Assyrian invasion, which eventually occurred in 701, and which Byron wrote about in 'The Destruction of Sennacherib' (1815), the area where Micah lived was militarised and the state of emergency was made into an opportunity for powerful people to rob and dispossess those who lived in smaller towns. Micah spoke up powerfully against this action, condemning Jerusalem and its rulers, and looking forward to a time when God would provide his people with a ruler who would shepherd his people after the manner of David. The language that Micah uses can be considered amongst the most brutal anywhere in prophetic literature. The imagery is that of cannibalism. The powerful, in effect, skin their victims, and tear off the flesh to boil it in cauldrons. They break the bones of the victims to make more manageable the process of cramming the flesh into the cauldrons. Although the language is totally repulsive, Micah succeeded in what he wanted to say, that the oppression of the people by the rulers, is as repulsive as cannibalism and that oppression is, in a sense, a form of devouring people.<sup>38</sup>

If we read *Don Juan*, we see parallel ideas to those expressed by Micah, emerging. The first to be devoured in Canto II was something that had no voice in society, an animal. The next, the narrator points out, is a licentiate (II. 25. 194), someone who preaches the Scriptures, but lacks an authorised position to speak from. Those then, that are devoured, are the ones more easily oppressed, and the

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<sup>37</sup> What is now regarded as Absalom's tomb, in the Valley of Kidron was, at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., regarded as the tomb of Hezekiah, (Bordeaux Pilgrim). However, this is not in agreement with 2 *Chronicles* 32:33. The decorations of the monument date from the Greco-Roman period, but the chamber itself may be older. According to the title, *Psalms* 3 was composed by David during Absalom's rebellion. See 'Absalom', *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by Henry Snyder Gehman (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 11-12.

<sup>38</sup> *Jeremiah* 26:1-19 records that king Hezekiah turned in penitence to God on account of Micah's words.

men who devoured them suffered an unquenchable thirst and became mad. This is much like the words in *Childe Harold*, Canto III, 40-44, where ambition, once kindled becomes quenchless for high adventure which is 'fatal' (III. 42. 375-375): "This makes the madmen who have made men mad/By their contagion" (III. 43. 379-380). *Childe Harold* continues, "One breast laid open were a school/Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule" (III. 43. 386-387). Those that were left in the boat were even less inclined to cannibalism, having seen its effects. It was a lesson to them against the fatal consequences of oppression of their fellow man much as punishment follows crime in biblical narratives.

There are five different elements within the shipwreck scene and these elements set up contradictory ways of regarding the same event. Firstly, Byron sets up a meaningless natural disaster. Secondly, the shipwreck is a fictional event, a disaster at sea from which the hero alone escapes, so Byron runs realist contingency together with fictional predictability. We find realism in that, for instance, there was not enough food put into the boat and fictional predictability in that once the embarkation of the boat is described, fictionally the reader expects things to go wrong on board. Thirdly, there is an element of moralism in that Juan survives because he avoids the taboo of cannibalism. This, of course, is not unlike *Deuteronomy's* way of describing good and bad kings. Fourthly, Byron sets up religious ways of dealing with contingency and lack of safety. For instance he writes of Catholics making vows to saints through lit candles and obtaining salvation through mass. Byron is playing with the idea of a belief that there is a divine meaning in history, whilst at the same time keeping a sense that there may not be, that there is no overall plan and that everything is just a total mess; the fact that sacred history presupposes divine intervention makes it even more obvious

that there is not.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, part of the religious sense that God cannot be felt in history confirms the necessity of faith. If God could constantly be seen working in history, then faith would become obsolete. But faith is the necessary requisite in salvation history. It seems as if Byron is setting up a parallel between fictional faith, (Juan will survive), and religious faith. We wait upon what seems to be accident, but from a later perspective is seen not to be. Lastly, Byron ironically but semi-seriously sets up a Calvinist sense that God arbitrarily dooms most people to destruction. He links contingency, the fact that accidents such as shipwrecks happen, with the idea of God working, in a way, with a degree of malignancy towards his enemies and rather more worryingly towards those who are not his enemy.<sup>40</sup> It was Juan's pastor, who was the first man to be devoured. It was not the sailors who were cursing and blaspheming, but the person that people looked to for comfort and reassurance and who is described as a 'most reverend tutor'.

Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* shows the author's similarly uneasy relationship between the belief in God in history, and a sense also that he may not be. Dryden very much wants to believe that there is a divine meaning in history, but at the same time is appalled at the sense that everything is a complete and total chaos as he lives through the rapid changes of mid seventeenth-century England

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<sup>39</sup> David Leigh's essay '*Infelix Culpa: Poetry and the Skeptic's Faith in Don Juan*' (1979) argues that Byron's rejection of traditional means flows from his fragile faith in a complex but underdeveloped notion of creativity. He adds that Byron's trust in divine, social and aesthetic creativity is his closest approach to Redemption, adding that the reason for partial saving forces in *Don Juan* is that Byron "holds out for a Creator who may not have control of his creating". Essay in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, Vol. 28 (Keats-Shelley Assoc. of America Inc., 1979), pp.120-137, p.137.

<sup>40</sup> M. Corbett in his book *Byron & Tragedy* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1988), p.147, notes Byron's notion of God acting, in some respects, maliciously. In his discussion on Zillah's prayer in *Cain*, Corbett comments that the remarkableness of Zillah's prayer is her omission of any human contribution to the first Fall, adding that it appears that the Fall is the product of some divine caprice.

much as Byron lived in the turbulent period of the Revolution, Napoleon and the Restoration of the old order. He finds in Scripture, authorisation both for his belief and lack of belief. Within the poem, Dryden, like Byron, links contingency to the idea of God acting with a degree of malignancy. Added to the account of the so-called worthies is a lament for Barzillai's son who tragically and unexpectedly dies. Dryden, in effect, sets out the question of why should God kill off the son of such a good man and the most powerful person on the king's side? Or, in other words, why is it that the good suddenly die and the bad remain powerful? It seems as if God is acting with a degree of maliciousness: "It looks as Heaven our Ruine had design'd" (line 848). Although there is much about contingency within the poem, for instance, "Those heaps of People which one Sheaf did bind,/Blown off and scatter'd by a puff of Wind" (lines 277-8), and, how happy Absalom would have been if "Destiny/Had higher plac'd his Birth, or not so high!/His Kingly Vertues might have claim'd a Throne" (lines 481-3), yet the ideas of contingency are not quite the same as with Byron. For both Byron and the Scriptures, contingencies are often simply accidents, unexpected things that happen. However, within *Absalom and Achitophel*, even though Dryden parodies those who think:

Did ever men forsake their present ease,  
In midst of health Imagine a disease;  
Take pains Contingent mischiefs to foresee,  
Make Heirs for Monarks, and for God decree? (755-758)

Nevertheless he seems also to have a sense that people are partly masters of their own fate:

Heav'n, has to all allotted, soon or late,  
Some lucky Revolution of their Fate:  
Whose Motions, if we watch and guide with Skill,  
(For humane Good depends on humane Will,)  
Our Fortune rolls, as from a smooth Descent,  
And, from the first Impression, takes the Bent:



But, if unseiz'd she glides away like wind;  
And leaves repenting Folly far behind. (252-259)

The second quotation is, of course, a version of Shakespeare's; "There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which, taken at the flood" (*Timon of Athens*; iv, 3. 218); and which Byron also quotes in *Don Juan* 6. 1. The two quotations show that Dryden's poetry, like other poetry, often says different things at the same time. Although he is interested separately, intellectually and conceptually in the relationship between rule and necessity, what God ordains and what we can do, he does not have a single worked out theory, or doctrine. So in poetry, Dryden, like Byron, can often say or show the same thing in a different light. The ending, though positive, is nevertheless presented to the reader as a deliberate hope-filled polemical fictional ending. He does this because he is writing in the midst of political events and he does not know what is going to happen. Dryden and the reader fear the future, but the poem's religious hope is held out against this. The poem ends with the lines:

Henceforth a Series of new time began,  
The mighty Years in long Procession ran:  
Once more the Godlike *David* was Restor'd,  
And willing Nations knew their Lawfull Lord. (1028-1031)

The reader realises that the conclusion, though upbeat, is a matter of aspiration and fictionality. Dryden is, in effect, trying to influence opinion, so that events will turn out satisfactorily. Byron does the same thing when he writes to Ada at the beginning and end of Canto III in *Childe Harold*. He is trying to influence her, in the future, to agree with him. It is an attempt to project a reaction in history, which is also an attempt to interfere with contingency.

Dryden's reading of *Absalom and Achitophel*, although open to the contingency of past history is, of course, mainly open to the unpredictability of modern history;

events concerning Charles II, his illegitimate son, fresh civil war breaking out, and so on. Dryden is acutely aware how exposed to chance central events are and, in a sense, that is the main background to *Absalom and Achitophel* and not the biblical story, for Dryden writes in the middle of an unconcluded story. We see something of this in Byron's *Don Juan* when he writes:

Talk not of seventy years as age! in seven  
I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to  
The humblest individual under heaven,  
Than might suffice a moderate century through.  
I knew that nought was lasting, but now even  
Change grows too changeable, without being new:  
Nought's permanent among the human race,  
Except the Whigs *not* getting into place. (XI. 82)

Byron has a strong sense of what it means to be born in 1788 with regards to historical change. For instance the French revolution occurs one year after his birth; England is soon at war; the emergence of Napoleon, his defeat, his comeback and his eventual capture; the 1820 revolution in South America and the Basques in Spain, and so on. Some of those events are determined by human will, especially Napoleon's will, but most are governed in Byron's often emphasised view, by accident, chance. Contemporary history is thus often represented as a kind of farce. When Byron reads the Scriptures, presumably he is reading history in the light of biblical history such as that of the book of *Kings* and at the same time, like Dryden, assimilating those events to the ones surrounding him, both in public life and in his private life. In *Don Juan*, for example, Byron instances the effects of indigestion on people and therefore history:

... Oh! ye who build up monuments, defiled  
With gore, like Nadir Shah, that costive Sophy,  
Who, after leaving Hindostan a wild,  
And scarce to the Mogul a cup of coffee  
To soothe his woes withal, was slain—the sinner!  
Because he could no more digest his dinner;— (IX. 33. 259-264)

Although Byron makes out that Nadir Shah's death was directly linked to his indigestion, this is not quite the case. He was, in fact, killed by a conspiracy, which it is alleged was brought about through his temper being exasperated by his extreme costivity to a degree of insanity.<sup>41</sup> In other words he makes history more contingent than it really is. In Canto XIII Byron makes the whole of human history depend on accidents of that kind, although appetite itself is not contingent:

...I will not dwell on ragoûts or roasts,  
Albeit all human history attests,  
That happiness for Man—the hungry sinner!—  
Since Eve ate apples, much depends on dinner. (XIII. 99. 789-792)

We could say that the Bible comes to us through mediation. Particularly books like *Genesis*, the *Psalms* and *Ezekiel*, have come to us through a tradition of Jewish and Christian criticism. It is interesting to note, however, that although the prominent characters of the books of *Samuel* and *Kings* have been widely commented upon, the books, as a whole, have not. For instance, regarding patristic commentary, we find that although Origen has produced a commentary, it is based upon the verse of *1 Kings* 28 only, and Calvin, normally a prolific writer comments upon *2 Samuel* verses 1-13, only. Yet, Byron is clearly attached to *Kings* presumably because it is the most historical of Scriptural books and one that foregrounds contingency. Also, as we have mentioned earlier, although the Scriptures are loyal to contingency, there is the other side, which exists in the shadow of *Deuteronomy*, where the text (which comes from Jewish and Christian tradition) is also loyal to a narrative sort of patterning, which can be associated with a divine patterning. The earlier narrative of David as a 'Cinderella' story is

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<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed account of the death and conspiracy against Nadir Shah see *The Works of Lord Byron*, Vol. VI, ed. by E. H. Coleridge (London: John Murray, 1918), notes 1 & 2, p.389. Coleridge quotes an excerpt from *The Indian Empire*, by R. Montgomery Martin (1857).

like the rejected one, or the second one, getting the blessing, such as in the Jacob and Esau story. It also fits as one of the earliest examples of other kinds of narrative patterning, such as *Bildungsroman*.<sup>42</sup> David's story is one which tells how the young, handsome hero emerges from his lowly family background to become a warrior of renown, a member of Saul's court and then the victim of the king's excessive envy. Similarly, as we have noted, Byron's *Don Juan* is written through the received tradition of the original *El Burlador de Sevilla*<sup>43</sup> although, in some respects, he subverts it. However, Byron's Juan fits into the tradition of a hero who is young, handsome, brave and a good fighter. Byron's historical plays naturally come to us through received tradition, just as the writers of Scripture received the David tradition. The David tradition is that he was the first successful Jewish king, who captured Jerusalem and had several marked personal characteristics. Along with that hagiographical tradition also comes a mass of material which is difficult to accommodate because it does not fit neatly into the tradition. It is chaotic with many different stories of different kinds. The sacred authors are surprisingly loyal to contingency insofar as they accommodate the stories that do not fit in with the exemplary tradition. For instance the sacred authors do not make Abraham, Moses and David into wholly exemplary characters. On the contrary, an important thing about them is that they are ambiguous figures. This is because the Bible is not primarily a history of human persons but of history as shaped by God's intentions and reactions. Similarly, when Byron writes his historical plays, he is loyal to the shared tradition in that he does not step outside the framework of historical fact, yet, like the Scriptures, he

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<sup>42</sup> The prototype of *Bildungsroman*, 'A Novel of Development', tracing the protagonist's growth, usually from birth or early childhood, into adulthood and maturity, is Goethe's, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6), translated into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824. Byron read Goethe extensively, but there is no evidence that he had read this.

<sup>43</sup> Tirso de Molina's play, *El Burlador de Sevilla* (1635), (*The Seducer of Seville*).

is also loyal to contingency in that he often adds pieces that do not neatly fit into the story and suggests other factors. He also makes his heroes ambiguous figures, although, of course, most fictional writers do this. Take, for example, *Sardanapalus*. Byron knows the end of the story that Sardanapalus is going to die on a funeral pyre, but Byron makes him into an ambiguous figure. For instance, he is kind-hearted to many around him, but he is also cold-hearted to his wife; he appears gentle and effeminate allowing things to pass over him, but he also has strong characteristics and is ready to take and stick to tough decisions. This is as likely to have Scriptural as classical antecedents.

There are certain parallels that can be drawn between Solomon, one of the kings in the *Book of Kings* and Byron's *Sardanapalus*. Like Solomon, Sardanapalus is one of the elite, a king who displays lavish wealth and splendour and who, like Solomon has a magnificent table. He is portrayed as an honourable character in many respects; Beleses describes him:

...he loved his queen—/And thrice a thousand harlotry besides—  
And he has loved all things by turns, except/Wisdom and glory. (II. 1.  
125-128)

His love of women, especially his favourite, Myrrha, a foreigner, an Ionian slave, took precedence over a love for wisdom and he is eventually deposed as king. Both Solomon and Sardanapalus are kings with a weakness for foreign women who ultimately lose their kingdoms. However, the loss of Solomon's kingdom, which did not happen during his reign, was primarily caused by the influence of foreign women, while Myrrha is not held culpable in any way for the deposing of Sardanapalus. *Sardanapalus*, of course, is set in the biblical place of Nineveh, an

Assyrian capital and Assyria was in direct opposition to Solomon's Judah, yet Byron feels his way across to parallels between them.<sup>44</sup>

As well as the archetypal mythic story of David, *Kings* also has a literary structure based around both the so-called regnal formulae, which give brief statements as to the chronology of the reign, synchronising it with the ruling king in the other part of Israel (north or south); and also upon evaluative formulae known as judgement formulae, whereby summary statements give the reader brief details about the reigns of the various monarchs and offer some evaluation of the king's religious performance as to his faithfulness to Israel's God, his rejection of other gods and his adherence to the ideal of a central place of worship in Jerusalem. They often compare or contrast the current monarch with his predecessors. This formula is curiously similar to one found in Richard Knolles's book, *The General History of the Turks* (1610),<sup>45</sup> which Byron also read and loved.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Byron takes the name Myrrha, in the first instance from Alfiera's *Mirra*, a play based on the theme of incest, the love of a young girl for her father (suggested by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, lib. x, wherein Myrrha became the mother of Adonis by her father), which affected Byron profoundly. See Marchand, L., *Byron: A Biography*, Vol. II, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 806. But it is interesting to note the similarity of the name Myrrha to the word 'myrrh' which features significantly in the *Song of Solomon*, otherwise known as the *Song of Songs*, where the lover is described as a "sachet of myrrh" (1:13), as "perfumed with myrrh and incense" (3:6), and who "will go to the mountain of myrrh" (4:6). Paige Patterson notes in his commentary of the *Song of Solomon* that verses 6 and 7 contain five affirmations of love, which is linked to the doctrine of love expounded by Paul in 1 *Corinthians* 13. This doctrine claims that love is as strong as death, that jealousy is as cruel as the grave and, more especially, that the coals of love are eventually fanned into a vehement flame of fire; which, of course, reminds us of the funeral pyre in *Sardanapalus*. Patterson, P., *Song of Solomon*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute: 1986), pp. 116-117. Also, in view of our reference to Byron and Ugaritic literature, p. 176, particularly n. 121, it is interesting to note that Patterson's affirmation of the Solomonic authorship of the *Song of Solomon* alludes to its Ugaritic parallels, on p. 15, which is discussed in Pope, M., *Song of Songs*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1982), p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Knolles, R., *The Generall Historie of the Turks from the beginning of that Nation to the rising of the Othoman Familie with all the notable expeditions of the Christian Princes against them; together with the Lives and Conquests of the Othoman Kings and Emperours unto the year 1610* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition printed by Adam Islip, 1610).

<sup>46</sup> Knolles *General History of the Turks* was one of the earliest English examinations of the Ottoman Empire. It was a well-known book read by Johnson and, of course, Byron amongst others. Byron lists Knolles, under the sub-heading of 'Turkey' amongst the historical books he had read. See n. 9, Wilson Knight's *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues*, p.17. Earlier, Knolles' book had given William D'Avenant the basis for his spectacular entertainment, *The Siege of Rhodes*, (1656).

Knolles' *The General History of the Turks* is separated into individual books for each new monarch, each with a new heading page and illustration. Each monarch is compared or contrasted with his predecessors. For instance, the heading page for Selymus (p. 499) says, "The Life of Selymus, first King of that name, third and most warlike Emperour". At the end of each book a time line is also included, synchronising the reigns of contemporary kings of Germany, England, France, Scotland and the Bishops of Rome. Each book finishes with the words, "The End". Hence, although it is one book on the lives of the Ottoman Kings and Emperors, which he says in his title he has "Faithfully gathered out of the best Histories, both ancient and moderne, and digested into one continuat Historie", it is also a collection of individual books, one for each ruler. The question to be asked, of course, is whether Knolles got this style from the Scriptures, or from the general annals style of history used by Roman and monastic historians. In his book, Knolles emphasises his view that all great rulers and their kingdoms eventually diminish. For instance in the margins are such comments as "all worldly things subject to change", and "the greatest kingdoms have in time taken end, and so come to naught". He reiterates these sentiments when on page 918, at the end of a short poem he writes:

But what availes my glorie great, got with such Worthies paine,  
If in the twinkling of an eye it come to nought again?  
And nothing is of so great State, which Time shall not cast downe;  
Even so with may others moe, must perish my renowne.

This is very similar to the standard sentiments Byron expresses when he writes of history as ruin in *Childe Harold*. It is the pattern of history where great empires emerge, experience great glory and then diminish with only monuments, or ruins of monuments left to suggest anything of their former greatness. Along with this,

Byron, like Knolles and the Scriptures, also compares and contrast rulers and empires. Take for instance *Childe Harold*, IV. 11-12:

The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord;  
And, annual marriage now no more renewed,  
The Bucentaur lies rotting unrestored,  
Neglected garment of her widowhood!  
St. Mark yet sees his lion where he stood  
Stand, but in mockery of his withered power,  
Over the proud Place where an Emperor sued,  
And monarchs gazed and envied in the hour  
When Venice was a queen with an unequalled dower.

The Suabian sued, and now the Austrian reigns—  
An Emperor tramples where an Emperor knelt;  
Kingdoms are shrunk to provinces, and chains  
Clank over sceptred cities; nations melt  
From power's high pinnacle, when they have felt  
The sunshine for a while, and downward go  
Like lawine loosen'd from the mountain's belt;  
Oh for one hour of blind old Dandolo!  
Th' octogenarian chief, Byzantium's conquering foe.

The most obvious comparison, of course, between Knolles *History of the Turks* and Byron's *Childe Harold* is the way in which they are made up of separate books (or in Byron's case, cantos) which can equally be read on their own or together to make up the complete story. There are many authorising sources for this, but that of the Scriptures in general, and the Book of *Kings* in particular, must be a major one.

The other side to contingency, naturally, is necessity, an order where things have to be as they are. Within the Scriptures we see an interrelation between the two. For instance, within the Bible the universe is created and self-sufficient, but then something contingently goes wrong with it. But God has allowed for the contingency and He can enter it and redirect it much like an author. Another example would be God's making of contingency measures for mankind following Eve's temptation by the serpent. There is an interrelation between rebellious



freedom (that of Eve's temptation), and divine orderliness, the order that God had created within the garden, though this comes out of God's freedom too. This, naturally, is the main pattern, but against the main pattern is another, whereby God's interventions to put the orderliness back are sometimes not obviously orderly. For instance, although God had intervened to give the Israelites a new king, there was nothing orderly in David's anointing or his accession to the throne. There is a sense of being out of control, which allies itself to freedom and which, in a sense, is a dangerous mirroring of God's own freedom since, in human understanding, freedom and total control are in opposition.

However, in the relationship between life and art it is not difficult to produce a reconciliation between absolute freedom and absolute order. An artist is not obliged to make anything at all. He is not constrained. But when a work is made there is not a detail in the artist's poem, picture or building which is not in some sense necessary. We are quite used to the vocabulary of freedom and necessity not being at odds with one another in art, just as they are not at odds in God's actions. In God, freedom and order are not in tension because one will naturally produce the other. Nevertheless the two terms are needed. So, similarly, in Byron there could not be a strongly foregrounded sense of contingency unless he was equally fascinated by fate and necessity. Although McGann has a slightly different emphasis in *Don Juan in Context*, his idea is very similar:

Byron's sense that the true significance of sequential events is not that they confirm a wonderful, harmonious order in the world but that they reveal the equally wonderful, apparently endless, and yet finite possibilities of order and disorder.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> McGann, J.J., *Don Juan in Context*, p.102.

Byron is interested in the idea that things are fixed and that they cannot be modified, and part and parcel of this is his equal interest in freedom, or disorderliness, or chaos, or of being out of control. In other words, in order to have a strongly foregrounded sense of the out-of-control, there must also be a sense of the in-control. There are parallels to that within the Scriptures. If we take the most extreme example of the time that God appears to be most out of control from a Christian view, at Christ's crucifixion, then it is the area when he can be considered most in control. Passion can be read as action. In a similar sort of vein, however different the scale, it could be said that Juan's out of controlness, sexually, is only a sign that he is actually conforming to the inherent patterns of sexuality. In other words what we set up as opposites, out of controlness and controlness, chaos and order, if the logic were followed through and through, might turn out to be the same thing. This thought is expressed by the narrator in *Don Juan* Canto XV, stanza 81 "So very difficult, they say, it is/To keep extremes from meeting". This complex thought is more presented by the Scriptures than the classics. For although the classics allow some space for the contingent, nevertheless, they basically tend to privilege luminous kinds of order. The same sort of complex thought is brought locally into view through Byron's wide use of oxymoron.

Byron is not an embryonic Marxist in the sense that he thinks that things work out through a necessary dialectical process. Byron's sense of history is much more prophetic and like the book of *Kings* inasmuch as he does not see any master plan of God which is going to be good for all eternity and will be carried out come what may. Rather he envisions a kind of chaos that may turn out to have inexplicable orderings and good outcomes. These ideas could, of course, link

back to his ambiguous feelings about the French Revolution and equally they could link back to his interpreting history in the manner of the Whigs. The Whig version of history, as customarily understood, is basically not chaotic at all. It is a progressive, rational model where things get better which can easily be fused with the older Calvinist sense of absolute order. Michael Bentley in *Modern Historiography* describes the Whig understanding of history as “a process of constant ‘advances’ towards a sophisticated present from a primitive past”.<sup>48</sup> We have noted in a quotation above that Byron, when he considers change, or in the case above, the lack of change, links this to the Whigs.

However, there is another version of history available to Byron that whilst there is a divine providence, the actual workings of history in human hearts is more black and murky. Normally everything goes wrong. This version deplores yet celebrates contingency and God’s triumph of power which works, not within the manifest forms of history, but disrupts them unexpectedly by coming in from the outside. This, of course, is the biblical sense, for example, in the book of *Kings* where the reign of David is seen as the best part of an Israelite history ordered by God and yet David’s life is shockingly subject to accident. Nevertheless the narrative of *Kings* holds out the possibility of something actually realised and something better. David is promised a continuance of his dynasty and although, in the later events of sacred history, everything seems to go wrong and although nearly all is lost, there remains a remnant, a fragment, a thread of hope which survives.

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<sup>48</sup> Bentley, M., *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.1. See his chapter entitled ‘The English Whigs’, pp. 62-70. For an in-depth study on the Whig version of history see Butterfield, H., *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1950).

This can in some ways be likened to Byron's *Don Juan*, with the narrator's comic view of life which survives, as Juan does, as a privileged 'remnant', though accidents happen. The text is borne along by a haphazard series of events especially at the siege of Ishmael where people are killed for no good reason. But whilst *Don Juan* tends to present history as a glorious blunder, Byron does not seem to wholly know whether the narrative or the poem will hold together in a more coherent way than this. Nevertheless, it holds out the possibility of something better eventually happening, both in reality and in the text. Every time Don Juan finds himself amidst near total disaster, he is thrown a life-line and each time he is rescued it holds out the possibility that the narrative will eventually hold together, that he will be finally 'rescued'. In this way, when we encounter Aurora Raby we sense that she has been waiting as a possibility within the text from its origin.

Similarly in *Childe Harold*, there is a repeated assertion that throughout cycles of history things have failed, yet at the heart, the poem asserts the opposite. Amidst near total devastation, a fragment remains, a hope of restoration. For instance, at the beginning of Canto III, he describes himself as a weed flung onto the ocean (II. 2. 15-16); that his heart and harp has lost a string (II. 4. 29); that no flower appears in the last sands of life (II. 3. 27); and that he has grown aged in a world of woe (II. 5. 37). Despite this there is an underlying energy in his pessimistic assertions which is made fully explicit in the Coliseum stanzas when he asserts that after his death there will be something within him that remains, that will "breathe when I expire". Like the Davidic covenant, Byron promises himself that a thread, a fragment will remain after his death which will continue his purposes.

Stephen Cheeke in his article entitled 'Byron, History and the *Genius Loci*' asserts something of this when he says:

The moral aspect to historical material, rather than being obliterated in the blind cycles of time, survives and adheres after the event rather as the historical spirit may inhere in the landscape before its cultural manifestation.<sup>49</sup>

Byron versifies the debate about contingency and its interrelationship with fate and necessity most tellingly in *Childe Harold*, Canto IV, stanzas 125-127:

Few—none—find what they love or could have loved,  
Though accident, blind contact, and the strong  
Necessity of loving, have removed  
Antipathies—but to recur, ere long,  
Envenomed with irrevocable wrong;  
And Circumstance, that unspiritual god  
And miscreator, makes and helps along  
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,  
Whose touch turns Hope to dust,—the dust we all have trod.

Our life is a false nature—'tis not in  
The harmony of things,—this hard decree,  
This uneradicable taint of sin,  
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree,  
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be  
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—  
Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see—  
And worse, the woes we see not—which throb through  
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.

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—cabin'd, cribb'd, confined,  
And bred in darkness, lest the truth should shine  
Too brightly on the unprepared mind,  
The beam pours in, for time and skill will couch the blind.

In the first stanza Byron sets out ideas of the problematic relationship between necessity and contingency in human affairs. The necessity of loving joins together with accidents and circumstances to form a pattern of recurring

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen Cheeke, 'Byron, History and the *Genius Loci*', *The Byron Journal*, 27 (1999), pp.38-50, p.45. Cheeke says in a footnote that his comment is close to McGann's interpretation of Byron's 'fatalism' in *Fiery Dust*, p. 249.

hopelessness. Byron's personification here of circumstance as always tripping you up and making things go wrong (particularly strong in love relationships) is entirely different to the way he deals with it in the shipwreck episode in *Don Juan*. 'Circumstance' in *Childe Harold* is a watered-down version of the malign deity of the shipwreck. But although tonally they are completely different, Byron is dealing with a similar set of things. In the second stanza he emphasises the chaos in life. Life is not in harmony. Unexpected things happen which make life bleak and which cannot be put right. This is associated explicitly with the upas tree and implicitly with the Fatal tree in Paradise. In the third stanza, however, reason and will oppose themselves to chaos and cannot be defeated even though everything will continue to go wrong. Although in one sense it is the opposite of Juan in *Don Juan* because Juan foregrounds letting go of will and *Childe Harold* foregrounds the assertion of will against chaos, yet in both cases Byron wants to find a thread through to some kind of hope. In *Don Juan* there is the idea that in the contingency, or chaos of life, despite the exertion of will, providence will prevail. For instance, in Canto II, stanza 107, when Juan seems in imminent danger of drowning because, "his feeble arms could strike no more", then, "providentially for him", an oar arrives. Here, Byron asserts a fictional and real hope that contingency could be another word for providence.<sup>50</sup>

Our investigation into the structure of a book reveals that though a book of itself suggests coherence, yet both Byron and the Scriptures acknowledge the haphazard nature of life and of history and, like the Scriptures, Byron remains loyal to the records of history which chronicle this contingency. His strongly foregrounded

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<sup>50</sup> Contingency as another word for Providence is clearly suggested in *Don Juan*, Canto VII, stanza 76; "What Sages call Chance, Providence, or Fate".

sense of chaos and order parallels those of the Scriptures which sees the creation of the cosmos and of Israel as a summoning of meaningful order out of an antecedent chaos, and like the Scriptures he holds out the possibility, the hope, of there being some kind of pattern in the chaos. This indeed is the premise of 'The Book'. *Kings* registers the haphazardness of life far more than Gibbon does, but does not see that as a last word. Byron finds in biblical history, such as that in *Kings*, a model of writing where it is possible to register the haphazard nature of things so that he does not have to write history as a logical sequence of events. Certainly, *Childe Harold* does not give a panoramic view of history. Byron does not attempt to write a large-scale overview, setting out historical changes over large periods of time, but darts about all over the place, and deliberately mixes references as when Parnassus is described in a canto on Spain. Byron can take kinds of incoherence to extremes without taking, finally, the side of incoherence. The glue that holds *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold* together is something that it shares with the writing of the Scriptures; history, fidelity to occurrence, and a kind of trust in the workings out of history. Too little attention has been paid to the much looser and more existential model of coherence represented by the biblical book in forming and authorising Byron's own masterpieces — *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Don Juan*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TYPOLOGY

It was evident in the previous chapter that Byron's view of history and of those literary structuring habits most suited to represent it have been influenced by a sympathetic reading of the Scriptures. This chapter completes the investigation by enquiring into the totality of the book the Scriptures, or Bible, whose composition over a long period of time and whose forum is multiple. Any useful comparison with Byron will not, of course, attempt to look at the totality of his work and imply that it is formally equivalent to the Bible. Investigating parallels between the totality of Byron's works and the Bible could well be a legitimate area of consideration but Byron, of course, makes no such claim for that formal unity and they have not been treated in the way the Bible has. The reader makes, and always has made, cross-references when reading Byron, as with most authors. When we read as in *Childe Harold* Canto III. 12, that he would not submit his thoughts to others, or "yield dominion of his mind/To spirits against whom his mind rebell'd", we feel as though we are reading about Manfred refusing to bow to the spirits or be mastered by them; and Manfred's encounter with Astarte is clearly echoed within *The Prophecy of Dante*, Canto III. 31-33, which reads: "Think not that I would look on them and live./A spirit forces me to see and speak./And for my guerdon grants *not* to survive". Similarly, when we read in *Manfred*, Act III. IV. 26, that the "Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;—/But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,/A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!", the reader is projected into *Childe Harold* and the ruined Coliseum where there is a projection, this time within the narrator's mind, backwards in time, to the



gladiator's 'circus'. Of course, these poems are quite close in date and this partly explains the similarity. Nevertheless this is much like the way the passages in the Prophets, and the *Psalms* and the book of *Job*, books also of a closer date, reverberate within each other. But, although comparing the totality of Byron's works along with the Scriptures may well be a legitimate and interesting area of study, it is not how he intended them to be read, or how they have customarily been read. We shall concentrate upon individual poems and plays. In doing so we pose the question that if the Bible holds together as a coherent reading experience, even though it is disparate and written over a long period of time, and if it holds together by such things as typology, allegory, self-reference, and cross-reference, then to what extent is Byron influenced as a writer by this habit of reading so that he, too, can find parallels in disparate cultures and worlds? This is a fundamental question and predisposition of this thesis. We begin by looking at typology which, on the one hand, and fundamentally, means comparing event with event so that the first event is really an insight into and context for the second. This, of course, is unlike moral readings which compare event with meaning, or meaning with meaning. So, typology in this instance, is in the first instance a parallel, a correspondence between events. Typology customarily means on the other hand referring everything to Christ, which, of course, Byron does not do though his use of Abel as a type of Christ shows that he could do so. It is a method of biblical interpretation initiated by St. Paul and made popular by the early Church Fathers.<sup>1</sup> It describes how events foreshadow events to come. All the different types found in the Old Testament are seen as anti-types to the one,

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<sup>1</sup> The early Church Fathers refers to the writers and teachers of the early church. It began with the death of the last apostle John and although there is no agreed end to the Patristic period, Bernard of Clairvaux of the eleventh century is often called 'the last of the Fathers'.

main, Messianic type. Daniélou, in *From Shadows to Reality*, suggests that the essence of typology is:

...to show how past events are a figure of events to come. These events, recounted in themselves, are not particularly important. There is no striving to bring back again these past events.<sup>2</sup>

In this way of reading, although two events are distinct and separate they are both of the same type, the earlier event serving to foreshadow the later. Hence the Exodus of the Old Testament, where Moses led the Israelites from bondage out of Egypt to the Promised Land, can be seen as a foreshadow of Christ's flight into Egypt and his eventual leading people out from the bondage of sin and to their promised heavenly home. Moses therefore can be seen as a type of Christ since both were lawgivers and redeemed people. Both wandered in the desert (Moses for forty years and Christ for forty days) and both fed the hungry with bread from heaven; Moses with manna from heaven and Christ invited people to feed on his body. St Matthew in his account of the flight into Egypt by the Holy family and the subsequent return, and in relation to the story of Herod killing the children, quite clearly, as a writer, sets up an intended comparison with the story of *Exodus*, as well as the earlier story of Moses being spared amongst all the other children. It is clearly a writerly device. The Passion too is associated with the Passover and the Exodus, by the evangelists who clearly had the earlier stories in mind when writing. On the face of it, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection do not appear to have much in common with the Exodus. There is the leaving of the land at night and the killing of the firstborn, which are the obvious connections, but when other details are added such as people being spared because of the blood of the Lamb, and the feast of Passover and the Last Supper, and so on, then the interpreter

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<sup>2</sup> Daniélou Jean, S.J., *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, translation by Dom Wulstan Hibberd (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), p. 12.

begins to make connections. So there is a possible distinction between those acts of writing which are themselves self-consciously typological acts of writing and those acts of writing where it is the later interpreter rather than the original author who finds the connection between the two episodes. To read typologically is to read an event as a type of another event which is going to occur later, which is Christ (often referred to here as 'the Christ event') and so reading the Old Testament in this way is fundamentally reading the Israelite history of Christ. Thus typology means, on the one hand, a simple parallel, a correspondence between events, and on the other hand typology means that there is a foregrounded, privileged interpretation of events as having a secret but major meaning apart from the literal one. This secret meaning is disclosed in the later event. From the standpoint of this thesis, the notion of 'correspondence of events so that one substitutes for the other' and the more general sense that history has secret larger patterns as well as local resonance, are the two most important emphases. They are part of the history of the biblical reading in a way that they are not part of the history of the exegesis of epics or tragedy.

The word 'type', however, has come to be used in a completely different sense from that of typology. A characteristic usage would be — an 'ordinary type' — which describes a class of people. That second sense of the word 'type' was first used in 1840, which means that Byron is at the cusp between the old sense of 'type' and the new. The new sense of type dehistoricises type. That is to say the old sense of type is to do with real history and sequence, but this real history is, in a certain sense, annihilated because the emphasis is on the subsuming of past events in Christ's saving event which is certainly in history but also transcends time. Hence icons and the liturgy can represent the external presentness of

apparently past events. In another sense, however, history is confirmed because there was an historical Christ and there was an historical Exodus and typology would not work if this was not so. History is confirmed as real and the primary locus of meaning. It is diachronic. The modern sense of type has nothing to do with history in this sense. It is a spatial thing, to do with categorising. Because Byron is on the cusp where the older sense of 'type' is being replaced by the modern sense and history is being dispersed into sociology and 'topics' which deal in types such as 'patriarchal societies', it is possible to think of Byron, in certain respects, as trying to keep the older sense of a history which is full of real cross-references.<sup>3</sup> The idea of history in the eighteenth century can be seen as both weakening and intensifying the centrality of temporal events and their record. Intensifying, because the discipline of history and the writing of history books take a strong hold in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Byron was, of course, part of that. Ricardo Quinones, in his essay entitled '*Cain* between History and Theology' says:

More than any other prior generation, Byron represents a generation that has been thrown into history. And Byron is the most sensitive, most perspicacious spokesman for this fact. In the turmoil of his intellect he showed the true consequences of the dawning age of history. He saw and reacted desperately against the scepticism that was the natural product of this "historicism".<sup>4</sup>

He was reading the new-style history set in motion by the Renaissance, for instance, the history of the Turks by Knolles and the later Roman Empire written

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<sup>3</sup> See, Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), letters 78 & 79, pp. 146-7. In a letter to Mr. Hodgson, dated 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1811, Byron seeks out a book by William Drummond on Drummond's allegorical interpretation of *Genesis* and *Joshua*. Although Drummond's concern is not so much about Patristic interpretation as it is about giving *Genesis* an allegorical interpretation because of the difficulty in accepting the text literally, nevertheless, in seeking out the book, Byron demonstrates his interest in both recent styles of interpretation and allegorical interpretation generally. Also, see Byron's conversations with Dr. Kennedy in Cephalonia where Byron "appears to be struck by the notion of his lecturer, that the circumstance mentioned in Job of the Almighty summoning Satan into his presence was to be interpreted, not, as he thought, allegorically and poetically, but literally" (p.600).

<sup>4</sup> Quinones, R.J., '*Cain* between History and Theology' essay in Wolf Hirst's *Byron, The Bible and Religion*, pp. 39-57, p. 55.

by Gibbon. He was reading history written by modern historians. Nevertheless, at exactly the same time as history is foregrounded and history begins to be read by people at large, people begin to lose the sense that they are actually in history and begin to see themselves as its spectators. For instance, although Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* does not have an accurate detailed sense of past history in the modern sense of 'history' and puts his Roman soldiers in contemporary dress, Shakespeare does consider that Julius Caesar had really influenced a continuing history, of which he, Shakespeare, was still a part. In the same way Gregory the Great takes for granted that Ezekiel really did live and that there was a temple a long time ago and because he lived in a real history, with real continuity, a saving history which God is guiding, Gregory considers that Ezekiel is still talking to him directly through the text. Whereas, a modern post eighteenth-century way of regarding history assumes that past people and events that happened a long time ago bear little or no relevance for the present day but can be examined across a distance, after some reconstruction. Here there is little point in Gregory reading about Ezekiel to shed light upon present day concerns, for Gregory was a Catholic, a Roman monk and a Pope, whereas Ezekiel was a Hebrew prophet who had lived in completely different circumstances. So, curiously, the rise of 'history' as discipline and pervading presumption has led to people thinking they are not part of, related to, or formed by history. Bentley in *Modern Historiography* says:

eighteenth-century thought lost contact with the specific and the particular... In reducing the world to law, the Enlightenment's understanding of history truncated the past as a domain of enquiry. It also became out of date virtually the moment it was announced.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bentley, M., *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 15.

Being part of history, paradoxically, is linked more readily to the older sense of 'types' where it is taken for granted that something that happened a long time ago might be reverberating in the present tense, directly. For instance, von Rad in *The Message of the Prophets* describes Hebrew thought about history:

While, therefore, it is perfectly correct to say that Yahwism is founded in history, this does not, of course, involve any thought of the modern concept of history which, as we know, lays stress on the idea of relativity and the transitoriness of all events. The historical acts by which Yahweh founded the community of Israel were absolute. They did not share the fate of all other events, which inevitably sink back into the past. They were actual for each subsequent generation; and this not just in the sense of furnishing the imagination with a vivid present picture of past events.<sup>6</sup>

These ideas, of course, have considerable impact on the way we read texts.

Byron's sense of type belongs, I will argue, more to the historical sense linked to typology, than to the dehistoricised, categorising sense of type as typical. He has a strong sense of being part of history as a continuum and a predilection for finding parallels between separated events.<sup>7</sup> The essence of orthodox typology is that Christ is the centre of history and the key to its meanings, hence all events are versions of Christ-events. Byron clearly does not foreground this. Manifestly Christ is not the specific centre of *Childe Harold* or *Don Juan*. In this sense, his text is not typological at all in any sense that Gregory the Great would understand and yet it has the main feature of typology in that, characteristically, Byron invites the reader to read one event in terms of another event and thus read in something of the way that Gregory reads the Scriptures. Moreover, though Byron does not

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<sup>6</sup> Rad G. von., *The Message of the Prophets*, a translation of the German *Die Botschaft der Propheten* (London & Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd Ltd.), p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Byron would have been familiar with the words in Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* (lines 29-30): "Hewood and Shirley were but Types of thee,/Thou last great Prophet of Tautology". Dryden is interested in a succession from a previous bad poet Flecknoe to a present bad poet Shadwell. Although it is like a blasphemous inversion of typological reading, nevertheless it demonstrates that Dryden is reading typologically, and Byron knows *Mac Flecknoe* as much as he knows *Absalom and Achitophel*. *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by James Kingsley, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 265.

place Christ at the centre of history, though he does not foreground Christ at all, nevertheless, he certainly goes through a lot of manoeuvres, in particular reading event as event, which could be regarded as specifically typological. There is no doubt that this pattern of interrelationship has been primarily forged by Christian typological reading of the Scriptures and that it makes Byron's practice as a poet far more typological than any of his contemporaries.<sup>8</sup>

It is simply not possible within the limitations of this thesis to make detailed enquiries into the whole of Byron's work, but *Childe Harold* is an obvious and helpful example for our purposes. We can distinguish between such things as layering, allusions, comparisons, internal references, and reverberating typology where words and phrases which would mean little on their own, when they occur time and again, take on larger significance. We shall also explore within some of Byron's plays the relationship between typological events and salvation. *Cain* is an obvious example here for Cain comes close to a negative inspection of Scriptural truth and constructs patterns of typology, including technical typology, yet still avoids salvation. We shall also explore the extended typology within *Marino Faliero* which, I shall argue, although of a secular nature in its subject-matter, makes extensive biblical parallels with Christ's crucifixion whilst rejecting salvation. In *The Island* where there is a kind of salvation, and a paradise, I shall suggest that Byron celebrates an erotic salvation rather than a Christian one. The last of Byron's works to be explored will be *Don Juan*, to see how he relates typology to purely fictional writing. It will help, I think, if we compare Byron's

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<sup>8</sup> Ray Stevens, in his essay 'Biblical Allusions in *Heaven and Earth*' argues that Byron explores in an unstructured manner the problems involved in the doctrine of the elect and in doing so adopts a traditional Christian approach to Typology. This, he adds, is the same method as Byron's early teachers, the Calvinist Presbyterian elders, used to explore the Scriptures. Essay in Hirst's *Byron, The Bible, and Religion*, pp. 118-135.

typological practice with another bench-mark. Thomas Carlyle is particularly helpful because he was nearly a contemporary of Byron and, like Byron, was an intellectual who was brought up in Scotland as a Calvinist Presbyterian. Biblical categories, diction, and structures clearly influenced him and he, too, is an interpreter of history.

We begin with *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. A major feature of the poem is the large number of references to various battles so that they form a layering of equivalences which has analogies to typology. It seems that wherever Byron travels he is concerned, or even preoccupied, with the battles that have been fought there. The landscape is redolent with past events whose effect is recoverable in some way. For instance, within the first canto there are references to the Peninsular Wars, the wars of liberation of the Spaniards from the Moorish occupation and the various battles between the French and English. It is noticeable, looking at the sequence of past and present battles, that Byron has a tendency to take events back to an originating archetype, some of them biblical. For example, Byron's concern over the Peninsular Wars in the first canto regarding Napoleon's heavy-handed tactics with the Portuguese and his injustice to the Spaniards, is allied to an idea of divine retribution:

And when the Almighty lifts his fiercest scourge  
'Gainst those who most transgress his high command,  
With treble vengeance will his hot shafts urge  
Gaul's locust host, and earth from fellest foemen purge. (I. 15. 212-215)

The French army is referred to as 'Gaul's locust host'. This is a typological reference to the plague of locust in *Exodus*, but more especially to the books of *Amos* and of *Joel*. *Joel* records prophetic reaction to a locust plague that threatened to destroy God's people. The prophet indicates that the plague is either



a divine punishment, as is the plague of locusts in *Amos* 4:9, or as a covenant curse. Joel likens a huge swarm of locusts to a mighty invading army and describes the locusts, agents of destruction, under the image of a ruthless nation powerful and innumerable. So locusts are likened both to an invading army and to divine retribution. Byron uses the imagery in exactly the same context. The wars oracle against the nations in the book of *Amos* 1:3-2:16, which is closely tied to the book of *Joel* because of their common literary themes,<sup>9</sup> reveals that God will hold all nations responsible for their oppressive and inhuman treatment of the weak and powerless. When Byron refers to Napoleon's oppressive treatment of the Portuguese who were weak and powerless against the might of the French army, like the prophets Amos and Joel, he believes that the oppressors will suffer divine punishment. We could also note that Amos's prophecy of divine retribution is also quoted by Stephen in *Acts* 7:42-43, in his historical summary of the history of Israel's rebellion against God, which helps to demonstrate that reverberating through the Bible, both in general terms, Israel's continuing rebellion, and in specific acts of aggression (such as those referred to by Amos) there is the idea of divine retribution against oppressive nations. Byron's quotation is modelled on Stephen's. The idea of retribution against oppressive nations also reverberates through Byron's work. For instance, later on in the same canto, in stanza 89:

Nor yet, alas! The dreadful work is done,  
 Fresh legions pour adown the Pyrenees;  
 It deepens still, the work is scarce begun,  
 Nor mortal eye the distant end foresees.  
 Fall'n nations gaze on Spain; if freed, she frees  
 More than her fell Pizarros once enchain'd:  
 Strange retribution! Now Columbia's ease

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<sup>9</sup> The locusts of *Amos* recalls *Joel* 1-2, while the day of Yahweh motif in *Amos* 5:18-20 connects with the whole of *Joel*. The divine roaring in *Joel* 3:16 appears at *Amos* 1:2, the blessing in *Joel* 3:18 at *Amos* 9:13 and the earthquake mentioned in *Joel* 2:10 & 3:16 also features in *Amos* 1:1; 8:8 & 9:5.

Repairs the wrongs that Quito's sons sustain'd,  
While o'er the parent clime prowls Murder unrestrain'd.

In this quotation Byron typologically links the loss of the Spaniards' freedom to the French, to that of the Incas who were conquered in 1531 by the Spanish explorer, Francisco Pizarro, who, like Napoleon, was noted for his courage and his abilities as a military leader, as well as for his audacity, civil leadership and unscrupulousness. The Spanish invaders were unopposed by the Incas who assumed that the fair-skinned Spaniards were returning Incan demigods. Likewise the French were allowed to march through Spain in order to subdue Portugal, but ended up occupying Spanish towns and cities. Byron links the two invasions and sees it as retribution, because the once oppressors have now been turned into the oppressed. The pattern of history can only be seen as a quasi-biblical extension of time. Moreover, America, which includes the once Incan territory, has now gained its freedom from European rule, which Byron sees as helping to repair the wrong that has been done to it. Byron's use of the word 'retribution' closely follows scriptural principles in that the 'lex talionis' (law of exacting like for like) was not for private retribution, but the prerogative of God and of the authorities ordained by God.<sup>10</sup> Byron refers to the perpetrators as individuals (Quito's sons) whereas retribution is referred to in the form of European rules, legislation made by the authorities. Lex talionis also insisted that the justice administered had to be fair and not out of proportion to the crime,<sup>11</sup> and that retribution is built into the nature of wrongdoing.<sup>12</sup> Also, retribution in the Old Testament is characteristically associated with large-scale historical events such as war and battles, for example the defeat of the rebellious nation of Israel at

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<sup>10</sup> *Genesis 9:6, Exodus 21:23.*

<sup>11</sup> *Romans 13:4, Leviticus 24:17-22.*

<sup>12</sup> *Psalms 7:15-16 & 37:14-15.*

the hands of its enemies. Frank McConnell argues that Byron's use of the theological term 'retribution' to describe this set of events signals two aspects of his thoughts: the first being his inescapably moralistic, Protestant viewpoint on world history; secondly, his insistence, which is more specifically Romantic, that political liberation is possible only in the form of world-wide, total liberation of the oppressed.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of *Childe Harold*, Canto IV, stanza 181, Byron refers to the 'oak leviathans', the battleships of the Spanish Armada of 1588 and the French Navy at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805:

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls  
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,  
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,  
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make  
Their clay creator the vain title take  
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war;  
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,  
They melt into the yeast of waves, which mar  
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

The Leviathan, a sea monster, is represented as a fleeing and writhing serpent in Ugaritic literature,<sup>14</sup> and in *Isaiah* of the Old Testament, as a flying serpent, a swift serpent, a crooked serpent and a dragon of the sea. As the sea symbolises the restless, surging nations of the earth, the Leviathan symbolises the fierce and

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<sup>13</sup> *Byron's Poetry*, selected and edited by Frank D. McConnell, A Norton Critical Edition (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), n., p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra, lies on the Mediterranean coast 25 miles south west of Antioch and directly opposite the extreme east point of Cyprus. Between 1929 & 1939 several hundred tablets and fragments written in a cuneiform were found. Archaeologists uncovered 5 strata running from the lowest level, Neolithic Settlement (V), to the Late Bronze period (level I and may be dated from c. 1450-1200 B.C.), from where the literary and administrative texts come. These tablets are of special importance for the light they shed on Canaanite religion and the many parallels they offer to the Old Testament in vocabulary and poetic style. It is interesting that Cullen I.C. Story, in, 'Did Lord Byron know Ugaritic?' notes that although Byron's death antedates the discovery and decipherment of Ugaritic texts by more than a century, his rendering of *Psalms* 137:5, is only found in post-Ugaritic translations: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither." (RSV). Cullen argues that Byron's response in the poem to the pagan captors' demands to hear from the writer one of Zion's songs is a self-imposed imprecation whereby he unconsciously anticipates the true rendering of the biblical text which Ugarit has now made possible. Cullen I.K. Story 'Did Lord Byron Know Ugaritic', *The Byron Journal*, 19 (1991), pp. 146-148.

terrible powers of the world that have afflicted the people of God, but whom God will ultimately destroy. Byron attributes the storms that caused severe damage to the ships of the Spanish Armada and French navy at the battle of Trafalgar, before they could attack and defeat Britain, to divine intervention and to the arbitrariness of God. In this way he is effectively taking the Spanish invasion and the battle of Trafalgar back to an archetypal spiritual battle. The Leviathan, a name also used for the Devil, will, according to the book of *Revelation*, at the end of time, be defeated by Christ in the ultimate battle between good and evil. Byron ends the poem about the pilgrimage of Childe Harold with the battle of Trafalgar, which he typologically links to a battle which refers to the end of time and which also comes at the end of the Scriptures.

The wars and battles of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are, in Byron's mind, a version of his own spiritual battles, and Napoleon, himself, is a projected version both of what Byron is and what he critiques. Napoleon a courageous fighter, who inspired great loyalty amongst his men yet had certain weaknesses, for instance a weakness for women. This is a version of how Byron saw himself. In addition, Napoleon, to Byron, was more than just a man, he symbolised the battles he fought and the cause and country he fought for. Byron's 'Ode (From the French)' begins, "We do not curse thee Waterloo!" He makes no distinction between the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon, or France. Napoleon is both man and nation, first and third person. This is an echo of biblical correspondences, for Israel is both man and nation. It is the name given to Jacob in *Genesis 32:28*, when he wrestles with a man (commonly understood as God) until daybreak. The man showed his superiority to Jacob by disabling him with a touch, and before leaving him, blessed him by saying, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel: for as

a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed". The use of the word began in Jacob's own lifetime, (Genesis 34:7), and was commonly used during the wilderness wanderings. *Childe Harold* wanders back and forth from first to third person in a way familiar to any Bible reader. The first instance of this happening, which becomes a characteristic of Byron's practice throughout the poem, is in Canto I, stanza 27 when, having suspended the story for his own thoughts on history and fate, Byron brings himself up sharply to remind himself and the reader that the story he is telling is in the third person and not the first. In much the same way Byron projects himself into Rousseau. When he writes of Rousseau in Canto III, stanzas 77-84, we are also reading of himself in the Coliseum stanzas as we will later discover. We learn to anticipate this latency for further reverberation when we read any part of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

These are the stanzas on Rousseau:

His love was passion's essence—as a tree  
On fire by lightning; with ethereal flame  
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be  
Thus, and enamoured, were in him the same. (III. 78. 734-737)

His life was one long war with self-sought foes,  
Or friends by him self-banish'd; for his mind  
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose  
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,  
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind. (III. 80. 752-756)

Fix'd Passion holds his breath, until the hour  
Which shall atone for years; none need despair:  
It came, it cometh, and will come;—the power  
To punish or forgive—in *one* we shall be slower. (III. 84. 793-796)

Here we are reading about the apparent injustice Rousseau suffered by those whom he tried to enlighten. Rousseau's passion enabled people to see things more clearly, but in the process he antagonised the authorities and alienated, perhaps deliberately, many friends. This is partly how we are to read Harold and,

to some extent, Byron himself.<sup>15</sup> Byron implies that Rousseau is largely responsible for his own alienation from others but the sense of culpability is mingled with a sense of injustice and bitterness that belongs to Byron's own sense of his alienation, post 1816, from an English world. The reader picks up this transference. This, as we have already noted in previous chapters, is the essence, too, of the Coliseum stanzas where Byron rages against those with whom he, like Rousseau, has fought long and hard, and with people whom he had loved, but who had banished him to exile. Within him, however, is the power, the prerogative, to forgive or to punish. His forgiveness is a punishment in the form of a curse against his attackers that they will feel life-long remorse which will atone for the years of suffering that he has had to endure. When he writes these stanzas Byron is Rousseau, he is Napoleon, and he is even Suffering itself. Just as we have noted previously, when we are reading of the gladiator's suffering, we are really reading also of the bull's suffering and of Byron's own suffering. The suffering is interchangeable across different images and events just as it is in the typological reading of events which prefigure Christ's Passion. And, as we have argued in the previous chapter, the Coliseum and the Parthenon are images of a human head or skull, and so too, earlier, is the bull-fight arena. These places of suffering, the Coliseum where the gladiator suffered, the arena where the bull suffered, are also Byron's own head represented within the poem as a consciousness which is a natural amphitheatre of suffering and yet remain creative and defiant. He stands a ruin (through suffering) amongst ruins. But he asserts in the Coliseum stanzas that, although he may be ruined and although he may die, there is something inside him that will live on and will give him ultimate victory. This has pagan

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<sup>15</sup> Leslie Marchand notes in his *Prefaces to Byron* (Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1978), p. 51, that Karl Elze who published the first full-length biography of Byron in 1870, entitled *Lord Byron: A Biography*, discusses Byron's resemblance to Rousseau.

resonances of an immortality through fame but also loosely parallels Christ's death by those who oppressed him and his ultimate victory through Resurrection. Although, of course, Byron is in no way directly linking himself to Christ and he does not seek redemption for all, but for vindication for himself. Typologically, the Redemption achieved by Christ is foreshadowed by the Israelites being released from their Egyptian oppressors, which began their exile and forty years of suffering in the desert. When Byron writes of his suffering in the Coliseum stanzas, he is the totality of suffering. He feels not only his own suffering throughout his years of exile, but of all those who have suffered in any shape or form, through wars, oppression and injustice. He is the bull, the gladiator, Napoleon, Rousseau, and so on. He is the essence of suffering, and, albeit the suffering is for completely different reasons and with different results, this closely parallels Christ, who, being the totality of humanity, took the suffering of the whole world upon himself. At the place of Napoleon's ultimate reversal, the battle of Waterloo, Harold stands on the 'place of skulls'. Byron, naturally is referring to the skulls of the vast army of men who died there, but 'the place of skulls' also clearly recalls Calvary, from the Latin, calvaria, skull, a place close to Jerusalem where Christ was crucified and is commonly known as 'the place of skulls'. Byron seems to be constantly invoking, implicitly and explicitly, Christian correspondences but, at the same time, he skirts round central Christian meanings. My major point is that it is the habit of mind and habit of reference which is Scriptural in a Christian typological sense.

Byron's non-salvific typology is never more apparent than in *Cain*, which, paradoxically, to my knowledge, is the only place in Byron's writings he uses technical typology. The words spoken by a dying Abel are recognisably those

spoken by Christ at his death. It is typology in the first and original sense, a foregrounded, privileged version of a Christ-like event, Abel being a prototype of Christ. Yet, the typology of *Cain* is not a Christian typology which demonstrates God saving, rescuing us. Abel does not save. Cain's dialogue with Lucifer is extensive covering the first two of the three acts and suggests a negative God who is indifferent or hostile to humanity. Adah alone stands against this reading of God's nature.

The typology begins in Act III where Cain and Abel are required to make a sacrifice. Christ's ministry and ultimate sacrifice is compared with Abel's ministry to Cain and his last sacrifice. Abel, like Christ, was the shepherd of the flock and had a "pious ministry" (III. I. 175). He considers the act of sacrifice to be one of 'priesthood'. Christ, of course, is often referred to, especially in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, as the great high priest. Part of Abel's ministry was to teach Cain the correct way to sacrifice. His aim was to "Deserve the name of our great father's son", by making a sacrifice on the altar (III. I. 196). When Cain threatened to destroy the effect of Abel's sacrifice which God had already accepted, Abel says, "I stand between thee and the shrine which hath/Had his acceptance" (III. I. 312). This may be a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice being accepted as the summation of sacrifice. Although Abel tries to mediate with Cain in order to make Cain's sacrifice acceptable to God, he is killed by the person he tries to help. So, unlike Christ's death which achieves salvation, Abel's death does not save. In this way, it could be said that Byron takes on everything of Christ's crucifixion except salvation. Although Christ is killed by the people whom he tries to help, redemption through Christ means that Christ has victory, whereas in Byron's play there is no redemption connected to Abel's death. He is



not able to make Cain's sacrifice acceptable and so he ultimately suffers defeat. The result of Abel's defeat is Cain's permanent exile. So the non-salvific effect is exile. Is it possible then, that Cain's exile which can be seen to have affected Byron profoundly by the number of times it is mentioned in his own writings, contributed to Byron's feelings of irredeemable guilt brought on by his own exile?

The words that Abel speaks on his death, "Oh, God! receive thy servant, and/Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what/He did" (III. I. 319), are nearly the same words that Christ spoke at the Crucifixion, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (*Luke 23:46*), and "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*Luke 23:34*). But even though the words are technically typological, Byron's does not carry this through to that idea of Redemption, (which is the whole premise of typological reading). This is evident because the risen Christ speaks the words, "Peace *be* unto you" (*Luke 24:36*); whereas Abel speaks the exact same words, "The peace of God be on thee!" (III. I. 163), but before he dies and Cain receives them finally as a curse when he says "But with *me!*" (III. I. 563). Although it is true that Byron could not have had Abel speak the words following his death, he could have, if he had wished, made some provision for the words to be spoken regarding Abel after his death. Instead they are transferred to Adah's final salutation of her dead brother's body. It serves to show that Byron's concern, rather than being in salvific typology, is in archetypal events and their repetition in later history. It is interesting that Adah, though she does not embody salvation, is a confirmed emblem of love, patience and hope who exists with Cain in an offer of love that he accepts. But Byron has fictionally written her into the Old Testament text. Her vocabulary is largely a New Testament one of love. So it is as though Byron has constructed a quasi-Christian

(Catholic and feminine), kind of hope in his otherwise anti-salvation text. This is the opposite of *Heaven and Earth* where women are vehicles of damnation and Japhet is preserved, against his will, as part of the remnant.

The typology in *Marino Faliero* works primarily through allusion and extends throughout the play. When Byron writes about Faliero and his execution he clearly has in mind a parallel with Christ's crucifixion. It is not typology in the sense of Faliero's execution being a foreshadowing of Christ's crucifixion, because the crucifixion had already happened. Also there are many details within the play that are entirely different. The most obvious one is Faliero's guilt, as opposed to Christ's innocence. Nevertheless, it is an event compared with another event. Faliero is very conscious that he has left his princely status in order to fight with the people and for the people:

Such as I am, I offer to you  
And to your chiefs, accept me or reject me,  
A Prince who fain would be a citizen  
Or nothing, and who has left his throne to be so. (III. II. 207-210)

The offering of oneself in service of others is part of the Eucharistic prayer, 'We offer to thee our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice',<sup>16</sup> which is an attempt to follow Christ's way, who left his throne in heaven to become a servant king, one of the people, who offered himself as a living sacrifice for the people who could choose to accept or reject him. Faliero is a distant echo of this self-abrogation who finds it difficult because of his pride. It is a model that immensely interested Byron.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Eucharistic prayer can be found, for instance, in *The Book of Common Prayer for use in The Church in Wales*, Vol. I (Church in Wales Publications, 1984), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> See the last lines of 'To the Prince Regent', written in Bologna, July, 1819; "A Despot thou, and yet thy people free,/And by the Heart, not Hand, enslaving us". And his own mixture of pride and abrogation in going to Greece in 1823).

Faliero describes himself as like a pelican who bled “for *all* her little ones” (I. II. 443). The legend of the pelican tearing open its breast in order to feed its young with its own blood is a standard symbol of the Eucharist for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the shedding of his blood for the redemption of man. Before Faliero’s trial, he says that he broke bread and drank from the same wine-cup as the people (III. II. 459-460), and that he knew of the certainty of his fate of which he was afraid (III. II. 486-7), but acted not of his own free will, but did what he had to do to make the state free and immortal (III. I. 45-46). Although Faliero’s death is quasi-typological in the sense that his sacrifice in some ways reflects Christ’s sacrifice for the people’s freedom and immortality, in another sense it is the exact opposite, because with Faliero it is the hell within him that drives his actions and not the Spirit as with Christ:

And yet I act no more on my own free will,  
Nor my own feelings—both compel me back;  
But there is *hell* within me and around,  
And like the demon who believes and trembles  
Must I abhor and do. (III. II. 517-521)

The words are reminiscent of those of Manfred. Both Manfred and Faliero find themselves caught in a dark history which they cannot get out of. Faliero says that the “die is cast” (I. II. 564) and again, the “die is thrown” (IV. II. 32). Both Faliero and Manfred know they must act, but in doing so they are doomed. The consequences of Faliero’s actions are the opposite to the salvific typology of Christ in that Faliero, as the intended saviour of his people, produces failure and, finally, a profound curse. Nevertheless, Byron is anxious to suggest religious as political resonances for this pattern.

As with Christ, a traitor caused Faliero’s arrest. At his trial, which Faliero calls a mockery, he did not defend himself although he was guilty of the charges brought

against him, because he said that they did not have the legal power to try him and he would not plead to his inferiors. Christ remained silent at his trial, not answering the false charges brought against him, because he was under God's law and authority. At the crucifixion, in mockery, he was made to wear purple robes and a crown of thorns. Faliero considers his Ducal cap to be a crown of thorns and he wore purple robes, which did not belong to him, but was given to him as someone who "must play/Its part" (I. II. 416). He was singled out, "like a victim to/Stand crown'd, but bound and helpless, at the altar" (V. I. 206-207). He refers to Angelina's pleadings to the counsel as "but the bleating/Of the lamb to the butcher" (V. I. 392-393), which, of course, is an allusion to Christ at the crucifixion being "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (*Isaiah 53:7*), itself a typological reference. Two "criminals", Israel Bertuccio and Calandro, were put to death, along with Faliero. Like the two criminals who were being put to death alongside Christ, one had a forgiving spirit whilst the other scorned. Faliero's "murder", meant that they had killed the one person who could give them freedom (V. IV. 21), and his veins pour out blood in a sacrificial death as a payment to settle all between the people and himself (V. III. 51-52). Faliero's sacrificial death, however, is also the vehicle of a curse on the Sodom of Venice. This is reminiscent of the curse of *Childe Harold's Coliseum* stanzas for, like the poet, Faliero has something within him "which shall o'ermaster all" (V. I. 474). In *Revelation*, Christ's death unleashes the *Exodus* plagues on a present and end-time world. It delivers a cataclysmic judgement (Christ's own apocalyptic version of final judgement). So though wholly unlike *Marino Faliero*, there are correspondences. The idea of justice as mercy, and the criss-cross relation of the two, is central to the Scriptures. It fascinates Byron and is the inner dynamic of some of his best verse.

Inside Faliero's consciousness, we can discern typology within typology. Whilst using extensive typological references to the crucifixion, Faliero also refers to a columnar cloud of mist which went before him on his entry to Venice, which was like the cloud of mist that went before the Israelites as they made their way in the desert towards the Promised Land (V. II. 54-56). We have already noted that Christ's crucifixion is foreshadowed by the Israelites' release from Egyptian rule and them reaching Canaan, the Promised Land. Byron makes exactly the same typological link within Faliero's mind. Faliero not only connects his death with Christ's, but, furthermore, like the Scriptures, takes on the biblical typology of the deaths being linked to a former guiding to the promised land. However, Byron makes the exact opposite reading of the typology between the Israelites reaching their Promised Land and Faliero reaching his. Whereas the cloud that guided the Israelites to the Promised Land foreshadowed Christ guiding people towards immortal life, the cloud that guided Faliero on his return from Rome, misled him to a place where people are put to death. Byron seems to delight compulsively in using the interconnections within the Scriptures in his poems much more thoroughly and much more intellectually than his contemporaries and yet is in tension with the biblical structures which he is renewing and is inhabiting.

Within one of Byron's last writings, *The Island*, we can detect a softening attitude to a personal destructive history. Byron allows himself a glimmer of hope for mankind in an otherwise destructive world. As in *Marino Faliero*, the typology is extensive. Byron looks back at the Fall of Man with its ongoing guilt and retribution and at the same time he looks forward to the potentiality of a millennium paradise. It is a clear secular, erotic parallel to baptism and

resurrection to new birth. Salvation is achieved via an Eros-based love and not the Agape of the Old Testament. This distinction, as referred to in Nygren's *Agape and Eros*<sup>18</sup> is not absolute, for sexual imagery is used of the relation between God and Israel, Christianity and the Church and in mystical reading of the Scriptures. For instance, Christ is referred to as a bridegroom, a jealous husband, and Israel is referred to as an adulterous partner and as a harlot which, naturally, has sexually imagery and not that of Agape. Byron interestingly goes to Buddhism and Hinduism for his fusion between Eros and the Divine in *The Island* where he side-steps Christianity:

Is love less potent? No—his path is trod,  
 Alike uplifted gloriously to God;  
 Or linked to all we know of heaven below,  
 The other better self, whose joy or woe  
 Is more than ours; the all-absorbing flame  
 Which, kindled by another, grows the same,  
 Wrapt in one blaze; the pure, yet funeral pile,  
 Where gentle hearts, like Bramins, sit and smile. (II. 16. 374-381)

The lovers here, “O’er those who, burning in the new-born fire,/Like martyrs revel in their funeral pyre” (II. VI. 115-116), remind us of the love pyre of *Sardanapalus*. The theme of the purging of sin and guilt from the land but yet the saving a remnant of representative humanity is typologically linked within the poem to the Old Testament flood as it is in *Heaven and Earth*. The use of the word “flood” could, of course, be general and does not necessarily imply Noah’s flood. An early use of the word is the opposite of “ebb” (floodtide). Or, it could be used in terms of a river in flood as for instance in Wordsworth’s *To her Murmuring Flood*. But the use of the word here, coupled as it is with the words “ark”, “dove” and “raven”, makes it specifically scriptural. The mutineers, who

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<sup>18</sup> Anders Nygren (1890-1933) served the Swedish Lutheran Church as bishop and professor of theology in Lund. *Agape & Eros*, 2 vols. (1932-39) is his best-known work and presents an historical account and theological analysis of the contrast between the motif of agape (unmotivated, self-giving love) and that of eros (love which desires to attain a higher good).

pollute the island bringing the experiences of civilisation to an 'untouched' society, are eventually purged from the island. Retribution is sought from the mutineers for leaving Bligh and his crew "to the mercies of the flood" (I. 4. 80), but Neuha and Torquil, two species of ideal humanity, are allowed to survive by taking to their "light ark". The mutineers who "with their rebel bark... fly her as the raven fled the ark" (I. 10. 231-2), are likened to the raven that left Noah's ark not to return, as the mutineers left the ship not wishing to return to their fellow kinsmen. But the mutineers also "seek to nestle with the dove" (I. X. 233). The dove returned to Noah with an olive branch, making the dove innately a symbol for purity, into a symbol of peace. The mutineers wished to settle peaceably as doves with the islanders but this is then impossible for the group as a whole. Neuha has made the same kind of provisions for the refuge as God had commanded of Noah, and from the cave the lovers could see no "tree, and field, and sky" (IV. 6.120), only the water. The cave itself is like a "Gothic canopy", or large arch, which is the same shape as an upturned ark and which protects them from the waters outside until the danger is past. It is a cave made by nature, which nature has also furnished through the stalactites with a "fretted pinnacle", "aisle", "nave", "shrine" and with a "seeming crucifix" (IV. 7. 153-158). So nature provides a parallel salvation from retribution as Noah's ark. The parallel is almost blasphemous, but quite explicit. Just as Noah was singled out from his fellow men, Torquil is also singled out from the mutineers because of his love for Neuha. He, along with the other mutineers had gathered together by nature's pure stream, which is "pure/And fresh as innocence" (III. III. 67-68), in which they try to quench their thirst and wash their "gory stains", but they are unable to do so. By settling peaceful amongst the innocent islanders, the mutineers had wrongly hoped that their guilt would be expiated and they are hunted down in the name of

revenge and justice. Torquil alone escapes retribution, only because he takes a baptismal-like dive in blind obedience and absolute trust to follow Neuha. Washing in a stream, like his fellow mutineers was not enough to expiate the guilt, it takes complete immersion, such as Torquil made in love and trust for Neuha. There may be a distant sense of crossing the Red Sea as a means of cutting connections with Egypt (here European civilisation symbolised by the naval ship). When they emerge from their “chapel of the Seas” (IV. 7. 160), they find, like Noah when he emerges from his chapel of the seas, that their land is purged from the pollution of hostility and is given a new hope of living in peace, love and harmony. Noah was given the sign of a rainbow as God’s promise for the future and Neuha also watches “as for a rainbow in the skies” (IV. 14. 384), when she leaves the cave. There can be no question that these parallels are deliberately drawn. They are both part of the aesthetic of the poem, establish its values, and yet also proceed clearly from a mind steeped in that habit of reading one part of the Scriptures in relation to other parts.

In *The Island*, there is again, as there is with *Marino Faliero*, typology within the typology in the form of the songs of Toobonai (II. 1-2). Moreover, the songs of Toobonai are typological in two respects. In one respect the songs are typological because they are a repetition of an account. Byron records in his notes that the first three sections of the islanders songs of Toobonai are taken from an actual song of the Tonga islanders, of which a prose translation is given in *Mariner’s Account of the Tonga Islands*. Toobonai is not however, one of them; but was one of those where Christian and the mutineers took refuge. Byron adds that he has altered and added, but has retained as much as possible of the original. So, the songs are a mixture of fantasy and fact, as is *The Island*, itself. Mythological and



historical worlds are intermingled. *The Island* is born of Byron's imagination, but it is based on the historical account of the *Mutiny on the Bounty*.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the songs of Toobonai are historically based but mixed with Byron's imagination. So within the mythological world of *The Island* is a memory of events which are mainly historical. Yet, the songs are typological in another respect, because the events of the songs of Toobonai parallel the events of *The Island*. The songs are about a paradise island, Toobonai, which has been polluted by the Fijians who brought war to the island. The Fijians suffered retribution, and afterwards the islanders look forward to, once again, experiencing paradise on Licoo. These events, of course, parallel the events on Neuha's paradise island. The island was polluted by the mutineers who brought bloodshed. The mutineers suffered retribution and afterwards the islanders, once more, experience paradise on the island.

But the songs are typological in a deeper sense too. *The Island*, as we have argued, is about Neuha plucking Torquil from the point of death, leading him to eternal life via a kind of baptism and a new birth. It could be argued that within the songs of Toobonai are exactly the same sentiments. The islanders of Toobonai gather flowers from the sepulchre. The flowers are living, fragrant things plucked from the place of death, the sepulchre. The flowers represent life and new birth. The islanders use the oil of the flowers to anoint themselves. In the Bible, anointing with oil is used for such things as setting specific people apart for God's use, or for healing the sick, or burial, but more significantly, from at least the second century onwards, Christians were anointed at their baptism. The Toobonai

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<sup>19</sup> Byron's headnote to the poem gives two principle sources, that of Bligh's *Voyage* (1792) which is an expanded version of Bligh's *Narrative* (1790), and John Martin's *Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands* (1872).

islanders pluck new birth (the flowers), at the point of death, (the sepulchre). They then anoint themselves with the oil of new, fragrant life, (baptism). So, both *The Island* and the songs within *The Island* are typological in two respects. *The Island* is typological firstly, in that it parallels the Old Testament flood, though the destruction is brought about not by the waves but by the navy. Noah's ark was typologically compared to *Exodus* through the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of the foes and to baptism. The Hebrew word for 'ark' is used only twice in the Scriptures. The other occasion is for the basket in which the baby Moses is placed in the river and from which he is rescued whilst the other Hebrew children are killed. The connection is deliberate. So Byron relies on a Christian typological account to see Torquil's dive as Noah's survival and the saving rite of baptism. Secondly, it is typological because within the mythological account of Neuha's island there is a memory of a partly historical account. The historical account of the songs is, itself, typological on two levels. The first is a straightforward parallel of the invasion and eventual restoration of the island paradise and the second is a deeper, more complex parallel of baptism and new birth within the islands.

There are then unmistakable parallels between the typology within *The Island* and within *Marino Faliero* and it is clear that Byron relies profoundly on Christian typological habits of reading without which his imagination would not function. But he gives these a twist through 180 degrees so that Christian baptism in an historical word and in eternity becomes a metaphor for erotic salvation in a wholly mythological world. Our enquiries into *The Island* and, indeed, *Marino Faliero* then have demonstrated that Byron has an interest in that watershed which is a repeat of history, in the sense that it has always been like this, things will always

die and things will always go wrong, and yet, at the same time, there is another unprecedented and specific version of it. So Byron has a genuine attachment to the older view of history, whereby past events have a direct and meaningful bearing on the present day. In this way he is a reactionary in relation to the new sense of history whereby, paradoxically, the people who foreground history lose their living place in it and become atemporal spectators of it.

So far in our discussion on typology we have enquired into poems and plays that have an historical background, namely *Childe Harold*, *Cain*, *The Island* and *Marino Faliero*. How then does Byron's typological mind deal with a purely fictional story? In this instance, *Don Juan* is the most obvious choice to investigate. On the face of it, *Don Juan* appears to be a less typological text, partly because the events are manifestly fictional, with perhaps the exception of the siege of Ismail and the evident resemblance of Norman to Newstead Abbey.

Although Byron does relate event to event, which is typological, he also draws upon the other great form of scriptural writing, namely Wisdom tradition, especially *Ecclesiastes*. Within *Don Juan*, I think there is something of the typological tradition juxtaposed with a moralistic, or moralising, tradition. I shall begin with the moralising, wisdom tradition of *Ecclesiastes*. *Ecclesiastes*, of course, asserts that human life is beautiful but transient and the best thing we can do is to be moderate. This emphasis on moderation takes two forms, one positive and the other negative. The 'vanitas' tradition is the negative version which says that the best thing to do is to be moderate in the sense of not expecting too much although this will not do us much good. The positive version suggests that moderation will have positive benefits. Even though there is clearly a strong

influence from the 'vanitas' tradition in Byron, it naturally does not follow that *Ecclesiastes* is the main source of that tradition, particularly because Byron in general is sympathetic to a 'vanitas' tradition in its broadest extension. He, himself, deliberately invokes such a 'vanitas' tradition when he talks about Plato, Swift, Juvenal and also Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, but also included in the list is *Ecclesiastes*. So Byron is alert and sympathetic to a 'vanitas' tradition in general, of which *Ecclesiastes* is a part.<sup>20</sup> In general, the Scriptures do not place great value on temperance, apart from the Wisdom tradition. It is true that the Bible very often critiques Babylonian excess or the riches rebuked in *Amos*. Nevertheless, it tends to associate God's blessings with abundance and plenty. So a major value of the Hebrew Bible is not towards temperance at all, but towards abundance. But it knows in its later books, probably from Greek tradition, another emphasis which we could call a temperance thrust and *Ecclesiastes* is a part of that. There is a prophetic, denunciatory 'vanitas' tradition and a moral, temperance tradition and Byron is heir to both. Within those two traditions, the biblical texts are particularly significant, especially with regard to *Ecclesiastes* which Byron refers to a considerable number of times.<sup>21</sup> So we shall look at the correspondence between them. As we know, *Ecclesiastes*, is part of the Wisdom writings, written by the teacher, or the preacher, called Koheleth in Hebrew, and is customarily attributed to Solomon. It has twelve chapters which debate the meaningfulness of wisdom, pleasure and wealth. At the end of the book there is the conclusion that, at best, all these things in life are no more than a

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<sup>20</sup> It is interesting that in his 'Conversations with Lord Byron' Kennedy equates Childe Harold with Solomon of whom he says is "the vanity of all human things"; in *Lives of the Great Romantics: By their Contemporaries*, Vol. 2, ed. by Chris Hart, (London: William Pickering, 1996), pp. 344-411, p. 398.

<sup>21</sup> J.J. McGann comments in his book *Don Juan in Context*, p.168, that; "in the medley style of *Don Juan*, there seems to be a time, and a style, for every purpose under heaven". This is a direct quotation from *Ecclesiastes* 3:1, "To every *thing there is* a season and a time to every purpose under heaven"; also *Ecclesiastes* 3:17, "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work".

chasing after the wind. In larger general terms it is a matter of human accommodation, a tradition of temperance and a sense of human littleness, 'vanitas'.

We begin our comparison with the most obvious link between *Ecclesiastes* and *Don Juan* which comes at the beginning of Canto VII when the narrator derides those who accuse him of scoffing at human power and virtue and refers them to Solomon amongst others. He adds, "Ecclesiastes said, that all is vanity" (VII. 6. 1). The poem begins, we should recall, with the claim that the work will consist of twelve cantos. Naturally, this does not necessarily mean that Byron is modelling his work on the biblical book, anymore so than he could be modelling it on the classical writers whose epics use twelve or twenty four books or chapters which we have discussed in the previous chapter. But it is interesting to note that Canto XII marks a kind of watershed in the poem. Certainly up until that point, Juan's revelry and escapades are well discussed. The latter cantos develop more of a critique regarding his adventurous lifestyle. For instance, in Canto XI, stanzas 5 and 6, the narrator says that he will not afford time for metaphysical discussions anymore because he has become more orthodox in his religious opinions. In the following canto we read that he:

Had sate beneath the gallery at nights,  
To hear debates whose thunder *roused* (not *rouses*)  
The world to gaze upon the northern lights. (XII, 82. 651-653)

This, of course, refers to his sitting in the House of Lords listening to Parliamentary debates and reminiscing that the modern debaters do not have the same gift of oratory as they did when he was young. However, if we wished to interpret this in a larger sense, we could say that 'the gallery', a place where pictures of people and life are displayed, is symbolic of *Don Juan* itself. Juan's

life inevitably prompts colourful pictures of people and of events, and that fictional life had, indeed, caused almost a furore amongst those who read and discussed *Don Juan*. So, in a way, the ‘thunder’ had caused people to gaze upon the ‘northern lights’, which, of course, is another term for the aurora borealis which, in turn, is the way he describes his poem — a ‘versified aurora borealis’. So the furore that was created by his writing had the effect of rousing people to look at his work. In comparison, the first twelve chapters of *Ecclesiastes* takes the form of a collection of proverbs and observations which are dominated by views that do not fit easily into the general pattern of biblical outlook. But, the conclusion of *Ecclesiastes* shows that the book is best understood as a powerful and convincing commentary on the meaningless of life without God, and the despair and cynicism which results from a lack of faith in God. If we go back to *Don Juan*, we see that following the first twelve cantos of Juan’s revelries and escapades, the poem turns towards a more reflective nature. Towards the end of Canto XII, at stanza 54, the narrator says that his poem now begins and then Canto XIII commences with the words, “I NOW mean to be serious”. Although he has said this before and use the admission to be ironical yet Canto XIII does make a new beginning. A significant turning point earlier in the poem can be identified at the siege of Ismail where suddenly Juan is no longer innocently taken along by events but deflects his energies directly into them. He begins to look ‘experienced’. But the beginning of Canto XIII, does mark another turning point in the opposite direction. For instance, at the end of the previous canto hypocritical London society banishes those who have lost their good position which Byron says could be “A comment on the Gospel’s ‘Sin nor more,/And be thy sins forgiven:’” (XII. 79). Also:

He knew the world, and would not see depravity

In faults which sometimes show the soil's fertility,  
If that the weeds o'erlive not the first crop,—  
For then they are very difficult to stop. (XIII. 22. 173-176)

Juan's knowledge of the world gives him an understanding of the way in which faults, unless kept in check, can develop. This, of course, is linked to the parable of the wheat and the tares, in *Matthew* 13: 24-29, where the seed is sown into fertile soil, but the weeds grow up and choke the wheat. Byron's emphasis is slightly different; slight faults may be a sign of fertility. The New Testament makes a more absolute distinction. There are also answers through this same metaphor to some of the larger questions of life. For example:

Truth's fountains may be clear—her streams are muddy,  
And cut through such canals of contradiction,  
That she must often navigate o'er fiction.

Apologue, fable, poesy and parable  
Are false, but may be render'd also true  
By those who sow them in a land that's arable.  
'Tis wonderful what fable will not do!  
'Tis said it makes reality more bearable:  
But what's reality? Who has its clue?  
Philosophy? No; she too much rejects.  
Religion? *Yes*; but which of all her sects? (XV. 88-89. 702-712)

The narrator ponders the question of truth and reality in literature, that verisimilitude is no guarantee of the truth and vice versa and that fiction can be 'rendered true'. Reality is multifaceted, cannot readily be represented, and needs to be treated as such, much as religion, in some respects does. The previous stanza comments, "But if a writer should be quite consistent,/How could he possibly show things existent?" (XV. 87. 695-696). This is a characteristic point which we have discussed in the previous chapter, regarding the way in which truth is recorded in the Bible. So, towards the end of the poem, we have less of the glorious blundering of Juan's escapades, which culminated in the siege of Ismail where both he and Johnson had completely lost their way (VIII. 19), and find

ourselves in the more stable world of Norman Abbey where there is much discussion and where ladies have enough time to cram “twelve sheets into one little letter” so that its reader would be indebted to make a response (XIII. 104). This brings us back to the twelve very short chapters, in the little book of *Ecclesiastes*, where the writer is indebted to make a response, by drawing a conclusion, to the revelries he has just described.<sup>22</sup> *Ecclesiastes* mainly considers the purpose of life given the transience of man. Juan’s adventures begin with the words, “All things that have been born were born to die” (I. 220. 1755), and the poem continues in the next but one stanza with:

‘Go, little book, from this my solitude!  
I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways!  
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,  
The world will find thee after many days.’ (I. 222. 1769-1772)

Here, Byron is quoting directly from Southey’s ‘Epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate’, but casting the book upon the waters is also a reference to *Ecclesiastes* 11:1:

CAST thy bread upon the waters:  
for thou shalt find it after many days.

The bread in this instance appertains to wisdom, which, in turn, is linked to *Isaiah* 55:10-11:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

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<sup>22</sup> McGann’s *Don Juan in Context*, p.129, argues that the English cantos are the result of Byron’s pressure of his own poem — that *Don Juan* demanded an alteration of its procedure. Consequently, there is a new, variant phase, which gives sanction to the poem being described as a ‘verse novel’, the late cantos no longer being ‘episodes’, but ‘chapters’. This supports my assertion here that the English cantos have an altered procedure to the earlier ones, in my view, acting as a critique.



Similarly, towards the end of the poem, just after the writer comments that “Perhaps mankind might find the path they miss” (XIV. 1. 3); and that it may be that man was born to die (XIV. 3. 3), (a common thrust of *Ecclesiastes*), we find the same words from *Ecclesiastes*, “And what I write I cast upon the stream” (XIV. 11. 87). Such literary farewells were traditional and Byron, like Spenser before him, uses this phrase to form a kind of framework for the whole poem.<sup>23</sup>

*Don Juan* has many shared concerns with *Ecclesiastes*. The feasts on Haidee’s isle, in Norman Abbey and the opulence of the Sultan’s palace are all critiqued as ‘vanitas’. But towards the end of *Ecclesiastes* the wisdom writer supersedes his critique of the love of eating and drinking with the love of money:

A feast is made for laughter,  
and wine maketh merry:  
but money answereth all *things*. (*Ecclesiastes* 10:19)

Byron begins Canto XII with thoughts on the relative powers of money and love and decides that “Cash rules Love, the ruler” (XII. 14. 109). Other details in the poem betray Byron’s familiarity with the Scriptures. For instance, the more quirky and direct comparison of, “whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him” (*Ecclesiastes* 10:8) — (it is interesting that although Byron could not have read the NIV version it uses the word ‘wall’ instead of ‘hedge’) — with the Russian officer who had broken through the walls of Ismail who, “felt his heel/Seized fast, as if ’twere by the serpent’s head/Whose fangs Eve taught her human seed to feel” (VIII. 83. 659-660). This reference does not only refer back to the saying in *Ecclesiastes*, for Byron is primarily referring to the serpent in the

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<sup>23</sup> Byron quotes from Robert Southey’s ‘Epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate’, *Poetical Works* (1838), X. 174. See also Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* (1786), V: ‘Go litel bok, go...’; and Spenser’s dedication of *The Sheperdes Calender*: ‘Goe little booke...’ which the poet repeats in the last six lines of his postscript: ‘Goe, lyttle Calender.../Goe but a lowly gate...’ Byron mocks clichés but delights in their ironical repetition.

Garden of Eden. He is not only putting two books of the Bible together, *Genesis* and *Ecclesiastes*, but (although it is not exactly typological) he is also reading the *Genesis* account in two ways. Part of the story in *Genesis* is that because the serpent has deceived Eve, God said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (*Genesis* 3:15). The first meaning is an aetiological explanation of the present set of circumstances, that if you walk about, a snake is liable to bite you on the heel and in recompense you will tread on it. In the origin of things, therefore, there is an archetypal enmity between the serpent and human beings. Byron takes the meaning in its original term, but he also interprets it in a different sense. "Whose fangs Eve taught her human seed to feel", means that all human beings experience the pain of Satan's bite in their Achilles' heel and so they feel sin and death. This is not what the biblical text means, but Byron is thinking it through and putting a theological concept on the biblical story that there is enmity between the serpent and the woman. Byron will have known the typological interpretation of the bruised heel where it is referred to Mary who is often shown iconographically with a foot on a snake for her obedience has reversed the disobedience of Eve.<sup>24</sup>

A further correspondence between *Don Juan* and *Ecclesiastes* can be made with the reference to woman as an entrapment:

And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, and whose hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. (*Ecclesiastes* 7:26)

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<sup>24</sup> *Genesis* 3:15 is known as the protevangelium, meaning 'The first Gospel' because it predicts the perpetual hostility between Satan and the woman, Eve (representing all mankind) and between Satan's seed (his agents) and her seed (the Messiah). The woman's seed would crush the Devil's head, a mortal wound spelling utter defeat. This wound was administered at Calvary when Christ decisively triumphed over the Devil, but suffered pain and even physical death on the cross.

This can be compared with Byron's description of the Sultana's entrapment of Juan:

Something imperial, or imperious, threw  
A chain o'er all she did; that is, a chain  
Was thrown as 'twere about the neck of you,—  
And rapture's self will seem almost a pain  
With aught which looks like despotism in view:  
Our souls at least are free, and 'tis in vain  
We would against them make the flesh obey—  
The spirit in the end will have its way. (V. 110)

The despotic Sultana had ensnared Juan, who had already been placed in chains at the slave market. Although Juan rejects her advances, he succumbs to Dudù's charms and is ultimately condemned to death. The vocabulary of women's 'entrapment' of men is widespread, but it is quite likely that Byron first found it in the Scriptures. There is a more startling link, however, between this episode and *Ecclesiastes*. Juan was held captive along with actors and singers, who were being sold into slavery and Juan, himself, was taken to a harem. Although the Sultan's palace can, in some respects be linked to Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and read as a symbolic landscape of eunuchs, dwarfs, masquerades, locked up women and impotent men who, in turn, lock them up, nevertheless a direct comparison of the harem episode can be made with *Ecclesiastes* 2:7-9:

I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house...  
I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of  
kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women  
singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical  
instruments, and that of all sorts.

I am including the NIV version because the language is more directly comparable with Byron's and makes it clear that the Wisdom writer is referring to slaves and a harem.

I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were  
born in my house... I acquired men and women singers, and a  
harem as well...

Slavery here is not so much an emblem of injustice as of 'vanitas'. At the slave market, twelve negresses from Nubia are bought and the Sultana's attendants composed a choir of ten or twelve girls. Byron continues with his preoccupation with the number twelve, which we have highlighted earlier. For instance, previously, the narrator wondered how Juan's parents got through twelve hours together. At twelve Juan was a fine but quiet boy; shipwrecked, Juan experienced twelve days of fear; Haidee had twelve rings on her hand; challenging Juan, Lambro stood twelve yards off from him; Haidee withered for twelve days and nights, and so on. Towards the end of the poem, at Norman Abbey there are twelve peers; Generals, "Huger than twelve of our degenerate breed", and twelve saints sanctified in stone. In addition to there being twelve chapters to *Ecclesiastes*, the number twelve is, of course, significant because it is symbolic for a number of reasons. It is the fusion of matter (4) with spirit (3). Matter, being earth, fire, wind and water, times the spirit, which is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (4 x 3). There are also twelve months in the year and twelve signs of the Zodiac. But more importantly there are the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve prophets and twelve apostles, or disciples.<sup>25</sup> Byron partly picks up these numerological patterns and his preoccupation with the number twelve makes it likely that the reference to his poem having twelve books, or over, to its change of character at Canto XII is pondered and significant.

Although, as we have seen, Byron draws upon the moralistic and wisdom tradition of *Ecclesiastes*, we have seen too that he also uses typological incidents from Old Testament narrative, particularly those of *Genesis*. So we shall now turn our

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<sup>25</sup> The terminology between the words 'disciples' and the 'apostles' in the New Testament is not consistent. Quite often the disciples, sometimes known as the seventy two (6 x 12) are distinguished from the apostles. But sometimes, confusingly, the apostles are called disciples, but it means that they are referred to as apostles.

attention to the typological connections between *Don Juan* and *Genesis*. It is a different tradition from that of *Ecclesiastes*. Byron widely utilises the dramatic world of cataclysmic destruction with absolute unimaginable salvation presented in *Genesis*, and transfers this into the secular salvation of Juan.<sup>26</sup> For instance, the shipwreck is typologically linked to the Old Testament flood. Juan was sent upon a Spanish ship called the 'Holy Trinidada' (Holy Trinity):

As if a Spanish ship were Noah's ark,  
To wean him from the wickedness of earth,  
And send him like a dove of promise forth. (II. 8. 62-64)

Juan suffers both mental and physical sickness. However, his physical condition overcame his longings for his lost love and it is not long before Julia is forgotten. As the ship started to flounder the "salvation" (II. 28. 223), of those on board hung in the balance. But when the ship's sinking is inevitable, it is Juan who, with a sudden maturity, makes directly for the "spirit-room", because, as the narrator reminds us, nothing calms the spirit more than "rum and true religion" (II. 34. 265-266). Sensible Juan, as guardian of the spirit-room, keeps the rest of the crew away. The other option left, of course, was that of 'true religion'. Byron obviously delights in the 'doubleness' of such words as 'spirit' and 'fire and water', words used both for alcohol and in religious terms. It is clear that whereas Byron is using the words, 'fire' and 'water' as a standard term for alcohol spirits, nevertheless he is also thinking that in the New Testament death to the old life and baptism to new life is through fire (the Holy Spirit) and through water. Juan and the other passengers are cast upon the sea in an open boat and suffer hardship which, the narrator claims, is what sailors have had to endure since the days of Noah's ark. Hardship means that they live only on the "love of life" (II. 66. 522)

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<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that Stevens' thesis 'Byron and the Bible', p. 177, asserts that Byron has taken the theme of *Manfred* from the first chapter of *Ecclesiastes* and has added to it God's injunction in *Genesis* that led to the Fall of man.

and, seeing those lives disappearing rapidly, they decide to live off anyone's life rather than give up their own, so they begin to devour one another. In the Scriptures, Jesus says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (*John* 12:25). The mariners' cannibalism and their rapid demise are a gloss on this verse. Juan alone was saved from the shipwreck because, in the first instance, he did not rush to alcohol because he did not want to drown in an uncivilised way, like the others who would "sink below/Like brutes" (II. 36. 284-285). Secondly, Juan was saved because he did not love his life enough to preserve it by devouring others. Adrift on the sea, there is a rainbow overhead (II. 91. 721), and also a dove-like bird, a bird of promise, which the narrator links to the dove of Noah's ark (II. 95. 754-756). Others perished, "chiefly by a species of self-slaughter" (II. 102. 815), but Juan deemed that his life was "saved" (II. 108. 864). It is interesting that Byron adds words reminiscent of *Ecclesiastes*, "perhaps, in vain".

The shipwreck episode is, in the first instance, not a salvation history, it is a comic history. Byron in his actual published statements about the poem does envisage Juan dying on the scaffold in the French Revolution.<sup>27</sup> We get a sense of this specifically in the Norman Abbey cantos, with the ghost stories and Lady Adeline described as being, "The fair most fatal Juan ever met" (XIII. 12. 91), and so forth. Similarly Byron envisages divorce, scandal, and break-up as the end point of the English narrative. Thus when he actually thinks forward about the poem he thinks in terms of cataclysm and disaster. But when he comes to actually writing the text, he cannot ever reach the conclusion of Juan on the scaffold. It is not that

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<sup>27</sup> See Byron's letter to Murray from Ravenna, dated 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1821. Letter no. 412 in Moore, T., *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1932), p. 496.

Byron does not believe that disasters happen, or that he cannot represent them — Haidee dies, Julia becomes a nun, and thousands die at the siege of Ismail, yet despite all, Juan survives. When Byron has apparently confined and subordinated his hero to the closed world of Norman Abbey, suddenly Aurora is introduced whom he had not intended, so far as we can tell, to include, so the poem goes in another direction. In this way, the poem does mimic salvation history in that the Bible is not interested in the destructions that it chronicles, but it is interested in the remnant that survives and the hope of a future. We might suggest then that Byron's theoretical and rational imagination is anti-comical and anti-salvation, whereas his actual imagination is on the side of salvation. Of course, Byron wrote tragedies too which, unlike those of his contemporaries, do not evade tragic closure, as George Steiner argued in *The Death of Tragedy*,<sup>28</sup> but *Don Juan* tells a different Byronic story. It could be said that the tone of the narrator and the tone of the explicit relation of the book tends to be pessimistic, but the actual writing and sequence of stories always imagines, and is in love with, a secular version of salvation. Juan expects to live and we share his expectations. Juan's succour is normally accomplished through woman and not through God's direct providence; there is more nature than grace in it. Nevertheless, the pattern is the same and it is not simply a natural pattern but one that Byron first encountered in the Scriptures.

The Flood accomplished the eradication of a corrupt and degenerate human race, except for Noah and his family. But the human condition, even among the righteous remnant of Noah's family, is such that sin soon finds its way back into the lives of those who were saved in the flood. The *Genesis* account records an incident in which Noah drinks himself into a drunken stupor. Ham shows great

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<sup>28</sup> Steiner, G., *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961, paperback, 1963).

disrespect for his father, Noah, whom he finds not only drunk but naked. Following the shipwreck, Haidee first sees Juan naked upon their island paradise. In Byron's text this is both an erotic joke and, tantalisingly, something more. Events soon turn sour when Lambro returns to see drunken islanders and what he perceives as Juan and Haidee's utter disrespect for him. Although it is not typological in the sense that it is Juan and not the father, as in *Genesis*, who has been drinking and who is naked, the scenario is the same. Drunkenness, sexuality and a perceived disrespect for the father is at the heart of the problem. This episode is a good example in which biblical and secular contexts marry and generate new sequences in ways which are generally astounding to the reader. Byron has activated nearly all the main Noah references as we have shown in the previous paragraph so there is no doubt that he has Noah and the Flood in mind and we also have the same sort of sequence. There is a flood, a saved person, but for that saved person things do not go right as one would expect. There is someone found naked and gazed at by those who should not and linked to this, the perceived disrespect to a father. Byron does not approach the Haidee and Juan story in the biblical way. He is much more interested in the erotic and transfers the biblical sequence to a romance sequence where a woman sees a man naked, as opposed to a father. Doubtless Byron has also in mind the episode in *The Odyssey* where Nausicca sees Odysseus naked, but it is the biblical story that interests him more. Both the Juan and Haidee story and that of the Flood are in operation, although they are entirely disparate. Byron is preoccupied by Noah's flood and by images of destruction and salvation but does not offer the text in altogether those terms. He superimposes upon them quite a different kind of text which comes from a different kind of context which has to do with Eros and sex, which the Bible is not primarily concerned with though it is concerned with generation. The



Haidee and Juan episode is a clear example of the way in which Byron activates references from a biblical source, and also from an entirely disparate, secular source, and having activated all of them, tries to mediate between them. We cannot say that for Byron the erotic world is primary and that he is simply making fun of the Bible, or conversely, that the biblical world is primary. He is establishing a complicated mediation task between religious worlds and sexual worlds based on his version of the *Don Juan* story. In a sense, it could be said that the origins of the Don Juan story, in Tirso de Molina's play, is a kind of mediation between the sexual energies, religion and the chains of religion and death. Byron does something surprisingly similar.

Byron makes many references throughout *Don Juan* both to Babylon and to the tower of Babel and we shall now explore some of these. Babylon, in the Scriptures, is originally a real city, but then becomes a typological model for other cities. It can also be a woman and Byron switches to Babylon as a woman when he refers to Catherine the Great. In a general sense, more so than the other Romantic poets, Byron is interested in, and identifies with, civilisation. He feels for the civilisations of Rome, Turkey and also that of ancient Greece. He delights in the idea of a revival for ancient Greece in the modern world. He likes big cities and identifies with them. In particular this is true of the city of Venice. Venice becomes, for Byron, the epitome of what human civilisation is like. In this sense, its typological forerunner is Rome. Venice is "an ocean-Rome".<sup>29</sup> It is deeply ambiguous, of course. It is dark, full of crimes, injustice and horror and yet, at the same time, it is magnificent and stirs the spirit. Byron is stirred by civilisations — Rome, Athens, Istanbul, Venice, but also by the ancient town of Nineveh and the

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<sup>29</sup> *The Two Foscari*, III. 1. 154.

fall of Babylon in the Old Testament. The shadow of a just destruction hovers over all his cities. In the Scriptures, the construction of Babylon with its stepped tower (ziggurat, an architectural form unique to Babylonia) was, according to *Genesis*, stopped by divine intervention. This was taken as a sign of God's displeasure at the arrogance of the people as a whole. Their pride, the concern with the preservation of their name (which led to rebellion against God), was followed by judgement, a confusing of the language (until this point everyone has been speaking the same language) and a scattering of the people (*Genesis* 11:1-9).<sup>30</sup> From a biblical perspective, the human city is liable to turn into Babel for they are synonymous with human pride and the ambition to be self-sustaining and usurp the glory which belongs to God.

Juan begins his escapades by being exiled and “wept, as wept the captive Jews/By Babel's waters, still remembering Sion (II. 16. 121-122). Byron uses the word ‘Babel’ here, rather than ‘Babylon’ for the metre, of course, but perhaps also to signify that Juan will be dispersed into various nations where he will not be able to speak the language. When Juan is washed ashore from the shipwreck, he and Haidee cannot communicate by a shared language. Following the Haidee episode, Juan finds himself, once more, cast out upon the waters. This time he finds himself in the Sultan's palace, where the narrator considers the tower of Babel. We are informed that “man makes that great which makes him little” (V. 59. 465), and that Babel was “Nimrod's hunting-box,<sup>31</sup> a town of gardens, walls, and wealth

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<sup>30</sup> The confusion of language and lack of understanding which befalls man as a result of his trying to ascend to heaven is typological, but reversed, by the descent of the Holy Spirit to the twelve apostles at Pentecost when each spoke in ‘other tongues’ but were amazed because each one heard them speaking in his own language (*Acts* 2:4-6).

<sup>31</sup> The name and fame of Nimrod have a secure place in Talmudic Judaism and Islamic tradition. In Rabbinic tradition, the tower of Babel is “the house of Nimrod” where idolatry was practised and divine homage offered to Nimrod.

amazing” (V. 60. 473-474). Babel then, as Nimrod’s hunting box, is a place of idolatry, whether it is idolatry in worshipping people such as the Sultan, Sultana, Catherine the Great, or glory, or power, and so on. Babel also may be found in gardens (reminiscent of Babylon’s hanging gardens) such as Haidee’s island idyll which is described as their garden of “Eden” (IV. 10. 74), and where, they could not understand each other’s language. Babel, too, is ‘amazing wealth’, such as the wealth Juan found in the palace of the Sultan and in Norman Abbey.

The siege of Ismail is a vision, historically based, but biblically founded, of the inherent destructiveness of fallen human beings. It is also a typological fulfilment, but in reverse, of the creation story:

‘Let there be light! said God, and there was light!’

‘Let there be blood!’ says man, and there’s a sea! (VII. 41. 321-322)

In the battle a fiery cloud shone as “A mirrored Hell” in the Danube’s waters (VIII. 6. 45). Suwarrow taught the soldiers to pray, instruct, desolate and plunder. His teaching was not like Jacob’s ladder (VII. 52. 415-416). In other words his teaching would not enable them to reach heaven. Suwarrow’s declared love of glory is one of the main causes of the ‘tower of Babel’. Here, there is some sort of a turning point in the poem. Juan is no longer innocently taken along, he becomes corrupted by war. The narrative describes how both Juan and Johnson have, in effect, lost their way, by accustoming themselves to the ways of the world. Juan may have warred with the best intentions, but, “’Tis pity ‘that such meaning should pave Hell’” (VIII. 25. 200). Juan stumbled on to try and find a path (VIII. 30. 238-239), but in his wish for glory, rushed into the thickest of the fire (VIII 32. 256). ‘The path’ of course, is symbolic of the regular methods by which a man

lives or shows his character.<sup>32</sup> Juan's wish for glory leads him to the thickest of the fire, to an image of damnation. Exactly the same things happen to Johnson. He rallies those in the "shadows of Death's valley" (VIII. 36. 288),<sup>33</sup> and then leads them into the heaviest fire. In Scripture, the psalmist who describes walking through the valley of the shadow of death is led beside quiet waters, guided in paths of righteousness and has his soul restored (*Psalms* 23:2-4). Johnson, however, leads the men into death:

They fell as thick as harvest beneath hail,  
Grass before scythes, or corn below the sickle, (VIII. 43. 337-338)

The language is reminiscent of the biblical 'grim reaper':

... Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.  
(*Revelation* 14:15-16)

Byron often complains of divine judgement and the doctrine of hell, but his imagination is in love with the imagery associated with it. In part Byron's muse is a grim muse. As the battle comes to a close the narrator adds that it will take more than a Revolution to "save the Earth from Hell's pollution" (VIII. 51. 407-408). Ismail is entered with the words "Oh eternity" and is linked, amongst other towns to Rome and Babylon. The wickedness personified in Babylon in *Revelation* 17, clearly symbolises the historic manifestation of iniquity in first-century Rome. God's final judgement upon Babylon, both literal and typological, for her immorality and persecution of the saints will be her destruction. Byron links the siege with Babylon by mocking man's delight in the decorations of the military. He regards them as of spurious, materialistic value and connects this

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<sup>32</sup>The Gospel writer Matthew warns, "wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because straight *is* the gate and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (*Matthew* 7:13-14).

<sup>33</sup>"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (*Psalms* 23:4).

vanity with the Babylonian Harlot of *Revelation*, a symbol of the degradation of spirit (VII. 84. 665-667).<sup>34</sup> Catherine the Great is also linked to the Babylonian harlot in cantos which are epitomised by sterility:

For Babylon's than Russia's royal harlot—  
And neutralize her outward show of Scarlet. (X. 26. 207-208)

Juan's journey to London, or what is called his approach to Babylon (XI. 23. 177-178), can be considered as a recuperation, a rapid symbolic repetition of his life journey. The road to Babylon takes him through "Mounts Pleasant" which he finds is not pleasant and through rows called, "Paradise", which he says "Eve might quit without much sacrifice" (XI. 21. 163-168). Juan found paradise on Haidee's island, but, in the end, it turned out to be a place of violence. His adventures as a whole have been epitomised by repetition of the Fall. Juan's life's journey that had eventually brought him to London, or as the narrator puts it, the approach to "Babylon", was not an approach via "Mounts Pleasant". Instead it was through a "roar of voices and confusion" (XI. 22. 170), reminiscent of the confused voices at the tower of Babel. The polite society of London is, itself, described as the "Babel round" (XI. 69.549). They are best left to their own devices of building themselves up into people of importance, and the country equivalent to London life, Norman Abbey, is the Gothic Babel (XIII. 50. 396). The artists that Byron put into the gallery at Norman Abbey are quite often noted for their contrast between darkness and light, for instance, Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Lorraine and Jose Ribera. In Norman Abbey, too, there is the contrast of people between the 'Babel round' those who wish to elevate

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<sup>34</sup> "I will show unto thee the judgement of the great whore... With whom... the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication... I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast... And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls... And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (*Revelation* 17:1-5).

themselves, who are there because they wish to be seen doing and saying the right things in polite society, and also those who appear as things of darkness, ghosts, etc. In contrast to these there is also Aurora Raby, the bringer of light, who shines like a jewel. Aurora is to be his salvation from the destruction of Babel.<sup>35</sup>

Newstead/Norman Abbey, is both a modern Babel and the old Christian image of the church as the renovated Temple which again has the Holy Spirit within it, as the twelve tribes of Israel once did, (the great singing spirit in the empty arch by the twelve apostles). Byron fuses here Romantic landscape, the Aeolian harp and the sense of Pentecost. This fusion is interesting because there is nearly always two sides to Byron. Byron, as we have said, is a poet of civilisation, but he also sets up mountains against cities, as he does, for instance, in Canto III. Byron is a celebrator of polished, sophisticated people with refined thoughts and manners, who live in cities. He is also interested in successful styles of organisation and politics. The contrary side to this is his interest in the dark, the counter, city of God, which is Babel, Babylon, and which symbolises the wickedness of cities, with its human self-sufficiency and resultant scattering. It is a biblical way of thinking because the Bible basically sets up, as St. Augustine sees it in *The City of God* (412-27), the thrust to create Jerusalem as an image of human and divine encounter in the Old Testament and then the thrust to spiritualise a literal Jerusalem first through the prophets, and in the last book of the New Testament where the heavenly Jerusalem descends. The whole drive of the Scriptures (as Augustine sees it), is to set up the sacred city which human beings produce, for better and worse, and its equally archetypal antithesis which is Babylon, and, at

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<sup>35</sup> For an in-depth and excellent discussion on the religious aspect of Aurora Raby see Beatty, B., *Byron's Don Juan* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 137-220.

the same time, to keep the thrust towards the other city, the heavenly city, which will appear untarnished from the vagaries of human history.

Byron, I would argue here, is the poet of civilisation and he is the poet of Babylon and Babel. It is those sorts of categories that operate in Byron's mind just as they do in the Bible. For instance, the Christian reader reads from Babel right through to Rome and then to the heavenly Jerusalem of the end time. Pentecost is the Christian corrective to Babel. Byron reads the whole history of civilisations in these ways and tries to find in human civilisation an equivalent to salvation. He sees cities as the greatest things that human beings produce and yet, at the same time, there is a counter to this in his equally strong sense of the city as a wicked place, which, as we have intimated, primarily comes from the Bible. All this he transfers to Newstead/Norman Abbey, which is a miniature city in the country. It is inhabited almost as a biblical real space open to divine encounter. There is a kind of emptiness in the big space of the arch of the destroyed church which is filled with mysterious music in the poems. There is a kind of parallel emptiness in people's lives in the poem with them not knowing how to fill their time. There is a different kind of emptiness in Aurora, which will be divinely filled. The discrimination of different kinds of emptiness depends upon quasi biblical imagery as, for instance, in *Jeremiah* 2:13, where God will fill up people's cisterns with springs of living water, which the prophet contrasts with broken cisterns which cannot be filled. The cistern in *Jeremiah* 38:6, was a source of hope and life when water was in it, whereas it became a place of death and judgement when empty. In *Don Juan*, Aurora is also a source of hope and life and will be replenished, whereas Adeline is built around a kind of hollow which cannot be replenished. The imagery of the constantly replenished lake in Canto

XIII. 57 derives from eighteenth-century interest in landscape and from passages like these in *Jeremiah*.

When Byron approaches Newstead/Norman Abbey, there is a kind of ambiguity about it, as there is in his attitude to cities. For in Christian Catholic imagination, Rome is the eternal city, the holy city where the apostles are buried. It is the centre of the Catholic Church where the Pope resides. It is also the eternal, sacred city, to which Byron refers specifically in Canto IV, stanzas 153-155, of *Childe Harold* as the new temple, the new Sion, the new Ark of the Covenant where God resides. And yet, at the same time, Rome is also the New Testament Babylon, a city which, under Nero and Domitian, attacks Christianity. So the tradition that the New Testament passes on is that Rome is simultaneously Babylon and yet, also, peculiarly, the inheritor of the role of the sacred city of Jerusalem which is now transferred from Israel to the world. Newstead/Norman Abbey can similarly be seen in those terms, both as a modern Babel and as a Christian temple with its great empty arch which is filled with music and sound, like God filling the temple with his spirit. Byron is careful not to be directly blasphemous and treads carefully between these emphases. On the one hand, it is a sort of sacred building, a sacred temple which the supernatural can take over and reside in, and on the other hand, it is a modern Babylon, a gothic pile of bad taste, a human city with a babble of human voices. Juan ends up in Newstead/Norman Abbey as a highly ambiguous place. Aurora is reminiscent of the new heavenly Jerusalem which St. John notes has a great jewel-like lamp which lights the city, and its walls and gates are made of jewels and precious stones. Aurora is compared to a jewel (eternity) in contrast to the flower of Haidee (nature).



Typology within the Scriptures functions by large-scale cross-references. We are able to do this in *Childe Harold* as we have seen when we cross-refer almost without noticing it from the Coliseum to the Parthenon to the bull fight arena, but it is harder to find parallels across the whole poem in *Don Juan*. There are the very small interconnections such as when Juan cannot remember Julia because he is vomiting and later when he cannot remember Haidee because he has a head injury, or the fate of Julia's letter (the paper used for the lot in the shipwreck). Similarly, there is a parallel in the fact that it is the women, (with the exception of Aurora), who makes advances to Juan. There is a larger structural parallel between the shipwreck and the siege. We could say that the siege is a larger version of the shipwreck for both stand against the pattern of erotic renewal which is the central dynamism of the poem. But *Don Juan* has its basis in an individual life. Juan is a unique survivor of the shipwreck and ends up in Haidee's bed. Later, he manages to survive the siege and ends up in Catherine's bed. The reader is enthusiastic about his relationship with Haidee, but not so with Catherine. It is harder to find broad typological connections. Certainly there is the biblical motif that in the middle of worldly splendour and prosperity there is some intimation of destruction, or some moral reproof from some kind of voice, an outsider voice which gives a warning. For instance, in Canto III, Byron writes a little fragment based on Belshazar's feast, to which he often refers. This fragment comes in the midst of a colourful description of a sumptuous feast and opulent dress. At that time the poet sings a kind of warring song about the need to fight the Turks. It is not unlike the way thunder strikes during the banquet of *Sardanapalus*, or when Lara reappears at the festival. In the case of Canto III, there is also the presence of Lambro who looks on at a happy self-sufficient human world wanting to destroy it. This can be linked to the two meals at Norman Abbey. Although the

meals are not interrupted as such, there is an association between the meals and the ghost story of the black friar which is a rebuke, a warning much as the Isle of Greece song is to the revelries at Juan and Haidee's feast. In both instances in the midst of a feast we have songs which alter the tone of gaiety to one of sobriety and a sense of impending disaster. We find the same biblical motif in Byron's account in *Childe Harold*, Canto III, of the Duchess of Richmond's ball just before Waterloo. These connections are real and important though less subtle than those in *Childe Harold*.

It will be useful to compare Byron's work, in this respect, to that of Thomas Carlyle's. We shall use Carlyle (1795-1881), because although he is almost a contemporary of Byron, who ostentatiously uses biblical style and whose background is very similar to Byron's yet, in some respects, he is the antithesis to Byron. Carlyle parallels Byron in that he is an intellectual, brought up in Scotland as a Calvinist, a Presbyterian, who read the bible daily. He is quite different from Byron in that he is not an aristocrat; he comes from peasant farming origin, and it is their background that, to a large extent, governs what they do. Carlyle knew much the same biblical criticism as Byron; a criticism that is losing confidence in the Bible's literal truth. Also, of course, he read and was influenced by Byron.<sup>36</sup> Bertrand Russell quotes Carlyle's remarks that at the time of Byron's death he considered Byron to be "the noblest spirit in Europe" and felt as if he had "lost a brother". Russell continues with Carlyle's apparent change of mind regarding Byron with his later, famous and emphatic command in *Sartor Resartus*, to "Close

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<sup>36</sup> For discussions on Byron's relationship to Carlyle see Sanders, C.R., 'The Byron Closed in *Sartor Resartus*' essay in *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol 3, ed. by David Bonnell Green (Boston: The Graduate School, Boston University, 1964), pp. 77-108. See also Timko, M., *Carlyle and Tennyson* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987), p. 119, both cited in an excellent chapter entitled 'Carlyle, Byronism, and the professional intellectual' in Elfenbein, A., *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 90-125.

thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*". Russell adds that whilst Goethe remained an aspiration to Carlyle, Byron was in his blood.<sup>37</sup> What Carlyle's comment to 'Close thy *Byron*' in effect says, is to close the door on negativity and open it to positivity. Carlyle articulates this in a letter to William Graham dated 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1821:

Poets such as Byron and Rousseau are like opium eaters; they raise their minds by brooding over and embellishing their sufferings, from one degree of fervid exaltation and dreamy greatness to another, till at length they run *amuck* entirely...<sup>38</sup>

When Carlyle reads an account of history, actual fact, he tends to interpret it, as does Byron, in a Scriptural kind of way. But Carlyle uses a model of redrafting what he has been originally taught, to bring it up-to-date. Byron does not go down that route, but uses two other routes. The first is a kind of rebellious, recalcitrant route where the original is completely annihilated and withstood. Carlyle sees this as Byron's 'Everlasting No'.<sup>39</sup> The second, a much more conservative route, is to consider that previous events and meaning could be present in the present and themselves interpret present day events and, connected with this, Byron also imagines as possible that the original biblical events are true in their own terms. So, whereas Byron does not abandon the possibility that original biblical events were true in their own terms and would not want to say otherwise, Carlyle insists precisely on the opposite point, which makes Byron much more reverent than Carlyle. Whereas Byron dislikes systems, for history has mysterious patterns but no systematic mechanism, Carlyle tends to interpret history in a systematic kind of way. Thus Carlyle articulates the dogma that the

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<sup>37</sup> Essay in *Byron: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Paul West (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 151-156, p. 155.

<sup>38</sup> *Letters of Thomas Carlyle to William Graham*, ed. by John Graham (Princeton, 1950), pp. 19-21, cited in Sanders 'The Byron Closed in *Sartor Resartus*'. Sanders suggests that this letter to William Green "is the first of many passages in which Carlyle finds something psychologically and spiritually unhealthy in Byron's poetry", p. 84.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Everlasting No' is the title of chapter VII, book II, *Sartor Resartus*.

same truth can be told in various ways, hence permanent truths need new forms of dress. *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor Re-patched)<sup>40</sup> uses clothes as symbols for covering or dressing-up the truth in different ways so that it can continually appear more relevant to present situations. The truth is the same in this view, it is just presented in different ways. For instance, from Carlyle's point of view religion is both true and false. What it holds to most deeply is true (and this means, as it does for George Eliot, a vague but insisted-upon moralism) but particular beliefs such as the resurrection and the Trinity are all false. Hence modern people should hold on to the essential moral truth and cast it in different clothing. Carlyle takes for granted that moral ideas precede symbols. Of course, this is now a familiar idea, but it is not the way, I would argue, that Byron thinks. Byron is very careful to stick as closely as possible to the original symbolisation, such as, as we have just noted, when he reaffirms the Songs of Toobonai. He uses much the same language as the original and although the invasion of the Fijians is unique, it helps give perspective and insight to the later, semi-mythical island invasion. The past reads the present. The past is vital, it does not need to be rendered vital by manipulation in the present. This makes Byron's method typological, whereas Carlyle's is anti-typological because, in his view, previous insights are encased and confined by the letter, but at the same time the spirit of previous insights is still operative, so you have to keep reading but alter the symbols to fit a present sensibility and context. In typology, on the other hand, the old symbols work still but reverberate in new ways. Here, if you say that the Exodus is a type of the Crucifixion, it does not mean that you do not have to read the Exodus again, just the Crucifixion, or displace one by the other. On the

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<sup>40</sup> *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor Re-patched), is a prose work in three parts, first published in *Fraser's Magazine* from November 1833 to August 1834 and in book form in the U.S. in 1836. The first English edition appeared in 1838.

contrary, if the Exodus is a type of Crucifixion, it means you still need to read it and follow the letter carefully because it will tell you not only about itself but also about the later event and be relevant to the present in which it is read. Past events are trustworthy and yield insight into later events. But Carlyle interprets things in a much more progressive way where you lay aside the older form and move on to a new one. For instance in *Sartor Resartus*, in a chapter entitled symbols, he writes:

Homer's Epos has not ceased to be true; yet it is no longer *our* Epos, but shines in the distance, if clearer and clearer, yet also smaller and smaller, like a receding Star. It needs a scientific telescope, it needs to be reinterpreted and artificially brought near us, before we can so much as know that it *was* a Sun. So likewise a day comes when the Runic Thor, with his Eddas, must withdraw into dimness; and many an African Mumbo-Jumbo and Indian Pawaw be utterly abolished. For all things, even Celestial Luminaries, much more atmospheric meteors, have their culmination, their decline.<sup>41</sup>

From Carlyle's point of view, there are two possibilities for regarding history. One is that you live in the past and the other is to pretend that the past does not belong to you, (Homer's Epos is no longer *our* Epos). Your task is simply to update the past by updating all the references, because the former presumptions, vocabulary figures and symbols and so on are no longer meaningful. If historical references are not updated, then you are doomed to live in the dead past. Carlyle here is the ancestor of the influential twentieth-century biblical critic Rudolf Bultmann who demanded that the Bible should be demythologised. Byron, on the contrary, is very keen on the irreducibility of fact and letter and stays within certain symbolic boundaries. He believes that whatever happens in history is a continuum of some kind which, of course, is very much what the Scriptures presuppose. Although Byron experienced and is often seen as embodying all sorts

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<sup>41</sup> Carlyle, T., *Sartor Resartus* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., copyright edition, 1894), pp. 137-8.

of changes taking place in the early nineteenth century including the way people read history, methods of interpreting religion and so on, it remains the case that, though he never wholly accepts orthodox religion, he increasingly identifies imaginatively with a whole series of orthodox mindsets. He is interested in seeing correspondences between events and customarily takes for granted that there is some kind of corroboration between moral life, political events and history. He is a liberal in his reasoning, but imaginatively he is not a liberal at all. Byron lives in a world in which what you say reverberates in literature and literature customarily affects what you do. Thus, for instance, he insists:

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;  
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses  
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link  
Of ages... (*Don Juan*, Canto III. 88. 793-798)

And later:

But politics, and policy, and piety,  
Are topics which I sometimes introduce,  
Not only for the sake of their variety,  
But as subservient to a moral use;  
Because my business is to *dress* society,  
And stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose. (*Don Juan*, Canto XV. 93.  
737-742)

Byron's idea of dressing society here, is not the same as Carlyle's. Byron is linking dressing society to dressing or preparing a bird for roasting. Byron adds that his reason is "subservient to a moral use". The word 'dress', naturally, means to 'set right', to correct and purify; and the words 'dressing down' means to rebuke or accuse society, or in other words to give it a 'roasting'. The sage stuffing used to dress the bird involves preparing, purifying, cleaning, or proceeding as in salad dressing, where 'sage and onion' becomes a sort of dressing. So you correct society by 'sage', or wisdom, but you also clothe it. The

symbolic importance of clothing throughout the Scriptures, of course, is attested by the many metaphors that relate moral virtues to apparel: for example, “let thy priests be clothed with righteousness” (*Psalms* 132:9), and “he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (*Isaiah* 61:10). Carlyle takes such metaphors and reinterprets them as replaceable clothes for permanent meanings, but the metaphors themselves do not imply this for the metaphors are indelibly bound up with their meanings. For Byron, as for the allegorist, such meaning could be renewed and extended through the purple robe of Christ, or through Marino Faliero’s act of robing, but all the clothes, so to speak, stay put and cross-refer to each other. So it is not a matter of one being discarded as it is for Carlyle. We can establish then, that although Carlyle considers himself to be religious, in this respect, it is Byron who is much closer to the letter and spirit of the Scriptures.

Carlyle is helpful to us because his overtly Scriptural and ‘prophetic’ stance petition the reader to relate both his views and his idiom to those of the Scriptures. And he has often been seen in this light. Indeed Carlyle’s rejection of Byron is presented as that of a Hebrew prophet of someone much more secular in manner and presumption. Andrew Elfenbein writes in *Byron and the Victorians* that Carlyle:

constructs Byron as a naive artist and himself as the more sophisticated philosophical reviewer who can evaluate Byron’s flaws because of his greater self-consciousness.<sup>42</sup>

If our analysis is correct, the exact opposite is the truth. We could then interpret Carlyle’s famous command “Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*”, in a completely different way. We could say that Carlyle is advocating not to read and write in

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<sup>42</sup> Elfenbein, A., *Byron and the Victorians*, p. 97.

Byron's structural way of thinking, but to write in his way of thinking, which is basically secular like Goethe's. So although Carlyle and Byron are born and brought up in very similar times and circumstances and both are avidly interested in the Scriptures, yet, structurally, they are diametrically opposed in their approach to them. Elfenbein writes that "'Byron' and Byronism were for Carlyle emblems of a literary system hostile to all that he represented".<sup>43</sup> The reasons for this, lie in the detailed analysis of Byron's habit of mind and procedures, which form the bulk of this thesis.

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<sup>43</sup> Elfenbein, A., *Byron and the Victorians*, p. 125.



## CONCLUSION

My thesis has attempted to examine the relationship between the form and forms of the Bible, and the way in which Byron wrote. It contends that Byron's mode of writing and structuring texts often follows that of the Scriptures, not as a specific formal intention, but rather as a habit of mind generated through his wide reading of the Scriptures. I tried to approach this through clear formal divisions namely, phrases, paragraphs, books and works.

I subdivided the category 'phrases' into two main subject areas, that of 'pregnant utterances' and parallelism. Within the 'pregnant utterances' section, the authority of the generating word in the Scriptures is compared with strategies of voice and operation in Byron's *The Morgante Maggiore* and *The Prophecy of Dante*. These very different texts highlighted Byron's concern for poetry to have an authentic voice which is performative and dynamic, and thus separated from the clichéd, second-hand, hackneyed, use of ordinary language, which he sees as often separated from the truth. The investigation identified and linked this concern for the generating word to the possibility that it comes, paradoxically, from a sense of sterility within his text. This, in turn, can be linked to Byron's preoccupation with guilt and a frequent sense of being cursed which, broadly speaking, comes from his Protestant beginnings and his wide reading of the Scriptures.

For the enquiry into parallelism, a working model was set up to look at three poets (Christopher Smart, James Montgomery and John Dryden) all of whom were demonstrably influenced by the Scriptures, to see whether there is any discernible

pattern of biblical parallelism evident in their work, compared to that of Byron's. These were invoked as a control paradigm to test the utility of the thesis. The initial enquiry into the structure of parallelism proved to be unpromising. Within Smart's work, parallelism was a significant feature and, although not as prevalent, it was certainly present in Montgomery's *The Wanderer*. But this cannot be truly said of either Dryden or Byron's work. Although there are instances in both, parallelism cannot be regarded as a significant feature in either. These results, of course, were very disappointing. If dominant biblical styles of writing are a model for Byron's writing, surely one would expect to find parallelism, a prominent feature of biblical poetry, evident in his work. However, further investigation into the nature of parallelism revealed an entirely different conclusion. Whereas Dryden appears to have little in the way of units of word pairs or well-used phrases in his work, this is not the case with Byron. Within certain of Byron's poems they do, indeed, form a significant feature. The study on parallelism then reveals a surprising aspect, in that it is to be found where it is not expected. Parallelism is not so evident in Byron's *The Hebrew Melodies*, where the title announces its biblical content, but it emerges strongly in apparently non-biblical works such as *The Corsair* and *The English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*. It was with much excitement when I analysed the results of these findings that I realised that the disappointment of the first set of findings served to support the contention of the thesis, that Byron's mode of writing does indeed follow those of the Scriptures, not through design, but through innate habits of mind, generated through his wide reading of them.

For the paragraph category, I compared pericopes and divans within Byron's work, with those in the Scriptures, by applying certain form critical questions to

the texts. The same sort of working model used to investigate parallelism was set up for this section. I compared Byron's writings with the historical narrative of Gibbon and also of the Scriptures. Later, into this, I incorporated Tillotson's observations on eighteenth-century transitions, and thus broadened the argument by making the same comparisons with Pope's work. I began the section by enquiring into the scriptural hermeneutics that could have affected Byron's writing. It is clear that Byron, who was writing at a time when the authority and historical authenticity of the Bible was being challenged, places great importance on historical fact. He tries to uncover the sources behind a text and does not wish to step outside certain boundaries of historical circumstance. Also, he wants to defend the historicity of the Bible and insists that Scriptural myths and legends have some historical foundation. The thesis goes on to claim that Byron's intuitive response to the attacks on fundamental Christian doctrine means that, though he is influenced by the sceptical criticism of his time and is often a version of it, yet he is more aligned with what has come to be called 'neo-orthodoxy', which is interested in Scriptural paradox and seeks to re-establish the special authority of the Scriptures, without altogether overthrowing the gains made by historical criticism. Byron's approach to biblical criticism, therefore, is simultaneously, conservative, progressive and intuitive. In many respects, he would have been more at home with biblical criticism as it operated at a much later date where it has been possible to accept the lack of historical verisimilitude in many biblical texts without debunking the historicity of others, or the essentially historical nature of biblical revelation.

The comparisons of the pericopes and divans were made in three sections: the general effect of the style, close readings of random isolated pericopes, and

divans. For the sake of accuracy, direct comparisons were made with each of the significant biblical features that had been identified. The results showed such manifest similarities between Byron's and the Scriptures' structural patterns that we concluded that Byron's regular reading of the Scriptures would almost certainly be a major contributor to these effects. The lack of such similarities in Gibbon's work served to highlight the evident scriptural influences on Byron. As this conclusion about Gibbon was, perhaps, rather predictable, the thesis was broadened to include a comparison with Pope. Pope proves to be a half-way house, or a mediating model between the Scriptural models and Gibbon's eighteenth-century rationalism. The results regarding Scriptural divans, at first, were rather surprising. Because of their striking form and content, I had expected Scriptural divans to have had a much more significant influence upon Byron's work, rather than the modest one the findings revealed. However, when Pope's writings are taken into account, it is found that when Byron appears to be directly influenced by Pope's writing, then, surprisingly, the structure of the biblical divan becomes, correspondingly, far more evident in Byron's writings. This concurs with our earlier findings on parallelism, namely, that when Byron feels free from explicit Scriptural literary constraints, then his style does, in fact, reveal substantial significant Scriptural influence of a less conspicuous nature and that this influence must come from innate habits of mind structured by his reading.

The third section investigates the structure of a book as a unit and looks at the way in which the Bible, though it is a single book, a unity, is also a collection of books of separate identity. By tracing the origin of the book from its relationship with its antecedent, the scroll, through to the codex, which was first used by Christian literature, it was argued that our notion of the book today must have Judaic

Christianity largely behind it. The story of the book's shape and construction cannot be separated from the early record of the propagation of the Gospel and its transmission in the form of a book. The thesis moved to the idea of a book from Byron's own historical point of view, which was reinforced by Renaissance and eighteenth-century ideas of the book in terms of authorship, ownership, coherence and emerging literary tradition. These are not biblical ideas but influence ideas about the Bible. Having set out the context for the emergence of the idea of a book, the notion of what constitutes a book is examined.

This was done by instancing a simple, relatively coherent biblical text, the book of *Ezekiel*. The writings of three individual biblical critics were examined, all of whom have very different ways of attending to the notion of a book. These, in turn, enabled the formal model of *Ezekiel* to be applied to the structure of *Childe Harold*. When the text of *Childe Harold*, which is often considered inconsistent, and at times, almost incoherent, is placed alongside the text of *Ezekiel* which has the same charges made against it, it becomes apparent that that they are, in some respects, assembled in strikingly similar ways. In *Childe Harold*, Byron's model of structure of unity and form, does not, therefore, so much come from customary classical models, but from an altogether different model, that of the Scriptures, where the relationship between unity and diversity, although existent, is much less regular.

*Ezekiel* is a prophetic text, like Byron's *The Prophecy of Dante*, but the structure of biblical narrative differs from this. Hence the second part of this section compares the sequences of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* to that of the book of *Kings* and also takes into consideration the most famous literary text to be derived

from it, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. It emerges that, like *Kings*, Byron remains loyal to the recording of history as a sequence with shape, whilst at the same time, remaining loyal to contingency, change of direction and opacity. He acknowledges the haphazard nature of life and of history and has no wish to tidy it up to make it more palatable.<sup>1</sup> Because *Kings* records history in this almost risk-taking way, Byron finds within Scriptures, the best texts for interpreting the history of his own times and a model for his writing. We find that the unity and form in Byron's writings, or the substance that holds them together, are history, fidelity to occurrence, and a trust that history will, somehow, eventually work out, which are precisely the same ingredients that gives *Kings* its structure.

The final chapter looks at typology within *Childe Harold*, *Cain*, *The Island*, *Marino Faliero* and *Don Juan*. I argued that Byron relies profoundly on Christian typological habits of mind without which his imagination would not function. Although he is in tension with the biblical structures which he renews and inhabits, he compulsively uses the interconnections within the Scriptures and his poems much more thoroughly and intellectually than his contemporaries. So what is it that gives Byron his typological habit of mind? What is it that sets Byron apart from his fellow Romantics? Why is he more receptive to the Scriptures than the other Romantics? Many people have referred to Byron's insistence that he does not like fiction and that fiction should be tethered to fact and also, that unlike his fellow Romantics, Byron does not give primacy to the imagination. However, it is not helpful to simply say that the findings concur with the vast amount of

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Cooke argues similarly when he claims that "*Childe Harold IV* takes on a pivotal significance with its unflinching presentation of a mind that sacrifices tidiness to inclusiveness". Cooke, M.G., *The Blind Man Traces the Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 100-101.

critics in these matters. So I will briefly conclude the main points in relation to his contemporaries.

Certainly, I would agree with the critics' claim that one of the main differences between Byron and his fellow Romantics is Byron's insistence that imagination is rooted in fact. In a letter to George and Georgiana Keats dated September 1819, Keats writes "There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees — I describe what I imagine".<sup>2</sup> Ruskin says that "the thing wholly new and precious to me in Byron was his measured and living *truth*" and adds "here at last I had found a man who spoke only of what he had seen, and known".<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it would be very difficult to find another Romantic who would argue for the importance of tethering imagination to fact, with the exception of Scott, whom Byron admired for this very reason. Anne Barton in her excellent lecture entitled *Byron and the Mythology of Fact*,<sup>4</sup> says that the difference between Byron and his fellow Romantics is Byron's distrust of the visionary and that, for Byron, however truth is to be reached, it is not reached by way of the imagination. I would rather say that historical fact is recovered through acts of imagining by Byron, as by Scott. So, whilst the other Romantics considered that whatever they could imagine was legitimate material for their art, Byron remained convinced of the foundation of fact. Here we could note that some kind of relationship between imagination and historical circumstance is one way of describing allegory. Not moral allegory, obviously, because that is morality separated from historical

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<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of John Keats 1814 – 1821*, Vol II, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), dated 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27 September, 1819, letter no. 199, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Praeterita: The Autobiography of John Ruskin*, introduction by Kenneth Clark, 1949, paperback edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 138-139. *Praeterita* was first published in twenty-eight parts between 1885 and 1889. The present text, taken from the three-volume edition of 1899, was first published by Rupert Hart-Davis in 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Barton, A, *Byron and the Mythology of Fact*, The thirty-eighth Byron Foundation Lecture, delivered on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1968 (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1968).

circumstance, but typological allegory, which is tethered to fact and yet invokes the imagination. This is one main reason Byron has a more typological mind than the other Romantics.

Barton's *Byron and the Mythology of Fact*, which has proved helpful and insists on many the same things as we have been suggesting throughout the thesis, says that the remarkableness of *Don Juan* is that his celebration of truth against the distortion of fiction lies in the structure of the poem itself. In other words Byron's writing reflects the contingency of life. She continues with the argument that you cannot call *Don Juan* unfinished in the same way that you can call Keat's *Hyperion* or Shelley's *Triumph of Life* unfinished, because *Don Juan's* form is co-terminous with Byron's life, both destined to conclude together. Barton surmises that Byron could not kill off Juan because of Byron's gradual acceptance of the validity of art in expressing the modes of life. This thesis, however, presents the possibility of an alternative reading. Byron could not kill off Juan because, as noted when we investigated his typological habits of mind, although the tone of the narrator and the explicit relation to the book is pessimistic, Byron's actual writing characteristically imagines and looks for an equivalent to salvation. We also identified this when we compared the structure of the book of *Kings* with that of *Childe Harold*. We found that Byron, like the Scriptures, always looks for the survival of a remnant, and places his trust in the workings out of history.

The primacy of imagination necessitates a confidence in the internal 'I'. Shelley's famous comment that poets are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world',



attests to that.<sup>5</sup> Keats, in his well-known letter to Bailey, writes that whatever is imagined and seized as Beauty must be the truth, even if it had not existed before.<sup>6</sup> Blake often speaks with visionary certainty. He writes to Dr. Trusler, 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1799, that “I know that This World is a World of IMAGINATION and Vision”.<sup>7</sup> Imagination is boundless and infinite. But for Byron, the internal ‘I’ is of an entirely different kind. Because Byron’s imagination is rooted in fact and life is multicoloured, Byron cannot allow his imagination to have a separate coherence and clarity which is separated from life. So his view will always tend to be multicoloured, being aware of paradoxes and of other opinions. He believes much more continuously that we cannot have a simple or single point of view, a frame whereby we can only have this point of view or that point of view. In other words, his opinion is a mixture of opinions. Blake, on the other hand believes emphatically in one thing, but changes his mind radically at any given state, and then believes emphatically in the new thing and so forth. In this way Blake, despite his changes of outlook, always speaks with visionary certainty and he believes that he is being consistent because he incorporates his earlier thinking. But it is Byron who could be considered more consistent, because although his imagination has a multicoloured property never producing a single point of view, unlike Blake, he does not change his mind, but holds firmly to his opinions.

Thomas Moore says in *Political and Historical Writings on Irish and British Affairs*, that:

Looking back, from the advanced point where we have now arrived through the whole of his past career, we cannot fail to observe

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<sup>5</sup> *Defence of Poetry* (1821) in *Shelley’s Works in Verse and Prose*, ed. with prefaces, notes and appendices by Harry Buxton Forman, 8 Vols (London: Reeves & Turner, 1880), Vol. VII, pp. 96-146, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1817 in *Letters of John Keats*, selected by Frederick Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), letter no. 31, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Dr. Trusler, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1799, in *The Letters of William Blake*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956), letter no. 6, pp. 34-37, p. 35.

pervading all its apparent changes and inconsistencies, an adherence to the original bias of his nature, a general consistency in the main, however shifting and contradictory the details, which had the effect of preserving, from first to last, all his views and principles, upon the great subjects that interested him through life, essentially unchanged.<sup>8</sup>

Wilfred S. Dowden similarly notes in 'The Consistency in Byron's Social Doctrine', that:

If we are to understand Byron, we have to take not glimpses, but an over-all view of the man and the poet. Such a view will reveal to us one who never wavered in the pursuit of his objective. He began his career with expression of hope for the freedom of man. He continued to express this hope, which is a dominant element in most of his poetry.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, one of Byron's major opinions, paradoxically, is that opinions or attitudes shift and change and are multiple. So it is impossible to retain an absolute systematic, intellectual and emotional stability and to find a coherent intellectual model of the world which can be relied upon to explain every circumstance. The best that can be done is to acknowledge the limits of human knowledge on the one hand, whilst remaining in touch with the varieties of human experience and different kinds of things that are in the world that need to be approached in different ways and which cannot all be easily assembled into a single body. So, Byron's opinion is consistent in that he acknowledges a totality which cannot be articulated because it is inconsistent, shifting, changeable, and so forth. In this respect Byron's internal 'I' is unsure, fragmented and changeable and because he writes in this way he can be regarded as an 'honest' writer. Of

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<sup>8</sup> Moore, T., *Political and Historical Writings on Irish and British Affairs*, introduced by Brendan Clifford (Belfast: Athol Books, 1993), p. 218. Moore adds in a footnote at this point: "Colonel Stanhope, who saw clearly this leading character of Byron's mind, has thus justly described it. 'Lord Byron's was a versatile and still a stubborn mind; it wavered but it always returned to certain fixed principles'".

<sup>9</sup> Wilfred S. Dowden, 'The Consistency in Byron's Social Doctrine' in *British Romantic Poets*, ed. by Shiv Kumar (New York: New York University Press; and London: London University Press Ltd., 1968), pp. 142-158, p. 156-7.

course, this is not to say that he always wrote what he knew to be true and, indeed, his exaggerations and flippancy are, at times, most obvious. But we have a sense that, in Byron's writings, he is prepared to parade his own sentiments, to own up to his shortcomings, to acknowledge his limitations and to give respect to the reader. It is a sense that the poet and 'art' of poetry is subservient to truth.

Maurice Bowra expresses this point well in his book, *The Romantic Imagination*, when he says that Byron "wished to tell the truth as he saw it with all the paradoxes and contradictions of his nature".<sup>10</sup>

To highlight the differences between Byron and his fellow Romantics, Blake serves as a useful control model against the findings of the thesis mainly because, in some respects, Byron and Blake are remarkably alike. They both read and respect the Scriptures and neither are wholly paid-up orthodox Christian believers of Scripture. Blake is widely considered to be a biblical poet. He openly acknowledges God and draws strange images of Jehovah. But in some respects his biblical imagination is not biblical at all because Blake is not Hebraic and rooted in history, but Gnostic and rooted in meaning and myths. Blake, like Byron, is obsessed with the story of the Fall, but Blake's view of the Bible, unlike Byron's (because of the primacy which Blake gives to imagination) allows little room for history. Whereas Byron sees in the Scripture a confirmation of historical existence and a revelation which is itself communicated through historical fact, historical circumstance and time, Blake sees the Bible as a visionary text which tells of a world of vision in which we should always remain. This makes Blake like other visionary texts that revise the visionary texts of the Bible, of which his

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<sup>10</sup> Bowra, C.M., *The Romantic Imagination* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 156.

moral prophetic book *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, written between 1804 and 1820, is the best example. Thus comparing Blake's poetry to Byron's, it becomes clear that, in some ways, Byron is much more orthodoxly Christian and Jewish in his understanding.

These, I have argued, are the main factors that set Byron apart from his fellow Romantics. Another major difference between them is Byron's treatment of the movement from innocence to experience. Although he is one with them in his interest, his ideas differ. Like Blake, the story of the Fall is his main focus here. *Don Juan* is about moving out of the realm of innocence. Juan does just that, and yet, at the same time, and in some sense remains innocent.<sup>11</sup> The Scriptures present the state of innocence and experience in two dialectical ways. One way of seeing it is that the Scriptures, from a Christian point of view, are fundamentally about a lack of innocence. Adam is born in the shadow of God's glory and is made to bear that glory, but because of the Fall, incurs God's wrath. Adam knows clearly that he has transgressed, but is not too sure about where exactly the blame should lie. Later, God gives the Jews the Law, which brings about both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage, as St. Paul clearly understands, is that there are now clear guidelines between right and wrong. But because of the impossibility of carrying out the letter of the Law, the Law becomes a terrible burden; it becomes a punishment and a curse. So from one point of view, the Bible shows us about sin, living under wrath, the absence of glory, and gives us

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<sup>11</sup> George Ridenour in his essay entitled '*Don Juan: "Carelessly I Sing"*' (1960) asserts that Juan's experiences with Julia and Haidee to the morally compromising experiences at Ismail and Moscow and the urbane doings in London and Norman Abbey is the movement from innocence to experience, dramatised, defined and made humanly relevant. Essay in *Byron: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Paul West (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), pp. 122-137, p. 137. As argued above, I think that that is only half the truth as it is the co-presence of Innocence and Experience in the Scriptures that is the clue to the poem.

the Law to aid our moral sense. But the Law places an added burden because, similarly to the operating restraints of the dark Byronic hero, it gives a sense of the permanent nature of our repeated capacity to transgress. Luther puts it that we are simultaneously just and sinful. In the same way that Jacob put on the fleece in order to deceive his father and gain his birthright, we gain our birthright by putting on Christ's innocence as if it were our own. From this point of view Christianity is a dark religion, doomed and sin-laden. It shows the extent to which we are enmeshed in a whole experience that we cannot get out of, that goes back to the origin of Adam, and, at the same time, it shows an innocence which we were born in and called to. There are, of course, many suggestions of reading it in this way throughout Byron's work.

There is, however, another Christian perspective: the Bible shows the capacity for constant renewal from a pure source. This is particularly emphasised in the Christian Bible, but is evident in the Hebrew Bible as well. Adam is born in innocence, he transgresses (*Genesis* 3:1-24), and then Cain plunges humanity into an even darker history (*Genesis* 4: 1-26). But then the biblical writer insists that Seth is born in the image of Adam (and therefore of God) (*Genesis* 4: 25-27), so it is as though man is made primordially pure again. Similarly, *Genesis* records a sequence in which man's sin produces the Flood, but following the Flood there is a new creation, a new covenant and a new relationship between God and man (*Genesis* 6-9:12). The theme of sin followed by renewal carries on throughout the Bible. This reading of the Scriptures sees innocence as perpetually being available and renewed from the originating source. So one way of reading innocence and experience in the Bible, is that we are in an inextricably dark experience. The other way of reading suggests that, notwithstanding that, God is

not outwitted by sin because he constantly makes available the capacity for untainted innocence to be perpetually renewed, or as in Christianity, to be taken to some higher level. The Scriptures then, uniquely puts together both these senses — a sense of things perpetually going wrong and at the same time it records a sense of untainted renewal and extra possibilities generated within historical time. This, of course, is rather like innocence and experience in *Don Juan*. Byron intuitively grasps that double sense that comes from the Scriptures. Things are always going wrong for Juan. He has a tainted, dark experience of history, and yet, at the same time, there is a wholly optimistic sense in the poem, in that there are always springs of renewal, of innocence, as in *Haidee* and more especially in *Aurora*.

The burden of an inevitable movement away from innocence to a permanent dark experience and yet, at the same time, within that dark experience the possibility of the effortless recovery of untainted experience, is a paradox, and Christianity is a paradoxical religion. These two polarities found in Christian belief are basically sin and redemption. Redemption in Christianity is ultimately achieved through the crucifixion. God subjects himself to dark history, injustice, tainting, death and, in Himself, becomes sin. This is the centre of history and, from one point of view, is the most extreme and pessimistic version of the taintedness of human life. Yet, that emblem of the crucified Christ, is treated at the same time, as an emblem of a wholly innocent man with an absolutely pure origin, who restores all human beings to absolute unconditioned purity. Byron is fascinated by the thought of redemption, but never accepts the argument or, wholly, the symbolism. The nearest he comes to it is in *Cain* at the death of Abel, which is a foreshadowing of the Christian redemption and Byron knows this full well. Although Byron does

not accept redemption, he does intuit, or represent that doubleness the Christian Scriptures represents in the crucifixion, in particular through the figure of Aurora who is both simultaneously “Radiant” and “grave”, a woman who looked “as if she sat by Eden’s door,/And grieved for those who could return no more” (XV. 45. 357-360). She is a grave, serious, reflective person whose consciousness is full of sin but yet retains the radiance of transfigured innocence. That is like Christianity, although, of course, it is not the same. We are not saved by the fictional Aurora Raby, but by Christ’s crucifixion. Aurora is not a biblical figure, she is a visionary, orphan figure, who does not, in one sense, seem to move in history at all, or connect with the social world of the Abbey. Yet, at the same time, her consciousness which sits by Eden’s door and grieves for those who could return no more, is that of an historical consciousness. In other words Aurora looks at the sin of a human world immersed in time which is unspecified, but does not seem to be outside Paradise. It is much like the iris in *Childe Harold* that sits overlooking a pool underneath a rainbow alongside the infernal surge of the waterfall; which is like, “Love watching Madness with unalterable mien” (IV. 72. 648). Love is not altered by the madness it sees, it remains radiant and happy; it remains love. Yet it sees that to which it can scarcely bring comfort — madness remains mad. The lines are certainly a prototype for Aurora. Aurora is juxtaposed with, and yet at the same time, connected to the Black Friar. The Black Friar represents death, the destruction of the Abbey, the human history of remembrance, severance, loss, of things going wrong and the survival of that in elegiac memory. Aurora, on the other hand sees exactly what the Black Friar ghost sees, a world which is always going wrong, bewildered and finally lost, but unlike the Black Friar, she sits in serenity.

The co-existence in the same figure of an acknowledgement of unalterable darkness, an ineradicable taintedness, at the same time as a pure fountain that will always be there, represents the same simultaneous conjunction found in Scriptures, but in no other sacred literature, nor in other Romantic literature. Blake, partly because his world is an ahistorical one, does not produce that simultaneous, alongsidedness, juxtaposition, or even agreed synthesis between a dark history of experience and an untainted world of innocence. He, like the other Romantics tend to separate the categories into innocence and experience, or to idealise innocence and set it up as a golden ideal, which one tries to reach, but nevertheless knows will be a perpetual series of failures. Of course Blake is more complicated than this and at one stage sets up the model of a synthesis, without contraries there is no progression, but I agree with E. D. Hirsch that in *Innocence and Experience* Blake fundamentally separates the two modalities. Many people read *Don Juan*, as they do Blake, but with the Scriptures in mind, it is possible to read it more positively. It is perfectly possible that *Don Juan* can be read as the paradoxical, but Scriptural combination, of the co-existence of untainted innocence and tainted experience and that Byron believes this more consistently than Blake does. The peculiar force of the poem lies in its refusal to abandon either category or, in the face of difficulties, to point to some position beyond their antithesis.

So Byron is different from the other Romantics mainly because of his fidelity to occurrence, his sense that the Scriptures contain truths in their own forms, and his consequent treatment of innocence and experience. But Byron can also be singled out as a mediator. He mediates between fact and fiction, scriptural and non-scriptural modes and between different scriptural hermeneutics; using progressive



ideas of his own without debunking those presented to him. In other words he has a foot in both camps. What makes Byron sensitive to two sides of an argument? Byron was, of course, born an aristocrat, but his early years were marked by his mother's financial struggle. He was also given conflicting accounts of his ancestry. His mother instilled in him a sense of pride in her own ancestry, but Byron knew her to be coarse and unbalanced, and with a sense of disdain for his father's ancestry. Nevertheless, through an apparently accidental or fated pattern of events, Byron inherited his title from his father's blood and the respect that went with it. He was brought up as a Scot, but later lived in England where he would have experienced less seriousness and theological intensity in relation to religious topics, though Calvinism itself, in its later modulations, accommodates many differing viewpoints.<sup>12</sup> Living in exile, Byron was someone different, an outsider who only partly belonged wherever he went and yet he entered deeply into the culture which he inhabited. All these factors coalesced in his multifaceted personality and enabled him to appreciate different points of view and to mediate between them. His writing arises out of these acts of mediation.

Needless to say, I am very aware of many deficiencies in my argument. Because 'Byron and the Bible' covers such a large area, I have followed a very narrow track and kept conscientiously to the 'phrase', 'paragraph', 'book' and 'totality' scenario, which inevitably limits my findings. Added to these limitations is the fact that Byron is the most complicated of English poets, his relation to Scriptures is complex and the thesis has been simplified to asking limited and specific

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<sup>12</sup>Henry Cole, who translated John Calvin's *A Treatise on the External Predestination of God* remarks in his Preface dated 1855 that there are, in the religious world, almost as many different shades, phases, kinds and degrees of Calvinism as there are Calvinists (or professors of the doctrines of Calvin), and almost as many diverse opinions on the faith and character of the Reformer himself. *Calvin's Calvinism: A Treatise on the External Predestination of God and the Secret Providence of God*, translated by Henry Cole (Cambridge: Clare Hall, 1855).

questions. The Scriptures are complicated in themselves and have produced vast amounts of scholarship and commentary which, perforce, I have only dipped into. I am neither a trained theologian, nor a statistician, but because the area is so vast and so complicated and because this, essentially, is a literary thesis, I have, at times, perhaps tended to over-compensate with Scriptural detail. The thesis is, I hope, a genuine attempt to arrive at, through a structured way, as faithful and accurate a result as possible. In doing so, I have tried to select what I consider to be the most appropriate comparative literary writers and texts, including diverse Scriptural critical opinion and randomly selected passages of Scripture. In the spirit of the thesis, I have tried, like Byron, to faithfully record the contingency of these findings, with a simple trust in the eventual workings out. In doing so, I have been rewarded with an interesting kind of byway, in that Byron does often seem to be more indebted to the model of the Scriptures when he is not consciously following them. In fact, the further away he consciously goes from the Scriptures as a model, the more he shows himself indebted to them. Aware of my own deficiencies and the difficulty of this research, I have looked for scholars who have been investigating and researching along similar tracks, but I have not been able to find them. Of course, there are many formidable critical studies on Byron's relationship with the Scriptures or with religion in general. Most of these fall into one of three categories. Firstly, some critics believe that Byron is a liberal atheist or a permanent sceptic. For instance, Samuel Chew's *The Dramas of Lord Byron* (1915) sees Byron's scepticism as the logical outcome of his reaction to orthodox religion, or more recently Malcolm Kelsall's *Byron's Politics* (1987) which sees Byron as having the mind-set of an enlightenment Whig. Whilst this emphasis is not wholly wrong, it is clearly misleading. Certain critics wish to disentangle themselves from this simplification by asserting that Byron is

serious about religion and that his relationship with religion is persistent and thoughtful. In particular, they have noted that Byron's attitude to the Fall and the apocalyptic image of destruction, such as the Flood, is a dominant concern. Amongst many, we can take for example, George Ridenour's *The Style of Don Juan* (1960), Robert Gleckner's *The Ruins of Paradise* (1967) and Bernard Blackstone's essay 'Guilt and Retribution in Byron's Sea Poems' (1961).<sup>13</sup> These critics tend to focus on Byron's attitude to doctrines and on the influence of his upbringing. There is a third group of people who have taken both a more literary and religiously informed approach than that. These are the people who have helped me most. In particular, I refer to McGann's carefully-worded thoughts on Byron's Catholicism in *Fiery Dust* (1968), the Wolf Hirst collection of essays in *Byron, The Bible, and Religion* (1991), which are more open than previous writings to Byron's to Byron's fundamentally religious temperament, and, more especially, I am indebted to Bernard Beatty's works, especially his *Byron's Don Juan* (1985). I am indebted also to H.R. Stevens' thesis, 1965, with the same name as this one. His detailed discussion of imagery is exemplary, but he is less interested in the structural forms peculiar to the Bible, than the present thesis. Taking these writings into consideration, I have tried to continue the debate by taking a narrow and structured approach. This approach does seem, I think, to have shown some interesting results. In particular, the original contention of the thesis seems to me clearly proven: Byron's writing, both unconsciously and semi-consciously, is indebted to Scriptural models of writing. We can discern this in his diction, local structures, larger structures and cross-referencing habits of mind. The evidence is there in the evident form and a myriad of small details.

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<sup>13</sup> Essay in Paul West's *Byron: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 31-41.

Byron as a respecer of people did not wish to debunk the valid findings of others, but sought to act as a mediator between old and new intellectual models and look forward to new possibilities whilst being intensely receptive to the value of vanished and threatened forms. This thesis seeks to do the same. It does not wish to debunk the excellent work of many critics who have enquired into Byron's religious form of understanding, but rather it seeks to add something to it. It seeks to further the examination of the long recognised ties between Byron and the Bible by drawing upon a concept of reading to which insufficient attention has been given and in doing so to open up a rich vein of new and fecund possibilities for reading Byron's work.

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