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CHASMS IN CONNECTIONS: BYRON ENDING (IN) *CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE* 1 AND 2

BY PAUL ELLEDGE

Two years and twelve days after departing England for his continental tour, Lord Byron landed at Sheerness on 14 July 1811 bearing the manuscript about to rocket him into international fame.¹ It tracks the months of recurrent dislocation intrinsic to a pilgrimage that enacted the chronic discontinuity of the poet's affinitive history. Just over one-hundred lines into the new poem, a valedictory lyric by the voyaging pilgrim sings a simulated indifference to his desertion of family and friends, and foresees as his destination the desolated terrain to which in fact its author returned.² This essay explores Byron's response to the devastation he in disembarking met, principally as textualized in stanzas added to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 1 and 2 in August and October 1811. But these supplements, partially driven by the deaths of the friends they covertly honor—John Wingfield in 1 and John Edleston in 2—also materialize the poet's apprehensions about reengaging a readership after his recklessly indiscriminating *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* had jarred and piqued the British literary establishment in 1809. The stanzas in question encrypt anxieties aroused by gaps in Byron's personal landscape and inflamed by the imminence of a gap between poet and manuscript—by the rift created with his abandonment of the *Childe* to an uncertain audience. My subject, broadly, is Byron ending: suffering, evading, disguising, denying, performing, and surviving terminations; ending relationships, poems, relationships with poems and their audiences; designing structures to accommodate and facilitate the dissociative imperative that determines so much of his verse as it disabled so many of his connections. More particularly, I look at the complementary coincidence of fateful human with necessary authorial separation in Byron's elaborated conclusions to his cantos, whereby he converts a psychic deficiency into a textual strength that ministers to the anxieties it inscribes. Among these, ruptures not of his making actuate a *Pilgrimage* discourse that nevertheless exploits them in the vexatious task of textual termination.

Two testimonial stanzas (1.91-92) precede the deceptively conventional parting address to Byron's readership that formally concludes canto 1 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.³ The collective circumstances inspiring them realized, with horribly concentrated impact, the vision of decimation ending Harold's "Good Night" song (*CH*, 1.118-197), for they resonate with the grief that staggered Byron as he learned, in Jobean succession, of the deaths of five intimates between July and October 1811, while preparing his new poem for the press. Mrs. Byron died on 1 August at Newstead Abbey, before reunion with her son who had lingered in London from mid-July. News of the deaths of two schoolmates, Hargreaves Hanson, second son of Byron's solicitor, at 23, and John Wingfield, at 20, "among my juniors and favourites [at Harrow], whom I spoil by indulgences" (*M*, 21), reached Byron in late July. Charles Skinner Matthews, the poet's high-spirited Cambridge companion, strangled among underwater weeds in the River Cam on 3 August. And by 10 October, Byron knew that his beloved Cambridge chorister John Edleston was dead of consumption. On 7 August he wrote in (an uncannily proleptic *Frankensteinian*) anguish to Scrope Berdmore Davis:

Some curse hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house: one of my best friends is drowned in a ditch. What can I say, or think, or do? My dear Scrope, if you can spare a moment, do come down to me, I want a friend. Matthews's last letter was written on *Friday*,—on Saturday he was not. . . . Come to me, Scrope, I am almost desolate—left almost alone in the world."⁴

And on the 10th to John Cam Hobhouse:

My dwelling, you already know, is the House of Mourning, & I am really so much bewildered with the different shocks I have sustained, that I can hardly reduce myself to reason by the most frivolous occupations. My poor J. Wingfield, my Mother, & and your best friend, (surely not the worst of mine) C[harles] S[kinner] M[atthews] have disappeared in one little month since *my return*, & without my seeing *either*, though I *heard* from *All*. (*L*, 2:69).

Hearing, Byron not only establishes a community of connections; as metaphor, hearing, more nearly than reading, realizes the presence only teased (and withheld) by epistolary texts, and of course renders proportionately more painful the lamented dissociations and the silences they signify.

On the 22nd, Byron enrolls Frances Hodgson in the listening fellowship:

You may have heard of the sudden death of my mother, and poor Matthews, which, with that of Wingfield . . . has made a sad chasm in my connexions. Indeed the blows followed each other so rapidly that I am yet stupid from the shock, and though I do eat and drink and talk, and even laugh, at times, yet I can hardly persuade myself that I am awake, did not every morning convince me mournfully to the contrary. (*L*, 2:77)

And finally, on 7 September to Robert Charles Dallas:

In M** [Matthews] I have lost my 'guide, philosopher, and friend'; in Wingfield a friend only, but one whom I could have wished to have preceded in his long journey . . . [Matthews] was indeed an extraordinary man . . . To me he was much, to Hobhouse every thing . . . I did not love quite so much as I honoured him; I was indeed so sensible of his infinite superiority, that though I did not envy, I stood in awe of it . . . I am quite alone, as these long letters testify. (*L*, 2:93)

With relentlessly brutalizing irony, the rejections and desertions Byron had earlier sought to displace or repress by the foreign tour that became his *Pilgrimage*—among them, derisive reviews of *Hours of Idleness* (1807), mnemonically reexperienced abandonment by the beloved Mary Ann Chaworth-Musters, rebuffs by friends at Christmas and by a kinsman in the House of Lords, the deaths of two Harrow classmates, and (of scarcely less moment to Byron) the death of his prized dog Boatswain—seemed to clone themselves in successors all irreversibly final. Homecoming excited flight. Coveted welcome wrenched into experienced repudiation as home emptied itself at Byron's approach.

The traumatizing bereavements that greeted the poet, Jerome J. McGann has proposed, fed the "Consciousness awaking to her woes" (*CH*, 1.92.6) already foundational in the two cantos, and helped determine Byron's October decision, once he had rallied from the blitz of shattering news,

to make his personal losses assume a kind of climactic significance in his poem. . . . He created a dramatic fiction by means of which the deaths appeared in the poem in a gradual succession, culminating in the conclusion of canto 2. . . . The sense of personal losses, lamented in some of the most moving passages of the early cantos, climaxes the poet's education in woe.⁵

This observation and McGann's brief defense of it encourage me to promote the argument for "personalization" from a different angle by contextualizing Byron's eulogistic stanzas as the closural strategies of a poet deeply anxious about reconnecting with an audience literally and literarily given up in circumstances that challenged its allegiances.

The stanzas at the end of canto 1 on John Wingfield commend the Caledonian guard stationed in Coimbra, Portugal, who died there of fever on 14 May 1811, two days before the battle of Albuera, the site of which, some seventy miles to the southeast of Coimbra, Byron had visited in July 1809 en route to Seville and Cadiz.⁶ This horrendous battle, commemorated in 1.43—another added stanza—claimed nearly fourteen thousand lives, 4,158 of them British in what, even so, authorities judged a Pyrrhic victory for English forces under General William Beresford over the invading French.⁷ *The London Times* from early June 1811 had trumpeted praise of the forces engaged in "the glorious victory at Albuera . . . Marshall Beresford speaks in the highest terms of the incomparable conduct of every part of the British army" (3 June 1811); and the next morning, in the same vein,

It is impossible by any description to enumerate every instance of discipline and valour shewn on this severely contested day, but never were troops that more valiantly or more gloriously maintained the honour of their respective countries. . . . It is impossible to do justice to the distinguished gallantry of the troops, but every individual most nobly did his duty. . . . [O]ur dead . . . were lying, as they had fought, in ranks, and every wound was in the front. (4 June 1811)

And again from *The Times* of 4 July, which reproduced a dispatch from Wellington to the Earl of Liverpool: "I beg to draw your Lordship's attention to the ability, the firmness and the gallantry manifested by Marshall William Beresford throughout the transaction on which he has written. . . ." Beresford "well knows that every officer and soldier deserves to be named in particular, the conduct of all has been most valiant and noble, and never were given greater proofs of brilliant British valour." And *The Times* prints Beresford's very detailed account of the battle, prepared for Wellington, dated Albuera, 16 May 1811:

It is with great pleasure I assure your Lordship, that the good and gallant conduct of every corps, and of every person, was in proportion to the opportunity that afforded for distinguishing themselves. I know not an individual who did not do his duty. (4 June 1811)

London papers, in short, gave extensive, even saturation coverage to the Albuera conflict, and excited among readers warm pride in the military glory earned by troops there deployed.⁸

But Byron's former Harrow classmate—annotatively identified by initials only, for reasons considered below—missed this action and whatever opportunity for honor it might have afforded him. The two had known each other for ten years, Byron's note remarks, "the better half of his life, and the happiest part of mine" (*W*, 2:189); and he had celebrated their Harrow companionship in "Childish Recollections," a poem self-described as a "parting song" to the institution. Lines 243-64 of that poem feature Wingfield as "Alonzo," "best and dearest of my friends":

Our sports, our studies, and our souls were one;
Together we impell'd the flying ball. . . .
Together join'd in cricket's manly toil,
Or shar'd the produce of the river's spoil;
Or, plunging from the green, declining shore,
Our pliant limbs the buoyant waters bore;
In every element, unchang'd, the same,
All, all that brothers should be, but the name.⁹

(*W*, 1:166)

Memory of such pleasures would have been freshened by Byron's visit to Harrow within a week of his return to London, less than three weeks before hearing of Wingfield's death only days after the deaths of Mrs. Byron and Matthews. His note to the *Pilgrimage* stanzas continues:

In the short space of one month I have lost *her* who gave me being, and most of those who had made that being tolerable. To me the lines of Young are no fiction—

"Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?
Thy shaft flew thrice, and thrice my peace was slain,
And thrice ere thrice yon moon had fill'd her horn."

I should have ventured a verse to the memory of the late Charles Skinner Matthews, Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge, were not he too much above all praise of mine. His powers of mind, shown in the attainment of greater honours, against the ablest of candidates, than those of any graduate on record at Cambridge, have sufficiently established his fame on the spot where it was acquired; while his softer qualities live in the recollection of friends who loved him too well to envy his superiority.¹⁰ (*W*, 2:189)

Grief, modesty, consoling intertextualization, and deference to other discourse for expression of an inarticulate sorrow all keynote these reflections, whose origin in pain may be felt in their martial, defensive stiffness and generality. But their effect, also apparent in the epistolary quotations above, discloses a bias, a hierarchy in the structure of Byron's mourning. To praise X while claiming Y *above* praise subordinates X to Y, values Y more highly, and interrogates the praise of X; and to elide Z altogether from this calculus ranks it third by default or eliminates it as an object of grief. Byron may, of course, mean to define grief for his mother and for Matthews as unutterable, as unspeakably deep. But even so, to eulogize Wingfield while positioning the cited others beyond the reach of suitable linguistic representation necessarily depreciates the one saluted in the also devalued medium. As we will momentarily see, the same explanation may be adduced for this probably accidental diminishment of the beloved comrade as for his screened identity in Byron's note.

Here is the first of the Wingfield stanzas:

And thou, my friend! since unavailing woe
 Bursts from my heart, and mingles with the strain—
 Had the sword laid thee with the mighty low,
 Pride might forbid ev'n Friendship to complain:
 But thus unlaurel'd to descend in vain,
 By all forgotten, save the lonely breast,
 And mix unbleeding with the boasted slain,
 While Glory crowns so many a meaner crest!
 What hadst thou done to sink so peacefully to rest?

(CH, 1.91)

From its opening affirmation of friendship, the stanza develops through negative demonstration of Wingfield's paradoxical ennoblement by deficit: losing certain entitlements by the manner of his death, his superiority evolves through disqualification. Unmighty, unslain, unlaureled, almost unremembered, unbleeding, unboasted, uncrowned, he fosters in the poet an "unavailing woe," and the parallel impotency links victim and mourner. But if Wingfield's exemption from the barbarity and glory of war redounds finally to his credit, earning the peace he is said to enjoy, so too by that logic the poet's woe achieves legitimacy as justifiable sorrow over irretrievable loss. Byron thus retroactively invests his canto's denunciation of warfare with an intensely personal gravity not by blaming war for his friend's demise but by recording satisfaction in war having lost that

privilege—in Wingfield’s fateful immunity to martial death and the misplaced pride and unmerited praise that it normally inspires.¹¹

Without disrespect to the poet’s sincerity, however, we should nevertheless ponder his adoption of the ironic mode for eulogistic tribute. It buffers grief, of course, as the decompressing medium through which factuality may submit to emotional management, providing space for adjustment to the new psychic landscape—now forever changed by a fissure—about to be encountered without mediation in Byron’s next stanza: it defends against the intimacy it also—defensively—suspects of sentimentality precisely because so fervently valued. But despite the ironically ennobling death by fever, the stanza shows Wingfield diminished by it too, even belittled, in losing an honor that, for all of Byron’s pacifist leanings, would have rendered him dearer and their association a source of greater pride. This stanzaic paradox matches and endorses an occasional ambivalence towards war expressed in canto 1—it may, for example, liberate as well as enslave—that permits Byron’s concluding self-representation as a companion genuinely shaken who yet murmurs resentfully over his mate’s abandonment, his negative rhetoric registering offense at betrayal of friendship not merely by death but by an inglorious, embarrassing one at that.¹² Wingfield becomes the first textual focus of Byron’s response to the shocking summer losses precisely because, emotionally, he matters least, and because their relationship, already massaged in “Childish Recollections,” lends itself to conventional treatment, with less risk than might accompany tributes to the mother and to Matthews, in a traditionally sanctioned mode familiar to the poet in Byron. But he must regret a demise that robs him of a received instrument for grieving it, for eulogies are not normally made on battlefield deaths by fever. That Byron’s survivors faced a similar dilemma thirteen years later eerily ironizes these lines.

But what bearing have they on closure, and what do they reveal about Byron in relationship? He added the Wingfield stanzas to the poem around mid-August (*W*, 2:267), at about the same time that he drafted a will, partly in response to Mrs. Byron’s death, but also urged, I suspect, by the two debilitating, emaciating bouts with “fever” he himself had suffered while abroad.¹³ The appearance of the new poem would represent Byron’s first venture into print since the publication of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* shortly before his 1809 departure—a parting (scatter)shot, if ever author

took one, against just about every “scribbler” of his day.¹⁴ For three and a half months, with embarkation ever “eminent” in a typically extended Byronic leave-taking, the poet relished the commotion wrought by his retaliative satire, not to mention its brisk sales, and even the notoriety it conferred, for anonymous publication had not concealed authorial identity. But the praise some readers had awarded *English Bards* notwithstanding, as the *Pilgrimage* moved toward the press Byron reckoned the cost of having pilloried the literary establishment, no doubt recalling the stings of the *Edinburgh’s* barbs on his own thin skin. “You must be aware,” he writes on 21 August 1811 to Dallas, his mediator with Murray,

that my plaguy Satire will bring the North and South Grubstreets down on my ‘Pilgrimage,’ but nevertheless if Murray makes a point of [assigning authorship], & you coincide with him, I will do it daringly, so let it be entitled by ‘the *Author of E[n]glish Bards and S[cot]ch R[ev]iewer[s],*’

as though to spur the reprisal he foresees. Farther along in the same letter, possibly projecting his anxieties onto his publisher, Byron writes: “I fear Murray will be in a Scrape with the Orthodox, but I cannot help it, though I wish well through it . . .” (*L*, 2:75-76). Similarly to Augusta on 2 September 1811:

Nothing so fretful, so despicable as a Scribbler, see what *I* am, & what a parcel of Scoundrels I have brought about my ears, and what language I have been obliged to treat them with in their own way;—all this comes of Authorship, but now I am in for it, and shall be at war with Grubstreet. (*L*, 2:88)

And again to Dallas on 7 September 1811: “I know I have every thing against me, angry poets and prejudices . . .” (*L*, 2:92). For two years beyond the summons of parties assaulted by *English Bards*, Byron expects *Harold* to reignite the smoldering embers of belletristic antipathy toward him. He anticipates warfare, and prepares to do battle “daringly.”

He prepares, in other words, for combat to avoid the “unlaurel’d” descent of the ingloriously fallen soldier/poet. I am suggesting that Byron’s consciousness of himself as a poet ending a segment of a poem about to engage him with an aggrieved audience capable of acclaiming, ignoring, or savaging him, in part determines the first of the Wingfield stanzas and helps to account for its affective ambivalence. Situated like his friend in a battle zone, recently recovered from physical illness but acutely aware of threats to literary health

posed by political and journalistic foes, his own injured heart bleeding for the “unbleeding” Wingfield, Byron launches *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* 1 and 2 as a second salvo to extinguish public memory of *Hours of Idleness* and its critics, as well as of the excesses of *English Bards* that answered them. But the new poem also seeks to redeem the honor Byron sometimes felt he had compromised or sacrificed by quitting the field in 1809 before challenges to the charges of his satire could be flung down. His continental absence equilibrates with Wingfield’s fever as a disabling void, without opportunity for ennobling conflict; successive editions of *English Bards* only underscored authorial inaccessibility. That Byron’s renown was ever in doubt now seems incredible enough, but with the *Pilgrimage* still on his desk he had not yet awakened to find himself famous; and an uneasiness about reception and perception, an ambition for enwreathed recognition, subtextually alloy his expression of grief for the soldier fatefully denied the right and occasion to earn through active conflict the admiration of the British public. “But thus *unlaural’d* to descend *in vain*” (*CH*, 1.91.5; emphasis added) records the doubled exposure anxiety of the poet post-scripting his canto, the dread that its reception might wring another sort of “unavailing woe” from his heart.

The fear of authorial oblivion (“By all forgotten”) complements the fear of anomalous positioning as the oddity, the aberration—with intimations here of the behavioral repercussions and consequences of Byron’s lameness—among publicly esteemed professionals whose real worth is felt to merit honor less than his own (“mix unbleeding with the boasted slain, / While Glory crowns so many a meaner crest!” [*CH*, 1.91.7-8]). But that reminder of injustice provokes the vexation and the warning of the stanza’s concluding question: “What hast thou done to sink so peacefully to rest?” This accusing interrogative, distancing poet from soldier, asks of Wingfield, first, “What have you done to *earn* repose?” with the negative response implicit, and second, “What, scandalously, have you *done*, what *damage* have you inflicted on yourself, and what precedent established, by sinking (in unlaureled descent) so *peacefully*, so passively and submissively, to rest?” And the question identifies its author as one who will not go thus gently. Within eulogic convention, the interrogative also asks how its author can achieve the repose (ambiguously) granted his subject, particularly, for Byron, in the face of menacing book-reviewers analogically linked to the Albuera hostilities and notoriously productive of Pyrrhic victories.¹⁵ It serves subtle, combative

notice on censoring agencies and other adversaries, as Byron seals his canto, that he is back, in aggressive, daring pursuit of the laurel within reach.

Focused on Wingfield but conscious of the other deaths blighting Byron's return to England, 1.92 develops dialectically from the blurred appraisal of its predecessor.

Oh, known the earliest, and esteem'd the most!
Dear to a heart where nought was left so dear!
Though to my hopeless days for ever lost,
In dreams deny me not to see thee here!
And Morn in secret shall renew the tear
Of Consciousness awaking to her woes,
And Fancy hover o'er thy bloodless bier,
Till my frail frame return to whence it rose,
And mourn'd and mourner lie united in repose.

A manuscript revision points to the stanza's alternative emphases: "Oh, known the earliest, and beloved the most," Byron alters to "esteem'd the most." If his chiasmus gains by an enriched assonance, the revision also shows passion cooling to admiration, intimacy to reserve, perhaps in the aftermath of first grief. And so on throughout the stanza: hopeless bereavement succeeds prized attachment to be balanced by the wish—suspiciously framed in a double negative—for reuniting resurrection dreams; lines 5-6 anticipate quotidian grief as Wingfield becomes a metaphor for general dispossession and desertion, while line 7, linking authorial "Fancy" to the classmate's "bloodless bier"—with Byron's adjective remembering the humble end—foresees their posthumous reassociation. Conventionally enough, with stress dividing about evenly between recollected union and separative sorrow, the stanza traces emotional passage from dejected egocentrism through a self-renewing realization of the magnitude of loss—sullyng the dawn it accompanies—to a reversal of sorts in the dark consolation of a fancied reunion: Byron's last line simply denies death's dissociative office by naming it unifier. If no vision of a transfigured Wingfield comforts grief, neither does it confirm separation. But located where it can have no human significance, the relationship Byron imagines refutes itself as healing solace.¹⁶

This otherwise unremarkable stanza graphs a waffling appropriate both to the mixed emotions of 1.91 and to the proximity of the canto's conclusion. In *Don Juan* particularly, but elsewhere in the canon as well, a separative event or commentary often segues into

the termination of an installment (a canto) or of a poem as rehearsal for closure, especially when the poet's resumption of relations with his audience beyond it may appear problematic. The exercise practices disengagement and through displacement reduces separative anxiety aroused by closure.¹⁷ A similar service might be expected of 1.92, whose dissociative moment as a preface to ending appears to model Byron's praxis by providing a textual conduit for draining away apprehensions of rupture. But 1.93 is of course a false ending, a formally necessary break, perhaps, but as an artificial rhetorical marker unlikely to produce separative alarm if so understood by its architect. And yet it structures an end whose internal dynamics, like its two-stanza prefixure, expose all the emotional awkwardness of, say, dinner guests who, donning wraps at the door, sit down again to resume conversation. Byron's simultaneous awareness of ending and continuing, of closing without stopping, his consciousness of signing a lie helps to explain the instability, the near affective indeterminateness of 1.91-93. For stress pressures the terminal stanza in greater degree than its largely structural function would appear to warrant. The still hot sting of reviewers' ink in Byron's blood stirs him, as he affects to release the poem, to address to his "stern Critic" a question and an imperative that stifle and confute the anticipated complaint of "too much" by presenting canto 2 as a *fait accompli*. In other words, in light of the completed "fytte" of the *Pilgrimage* now at hand, indeed, already *in hand*, what seems an absurd hypothetical—"Ye . . . Shall find some tidings in a future page, / If he that rhymeth now may scribble moe"—constitutes a wounding shot at the critic whose objection to the "moe" that registers the poet's scorn of such a reproof is already obsolete: by implication, Byron finds this adversary ethically censurable for premature judgment on the basis of incomplete evidence.¹⁸ If for an instant uneasily suspended between a sympathetic and censorious readership in a relational dichotomy reminiscent of the tensions riddling Harold's song, at the end of his stanza Byron adroitly escapes it through the historical allusion linking his own with the "Grecian arts" next on the Pilgrim's itinerary, a bold maneuver checking the critic's "barbarous hands" that would quell the poetic inscription of those artifacts.

2

"Where are thy men of might?" canto 2 inquires of Athena in the first of many reflections on faded grandeur, empiric ruin, and moral dereliction that grimly march toward Byron's canto-closing medita-

tions on division and the particular losses of *his* men, parent, and “more than friend” (*CH*, 2.96.6). It is a canto largely about discontinuity and disintegration, whose local occasions of valediction and fracture anchor those subjects amid the discursiveness of travelogue reportage before their climactic personal expression in 2.94-98. For contextualizing purposes, I will glance at a few such moments before focusing on the stanzas ending the unit.

Typically investing with subjective import his geographical and historical surveys (of Gibraltar, Malta, Albania, Greece, Smyrna, and Constantinople) and his metaphysical speculations (on, among other topics, an afterlife, in this canto about the afterlives of civilizations, estranged travelers, and bereaved survivors), Byron restates in his ninth stanza the “vain” existence to which abandonment—now John Edleston’s—commits him, and repeats from the Wingfield tribute the imagery of entwinement and dream reunion.¹⁹ His attack on Lord Elgin (*CH*, 2.11-15) mourns the mutilation of relics on holy ground, the dismembering violation of indivisible relationship, and the amputation of heritage from its originating site: this divestment is the violent political version of the dispossession that pilgrimage enacts. Stanza 16, incidentally seconding Harold’s attribution of hypocrisy to those he left behind (*CH*, 1.174-77), borrows language from canto 1 to contrast his earlier departure with his latest, from Spain: “But Harold felt not as in other times, / And left without a sigh the land of war and crimes” (*CH*, 2.16.8-9). In this apparent revision of the prior text, “sighs” ventilated Harold’s initial embarkation, their inspiration—given the sweeping exclusions of 1.11—presumably the “few dear objects” cited in 1.10 and here perhaps indirectly retrieved as valuable connections: in short, these contradictory sentiments toward land-bound intimates articulate the stress of the recapitulated abandoning act. Over against them stands the poet’s more forthright confession of farewell sorrow: “None are so desolate but something dear, / Dearer than oneself, possesses or possess’d / A thought, and claims the homage of a tear . . .” (*CH*, 2.24.5-7). But the pain of absence thus keenly felt and more movingly recorded in the famous stanza defining solitude (*CH*, 2.26) produces its counterpoint in the lighter report of Harold’s spurning of “Florence” on the grounds of his unworthiness and, surprisingly, his former attachments (“check’d by every tie”)—old, neglected affiliations now revived to excuse refusal of a new one (*CH*, 2.30.7).²⁰ The whimsicality of Byron’s prescription for successful seduction may be arguable; I take it as a crude, epigrammatic summation of the cyclical associa-

tional dynamic emerging in his verse: "Pique her and soothe in turn, soon Passion crowns thy hopes" (*CH*, 2.34.9).

With an impatient "Away! Nor let me loiter in my song" that discloses the poet's psychological equivalence to Harold's restlessness, 2.36 resumes the travelogue, "By pensive Sadness . . . led" away, in the immediate case, from ruminations on the high wages of "successful Passion" (*CH*, 2.35.6). Nearing Constantinople, Harold "bade to Christian tongues a long adieu" (*CH*, 2.43.2); his farewell initiates a major cultural alienation, with which his moral defection within western civilization presciently corresponds, just as the poet's freethinking skepticism inaugurating canto 2 conditions his arrival on pagan soil. While the unexpectedly cultivated reception Harold receives in Albania (*CH*, 2.66-72) ironizes his earlier reflections on Christian civilization—or perhaps this episode fantasizes *Childe Harold's* reception among the barbarian critics expected to bludgeon it—the wild song offered as entertainment by the marauding band (*CH*, 2.649-92), a metaphor for voluntary corporate alienation, when literally read as a call to arms constructs a collage of departures and divisions themselves violent or performed in the service of violence. For all of its rugged, exotic glamour, this song of dismantlement, ironically the product of choric collaboration, extols bloodlust in relentless contempt for life and relationship, and in foregrounding battle over domestic and vocational routine ("the cave and the chase") radicalizes Byron's rupturing motif. Finally, laying the foundation for his conclusion—indeed, concluding the poem in its first stage—Byron by a deft ambiguity collapses the distinction between emotional and spatial division:

The parted bosom clings to wonted home,
If aught that's kindred cheer the welcome hearth;
He that is lonely hither let him roam,
And gaze complacent on congenial earth.

(*CH*, 2.92.1-4)

Whether we read "parted bosom" to mean one so internally riven that it remains hearthside (or anyhow longs for home's healing comforts); or as synecdoche for the wanderer mnemonically clutching a hearth graced by like-minded spirits; or, perhaps better, as the fragmented bosom of an outcast pilgrim; this shattered, disenfranchised, physically and morally ruinous condition of the heart can find congenial accommodation in a landscape similarly despoiled—as, perhaps, can a poem featuring such wreckage to and among a readership whose fractured identities and circumstances it analogi-

cally reflects. Albeit “consecrated” by its historical achievements, fallen, modern Greece qualifies as one version of the desolation Harold imagined as his destiny.

3

In late October 1811, roughly two and a half months after “ending” canto 1 with 87-92, and at about the same time he wrote 1.93, the final stanza of the first segment, Byron adjoined six stanzas to his second canto, five of them constituting what I here treat as his farewell to the poem.²¹ In the first of these five (2.94), Byron reverses the order of his canto 1 conclusion, now preceding personal lament with provision for closure, as though preempting the absence about to be announced by announcing his own—in effect, defensively leaving before being left. But more interesting is his revisionary appropriation of the earlier conclusion:

For thee, who thus in too protracted song
Hast sooth'd thine idlesse with inglorious lays,
Soon shall thy voice be lost amid the throng
Of louder minstrels in these later days:
To such resign the strife for fading bays—
Ill may such contest now the spirit move
Which heeds nor keen reproach nor partial praise;
Since cold each kinder heart that might approve,
And none are left to please when none are left to love.

(CH, 2.94)

If canto 1 closed on the combative poet poised for battle, this finds him resigning the field, although to poets not critics. It concedes longwindedness, exactly the charge spurned in 1.93, and admits to an “idlesse” and an “inglorious” performance that recapitulate the illness and undistinguished service of John Wingfield. For the silence enjoined on the critic in 1.93, this stanza substitutes the poet’s expectation of his own among “louder minstrels,” a figure that reformulates those glory-crowned soldiers of “meaner crest” in the Wingfield stanza. Whereas 1.91 contends for “bays” precisely against an “unlaurel’d descent,” the poet now drops out, forfeits the match, declaring himself careless of judgment, declining the wreath also denied Wingfield.

How should we understand this odd inversion of the argumentative structures ending canto 1? One might suppose it strategic, an attempt to disarm criticism by dissembling indifference, and by

exposing a personal wound to stay infliction of another professional one. If the latter, then the maneuver repeats Byron's error in pleading his minority as liability to readers of *Hours of Idleness*, a text whose title, self- and verse-effacing Preface, and fate he almost certainly remembers in the "idlesse" of 2.94.2.²² Or, more simply, does Byron invite contradiction by so extravagant a statement of (feigned) unconcern? Or is 2.94 repentance for pronouncing upon Wingfield, a compensatory association of himself with his friend in unremarkable fate? Or does it strike a defensively aloof posture against expected assaults?

Throughout the canon, especially in *Don Juan*, Byron invents (sometimes extreme) measures to avoid responsibility for various kinds of terminations, often borrowing tactics from other authors to accomplish the separations he regrets. Consistent with his practice elsewhere is the adapted replication in 2.94 of a "closural" procedure that ended nothing, that merely served the illusion of closure while remaining untainted as a severing instrument. Byron's plundering of his own expedients redeploys by echo the non-ending closure, and by distancing the composing voice from its original articulation enables the pretense that another, prior voice authorizes the ending now underway. But the radical difference between the texts presented by the composing and echoed voices sharply interrogates the illusion and foregrounds the changed mind that introduces this conclusion. My point is that the contrapuntal tension between 1.91-92 and 2.94 allows the poet more or less simultaneously to say, "This ending is not by 'my' will or design (and yet is); 'I' do not leave (and yet do); 'I' do not cause such pain as I now feel (and yet do)." Intertextual structure declines responsibility for the separation linguistically arranged.

And the bitter pain in the arrangement produces the capitulation and relinquishment of 2.94. When in mid-August Byron added 1.91-92 to his poem, he did not know of John Edleston's May death; by 10 October, he did, and 2.93-98 responds to that devastating news. The passing of his mother, two schoolmates, and a friend had grieved him dreadfully; but over Edleston's death, he despaired. On 10 October he cries out to Francis Hodgson:

I heard of a death the other day that shocked me more than any
of the preceding, of one whom I once loved more than I ever
loved a living thing, & one who I believe loved me to the last, yet
I had not a tear left for an event which five years ago would have

bowed me to the dust; still it sits heavy on my heart & calls back what I wish to forget, in many a feverish dream. (*L*, 2:110)

Byron's adjective perhaps anxiously remembers Wingfield's affliction and his own continental illnesses, as well as the hectic sway of an illusory Edleston. The next day, he writes to Dallas:

I have been again shocked with a *death*, and have lost one very dear to me in happier times. . . . It seems as though I were to experience in my youth the greatest misery of age. My friends fall around me, and I shall be left a lonely tree before I am withered. (*L*, 2:110)

Then, with tortuously mixed feelings, he writes to Hobhouse on the 13th:

At present I am rather low, & don't know how to tell you the reason—you remember E[dleston] at Cambridge—he is *dead*—last May—his sister sent me an account lately—now though I never should have seen him again (& it is very proper that I should not) I have been more affected than I should care to own elsewhere; Death has been lately so occupied with every thing that was mine, that the dissolution of the most remote connection is like taking a crown from a Miser's last Guinea. (*L*, 2:114)

A week later, again to Hobhouse, he has grown obsessive:

The event I mentioned in my last has had an effect on me, I am ashamed to think of, but there is no arguing on these points. I could 'have better spared a better being.' Wherever I turn, particularly in this place [Cambridge], the idea goes with me, I say all this at the risk of incurring your contempt, but you cannot despise me more than I do myself.—I am indeed very wretched, & like all complaining persons I can't help telling you so. (22 October 1811; *L*, 2.117)²³

Nor can he help telling the world: Byron pours into the poem the anguish he claimed reluctance “to own elsewhere” than to Hobhouse. This discreet and circumspect friend found the epistolary confession unwelcome, for he regretted—and counselled Byron to regret—the poet's earlier association with a man suspected of “indecentcy” in England during the spring of 1810. And as Louis Crompton remarks, Hobhouse might well have interpreted Byron's “grief as a form of backsliding” into habits of desire and conduct unacceptable and dangerous in Regency London.²⁴ Although Byron knew he could have had no future with Edleston, the death of the young man touched him at the core and turned it tender, for it recalled the

lyrical ideality of an intensely passionate but—as he always plausibly protested—“pure” bonding of youthful males that he also knew he would never know again. The letter from Edleston’s sister announcing the death assured Byron of her brother’s unaltered affection for him. It must have cut deeply, this guarantee of the love of one now beyond loving. And it proved relationally disempowering. It sapped his energy, broke his will for affiliation. As ending, it facilitated ending, its force expediting dissociation on all fronts. Of course Edleston became the determinant in death he might never have been, again, in life; but the shock of his passing sufficiently reinforced Byron’s suspicions of relationship itself to encourage his withdrawal from the engagements to which he had verbally and, by continuing his poem, vocationally, pledged himself at the end of canto 1. The silence of Edleston portends and excuses his own, not merely the end of his song but the end of his art; for the erasure of Edleston forebodes the erasure of a poetic identity suspended, without assurance of reactivation, by the end of the song. “I projected an additional canto when I was in Troad and Constantinople,” Byron had written to Dallas a month before learning of Edleston’s death, “but under existing circumstances and *sensations*, I have neither harp, ‘heart nor voice’ to proceed” (7 September 1811; *L*, 2:92)—except, of course, to deplore his unimaginably worsened circumstances and sickened sensations in October. Still, the medium of that plaint, resigning “the strife for bays,” contracts for and initiates an aesthetic abandonment equivalent to the geographical, moral and familial separations tracked in Harold’s “Good Night.” And Byron’s stated defenses of his retirement retaliate against his abandoning others. I put the case more harshly than he does, but when Byron writes, “Since cold each kinder heart that might approve, / And none are left to please when none are left to love” (*CH*, 2:94.8-9), he accuses a once beloved and trusted audience of exiting the theatre with his harp and heart in hand, of thus muting the singer—the absence and silence of that audience the warrants for his own, a retribution in exact kind. The angry undertone in Byron’s lines, however, expresses not only separation grief; it probably redirects to Edleston the poet’s chagrin over reacting so ardently to recollections of an association his self-appointed moral advisor had persuaded him to believe shameful. But he was helpless in their grip.

John Edleston, then, becomes the locus in stanza 95 of the poet’s grief for and resentment of other separations because unique in his capacity for unifying affection: “Thou too art gone, thou lov’d and

lovely one! / Whom youth and youth's affection bound to me. . . ." (CH, 2.95.1-2).²⁵ But the lines equivocate: the beloved "bound" is the beloved "gone"; and whether Edleston's or Byron's "youth" and "affection" accomplished the binding is undecidable (especially in light of the poet's sense of agedness): perhaps both, or possibly Byron is "youth" and Edleston "affection," or vice versa, and the binding a mutual achievement. However stricken by his loss, Byron's uneasiness about this relationship further destabilizes a tribute already unsteady in its defining foundation. On the pivot of an ontological question, gratitude for steadfastness swivels into a charge of betrayal—

Nor shrank from one albeit unworthy thee.
What is my being? thou hast ceased to be!
Nor staid to welcome here thy wanderer home

(CH, 2.95.4-6)

—as though realization of spiritual interdependence translates into memory of physical absence at the pier. This peevish shift from bereavement to accusation arises from the perception that homecoming, in repairing spatial division, exacerbated its emotional counterpart, and discovered reason for repenting return, resuming the voyage: home dissolved, center collapsed, nothing urges an end to wandering, which then becomes mandatory, and return meaningless. The vacancy thus predicted corresponds not only with the wish to evacuate memory of Edlestonian deposits but with the stanza's obsessive negativity—six semantic units accent the absence topos—as well as with the authorial resignation of 2.94 and the imminence of closure: emptiness behind, before, within.

But this insupportable vacuum irresistibly refills itself with "thoughts now better far removed" (CH, 2.96.3), if nevertheless stubbornly entertained.²⁶ That "Sorrow ponders on the past / And clings . . ." (CH, 2.96.2-3), witnesses its resistance to the separative paradigm despite textual counsel to detach from memory and dismiss it. Out of this relational discourse arises both tension and ambivalence, for Sorrow's tenacious grip on a ghost figures the willful choice of disease over health; passionate opposition to rupture stands against the conceded folly of preserving relationship. But nothing hints at relinquishment either, for the passion profits by direction toward a phenomenon unable to accept or reciprocate it, an absence rehabilitated as temporally doomed shade: "Time shall tear thy shadow from me last" (CH, 2.96.4). The grieving Byron mnemoni-

cally recovers Edleston's phantom in the (comfortable?) confidence that he will lose it again.²⁷ Unthreatening except through Hobhouse's censure, unrecoverable, and unable to challenge imaginative reconstruction, Edleston rekindles an unsatisfiable desire.

But then it always *was* unsatisfiable, and that was its supreme satisfaction. In short, the separation imagined in 2.95 approximately recapitulates the Cantabrian association it remembers, a relationship in which the (slight) physical distance maintained between partners empowered the love dependent upon it. I accept Crompton's argument that with Edleston, Byron "achieved something like the palpitating restraint Socrates advocates in the *Phaedrus*, where the male lovers . . . restrict the expression of their emotions to 'the sight, the touch, the kiss, the embrace. . .'"²⁸ Such amorous gestures—three of them mentioned and the fourth implicit in Byron's elegy to Edleston, "To Thyrsa," composed two days after he learned of the death—self-sufficient and restricted, define sensuality as the relational dimension that signified more than it satisfied for Edleston and Byron. Unconsummated passion remembered will almost certainly subordinate the sway of physical magnetism at the time. By its limited expressive options, their stimulating physical play pointed toward its own dispensability under the pressures of other priorities in that "purity" of passion that Byron believed he and his friend shared. Representing for them more than it materialized, flesh remained in some part separate, subservient, even absent. Consequently, Byron can recover in 2.96 an essence of the association, some distillation of its "purity," precisely because it is unrestrained and undistracted by physical presence. Removal, then, rewards by intensifying emotion and by liberating the imagination to reconstruct as it will: the fond heart, the quick fancy thrive on absence.²⁹

The remainder of 2.96 expands upon the earlier metaphors of clinging and tearing as the poet concedes valuables to a greedy and Time-serving Death.³⁰ Conferring a peculiar distinction upon him by such efficient theft of "parent, friend, and now the more than friend"—"Ne'er yet for one thine arrows flew so fast" (*CH*, 2.96.7)—Death occupies the relational space it vacates. For it replaces Edleston's ghost as addressee and becomes the betraying companion whose welcome is a vacant house, and whose gifts are the Pilgrim's transporting element somberly internalized, as waves of "grief with grief continuing still to blend" (*CH*, 2.96.8) condemn him to an oceanic wash of sorrow in perpetuity. Death's robbery inverts the dynamics of Harold's departure (active leaving/passively left) and

visits upon the poet—emotionally identifiable with his wanderer—in the midst of his departure, the desolation of abandonments made more terrible by the impossibility of reunion and by the coincidence of severance with homecoming.

4

In the face of such impoverishment, nothing evidently remains but to “plunge again into the crowd” (not, notably, the waves), “And follow all that Peace disdains to seek” (*CH*, 2.97.1-2), a resolve that tacitly critiques the peaceful decline of Wingfield in 1.91. The lines question that remedy rather than affirm it, however, and the remainder of the stanza continues in the interrogative mode, as though reluctant to resume an enterprise experientially proved futile except in the production of falsity:

Then must I plunge again into the crowd,
And follow all that Peace disdains to seek?
Where Revel calls, and Laughter, vainly loud,
False to the heart, distorts the hollow cheek,
To leave the flagging spirit doubly weak;
Still o’er the features, which perforce they cheer,
To feign the pleasure or conceal the pique,
Smiles form the channel of a future tear,
Or raise the writhing lip with ill-dissembled sneer.

(*CH*, 2.97)³¹

The narrating poet, not Harold, considers taking this “plunge,” which in prospect reconstitutes the Childe’s initial situation and state of mind: the Pilgrim’s “revel and ungodly glee” (1.2.6), “joyless reverie” (1.6.5), and “maddest mirthful mood” (1.8.1) reappear in the “Revel . . . and Laughter” awaiting the poet; the Childe’s unshed “sullen tear” (1.6.3) in Byron’s predicted weeping; the “strange pangs” flashing across Harold’s brow (1.8.2) in the distorted, almost disfigured countenance of the poet; the satiety of the Childe (1.4.7) in the fatigue of the author; the Pilgrim’s proud reserve (1.6.2, 4) in the poet’s dissembling pretense, and so on. This intertextual circularity serves a structurally enclosive purpose, of course, and may transfer Harold’s inanition and hopelessness to their creator. But more to the point is Byron’s preoccupation in this stanza with deception and distortion.

Over and again he sounds the deformative notes: false laughter, misshapen cheek, decrepit spirit, coerced cheer, feigned pleasure, secret resentment, contorted lip, simulated sneer. Although the lines

equivocate on whether “the crowd” excites the distortions and urges the deceptions Byron catalogues, or itself manifests disfiguring hypocrisies, in either or both cases his tropes befit their positioning in the canto immediately before the onset of discomfort, confusion, and “all that Peace disdains to seek.” Vibrant in their over-determination, Byron’s topoi figure the anxiety of a man poised to reenter “the crowd” but who, announcing intention, discloses in a revealing verbal a wish to exchange for that arena the more compatible and democratizing oceanic element where his own congenital disfigurement would neither handicap mobility nor provoke invasive curiosity.

If the mature Byron appears to have accommodated and even exploited his lameness with considerable physical and psychological dexterity, the childhood cruelties and humiliations it earned him left influential scars. Marchand comments on how “much bodily suffering and mental agony” attended a handicap “that probably did more to shape his character than it will ever be possible to calculate.”³² Although he never permitted the disability to sideline him from boyish sports at Harrow—he took the field against Eton in the final cricket match of 1805—it slowed him down, set him apart, except in swimming, at which he excelled. And at least in his youth, it encumbered, or was felt to encumber, his courtship: in a famous episode doubted by Hobhouse, Moore reports Byron’s pained anger upon learning of Mary Chaworth’s cutting disclaimer, “Do you suppose I could care any thing for that lame boy?” (M, 28). Marchand finds Byron blaming the clubfoot for his desertion by Susan Vaughan, a Newstead servant: “I do not blame her,’ he told Hodgson, ‘but my own vanity in fancying such a thing as I am could ever be beloved” (L, 1:312). Such brutal rejection as Mary’s, and such careless abandonments as Susan’s, could only inflame the wounds inflicted by a mother who, again according to Moore citing Byron’s memoirs, “in one of her fits of passion, called him ‘a lame brat” (M, 13), an epithet surely referenced, as Moore notes, at the beginning of Byron’s drama, *The Deformed Transformed*:

Bertha: Out, hunchback!

Arnold: I was born so, mother.

(W, 6:519)

On 22 May 1811, while waiting in Malta to sail for the home even then emptying itself of friends, Byron set down “Four or Five reasons in favor of a Change”; here is his fourth:

A man who is lame of one leg is in a state of bodily inferiority which increases with years and must render his old age more peevish and intolerable. Besides in another existence I expect to have *two* if not *four* by way of compensation. (*L*, 1:273-74)

I retrace this familiar territory in order to argue that despite Byron's admirable outward adaptation to the handicap, he still felt it a stigma in 1811, especially in social negotiation. And while we cannot imagine with any certainty how it affected him in individual situations, perhaps we may fairly suppose that it always required a decision, eventually instinctive and instantaneous, on whether and in what degree to expose, disguise or conceal his disadvantage among strangers—a judgment before entering a packed, fashionable salon, for example, on his self-representation as sound or impaired body: whether, in short, to be true or false. Further, simultaneously with Byron's composition of the concluding stanzas of canto 2, he perpetrated two deceptions of some literary and psychological importance, both involving Edleston. First, his elegy "To Thyrsa" pretends to address a female. Second, he denies to Dallas that *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 2.9 and 2.95-96 refer "to the death of any *male* person," in effect claiming that a woman is their occasion and object (14 October 1811; *L*, 2:116). In what measure, if any, guilt over these fictions emerges in the projections of dissimulation in 2.97 we cannot know. But I suspect that distress over reexposure of a thrice flawed and therefore triply vulnerable self—physically defective, and prevaricating to conceal another felt blemish—may have helped to produce the ascriptions of hypocrisy in 2.97 to the poet, or, if displaced, to a public pressing the threshold of his imminent reentry after a two-year absence that began with a defiant gesture flung in its face.

But "the crowd" will encounter less the poet than the poem—or so Byron might have thought before the poem, becoming the poet, thrust the person into social prominence; the text, more than its scribe, in the normal order of events, first risks victimization by hostile reception. But in the highly politicized atmosphere of early nineteenth-century reviewing, poem and poet were often one, as in fact Byron, with the memory still rankling of Brougham's personalized attack upon *Hours of Idleness* invited by its personalized Preface, assumes them to be in the defense of 2.97. Its placement, tensions, ambiguities, and figurative overdetermination urge secondary interpretation of the stanza as Byron's distorted fantasy of dreaded responses to his new poem. These responses he imagines to

be roughly analogous to the repudiations he has experienced in homecoming; for the *Pilgrimage* as a publishing event is itself a return in reconnecting with the public abandoned by the ending of *English Bards*, and in explaining, through travelogue partly designed to excuse, his absence. But successful explanation depends upon receptive, perhaps impartial auditors; and Byron knew that any except the blandest publication in a politically driven Regency already “disdained” the path of Peace. What if, then, his two cantos merely inspire laughter and mocking revelry, a levity false to the spirit of his text? What if critical interpretation and representation distort intention and so subvert, disempower his poem? What if it earns only the lip-service of an artificial praise, an insincere pleasure that transparently masks a dismissive sneer of genuine and merited offense? What if, in a word, the poem fails, and the poet too, in this effort at amiable relationship? Such anxieties as these vex 2.97 as poet and poem, merging in consolidated self-defense, move toward a reception rendered more uncertain by the reverberant silence around them.³³

And silence, of course, is not only the “worst of woes that wait on age”; mute welcome may mute the poet, absence evacuate imagination:

What is the worst of woes that wait on age?
What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?
To view each lov'd one blotted from life's page,
And be alone on earth, as I am now.
Before the Chastener humbly let me bow:
O'er hearts divided and o'er hopes destroy'd,
Roll on, vain days! full reckless may ye flow,
Since Time hath reft what'er my soul enjoy'd,
And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd.

(CH, 2.98)

The principal and consciously prominent discourse in this heavily alliterative stanza grieves a premature solitude on a landscape stripped of all “dear objects,” in a separation process personally threatening because occurring on a temporal continuum also conducting the poet to similar extinction without expectation of redemptive reunion. But behind it persists awareness of the impact of absence upon authorship. In one perspective, the silence of the man without contacts becomes the silence of the poet without audience, and the blank page of life his own endpaper. But Byron’s metaphors respond with a paradoxical counter-argument. Consider the second

and third lines quoted above: erasure engraves; elision imprints; absence inscribes. Because and out of vacancy, substance emerges. The textual utterance signifies separative sorrow; it is a wounded response that semiotically rewrites and figures the departures, divisions and absences from which, in part, Byron has constructed his canto, and conclusively validates that creative process. And it authorizes exit. His bow to a metonymic "Chastener," a grimly parodic curtain call, acknowledges the space it emptied. The brokenness registered in these lines feels authentic enough, but it may function strategically in the way of the Wingfield stanzas of canto 1, by pleading sufficient suffering. Himself dividing and bereft, and in division bereaving others of what he paradoxically thus offers for their soul's enjoyment, Byron withdraws in relational poverty and despair. But embedded in his farewell is the complaint of an author still smarting from the debasing ills wreaked upon him, first time out, by the (literal and figurative) elders, as he thought them, of the literary establishment. Their lesson, however, evidently took; for the present valedictory virtually inverts the inciting offense of minority status advanced in the Preface to *Hours of Idleness*, and self-admittedly speaks in the accents of an aged man.

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NOTES

¹ For biographical details, I rely throughout this essay on Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1957); Doris Langley Moore, *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Thomas Moore, *The Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1860), hereafter cited parenthetically as M in text; and Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth Century England* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985). William St. Clair provides instructive documentation and analysis of the sales of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 1 and 2 in "The Impact of Byron's Writings: An Evaluative Approach" (*Byron: Augustan and Romantic*, ed. Andrew Rutherford [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990], 1-25).

² See my "Byron's Harold at Sea" *Papers on Language & Literature* 22 (1986): 154-64.

³ For the text of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I use *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), vol. 2; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by canto, stanza and line number, and abbreviated CH; W indicates other references to McGann's edition, cited parenthetically by volume and page number. References to the songs in *Childe Harold* are by absolute canto line numbers.

⁴ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973-1982), 2:68-69; hereafter cited parenthetically in text by volume and page number as L.

⁵ Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), 109, 71. See also his “The Book of Byron and the Book of a World,” in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 259-61.

⁶ See William A. Borst, *Lord Byron’s First Pilgrimage* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948), 22-23.

⁷ *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898), 2:51n.

⁸ Byron, of course, would not have seen this coverage fresh from the press, but he almost certainly heard—and heard with interest, given his on-site experience—talk of the Albuera battle after his return on 14 July, for by then news from the front had turned dire, and the Albuera victory would have provided a ready, encouraging conversational antidote to such reports as the following one, which sweetens with near denial its account of Allied misfortunes: “The general tenour of the great mass of foreign intelligence continued in our paper this day . . . is of an unfavourable nature. Its two prominent features are the fall—the honourable and glorious fall—of Tarragona; and the retreat of Lord Wellington. The last, indeed, is not to be esteemed a disaster till it shall appear to be such by its result and consequences, which may, and probably will, prove of the same nature as the retreat from Almeida. The fall of Tarragona is a serious and heavy affliction to the Spanish cause in that quarter; but yet, as the phrase is, the place had sold itself dearly to its purchasers” (*The Times*, 15 July 1811). Sharing if not stealing the journalistic spotlight on the day following Byron’s disembarkation was “a fresh accession of [His Majesty’s] disorder,” a health concern serious enough to move the Queen’s Council, meeting at St. James’s Palace, to summon to Windsor the prince regent and the duke of Clarence, for attending physicians had concluded that “his Majesty’s disorder had increased” (*The Times*, 15 July 1811). In yet another sector of British life, then, the returning Byron found instability, uncertainty, anxiety, threat.

⁹ In an earlier version, however, these lines honored Lord Clare, another Harrow friend, a subsequent snub from whom provoked this bitter estimate from Byron to Dallas as he prepared to sail in 1809: “Friendship! I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and your family excepted, and perhaps my mother, a single being who will care what becomes of me” (Marchand [note 1], 1:180). That the “Recollections” lines can and did refer to more than one person suggests that in commemorating one, Byron memorializes several, and enshrines the landscape of their association.

¹⁰ See Edward Young, *Night Thoughts: The Complaint*, Night 1, lines 212-14. Probably quoting from memory, Byron omits Young’s emphasis, in italics on “one” and the first “thrice.” He also mispunctuates the passage, substituting a comma for Young’s semi-colon in line 213 and omitting a comma after the first “thrice” in line 214.

¹¹ See McGann, *Fiery Dust* (note 5): “Writing in England in 1811, Byron . . . notes gloomily that, since his visit to Spain in 1809, his worst fears for that country have begun to materialize. . . . The melancholy events over which he had lamented earlier are now seen to have had an even greater relevance than he had ever realized” (110).

¹² Borst historically, and McGann aesthetically, have studied the “inconsistencies” of Byron’s and Harold’s unstable ideological positions in the opening cantos of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, particularly with respect to Spain and the Peninsular

War. Borst asks, "What are we to make of a poet who exhorts the people of Spain to deliver themselves [of French oppression] and then in almost the same breath implies that all who engage in warfare are 'Battle's minions,' that they can do naught but 'fertilise the field that each pretends to gain'" (Borst [note 6], 44, 45). Less troubled by "inconsistencies" he believes functional, McGann notes that Byron's stanzas on Spain "contain an elaborate complex of shifting emotions and attitudes" of the sort I find compressed in the Wingfield eulogy. Despising war, Byron yet favored Spanish revolution against Napoleonic usurpation; hating the military route to honor, he yet admired heroism. The central paradox of the Wingfield stanzas accords with McGann's claim that "war, martial glory, Spain, France, England all weigh equally (or nearly so) in the balance of his [Byron's] mind" (McGann, *Fiery Dust*, 49-50, 53).

¹³ See also his letter of 30 August to Hobhouse: "I have two stanzas in commemoration of W[ingfield] who died at Coimbra" (*L*, 2:84).

¹⁴ The poem appeared in March 1809, while Byron was still scheduled to embark in May. Delays postponed his actual departure until 2 July, shortly before Murray issued the second edition of *English Bards* that included new lines bidding "yet once again adieu!" not merely to England but to authorship: "But should I back return, no lettered rage / Shall drag my common-placebook on the stage. . . ." Declaring himself "quite content," he "no more shall interpose / To stun mankind with Poesy, or Prose" (quoted in Borst [note 6], xxii, from the second edition of *English Bards*). Returning, after all, in 1811, poesy in hand, Byron revised the last phrase to read, "To stun the public ear—at least with Prose."

¹⁵ For this observation, and for other insights silently incorporated, I am gratefully indebted to my Vanderbilt colleague Mark Schoenfield, whose always informed and imaginative commentaries on my manuscripts generously repay the effort required to decipher them.

¹⁶ Mark Storey believes 1.92 "one of the most important stanzas in the entire poem: the coldness of Harold is replaced by the genuine, puzzled loss of a dear friend. Emotion is full, but held in check; the image of 'Fancy' hovering 'O'er thy bloodless bier' inevitably recalls the comparable, but more fully evoked image in *The Giaour* [lines 68-102], as though Byron finds in that poised moment of bereavement a release and a relief from conflict" (*Byron and the Eye of Appetite* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986], 119). The importance of the stanza is indisputable, but its record of "relief" seems to me doubtful.

¹⁷ See, for example, Julia's valedictory letter at the end of *Don Juan* 1 and other substitutive and delaying tactics there employed. My essays in *Studies in Romanticism* 27 (1988) and *South Atlantic Review* 56 (1991) deal with this feature, among others, of Byronic closure.

¹⁸ See Jerome Christensen's ingenious examination of "fytte" and its importance in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (*Lord Byron's Strength* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993], 181-84).

¹⁹ The ninth stanza was added to the poem in October 1811 (*W*, 2:267).

²⁰ McGann sees the "lighter report" as mock heroic in *Fiery Dust* (note 5), 54. "Sweet Florence," the "new Calypso" (*CH*, 2.30.4-5), is Mrs. Constance Spenser Smith, relations with whom Byron did *not* refuse during his stop at Malta. See (*W*, 2:287); Marchand (note 4), 1:199-201; and McGann, *Fiery Dust*, 54. In Peter Manning's opinion, "Harold's refusal to join 'the lover's [Mrs. Smith's] whining

crew' hints that the lady is really a Circe" (*Byron and His Fictions* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975], 33).

²¹ Byron's letter to Dallas of 25 October 1811 identifies the stanzas it includes as "a conclusion to the *whole* poem" (*L*, 2:118).

²² From Byron's Preface to *Hours of Idleness*: "In submitting to the public eye the following collection, I have not only to combat the difficulties that writers of verse generally encounter, but, may incur the charge of presumption, for obtruding myself on the world, when, without doubt, I might be, at my age, more usefully employed. These productions are the fruits of the lighter hours of a young man, who has lately completed his nineteenth year. As they bear the internal evidence of a boyish mind, this is, perhaps, unnecessary information. Some few were written during the disadvantage of illness, and depression of spirits. . . . This consideration, though it cannot excite the voice of Praise, may at least arrest the arms of censure. . . . To the dictates of young ambition, may be ascribed many actions more criminal [than my poems], and equally absurd. To a few my own age, the contents may afford amusement; I trust, they will, at least, be found harmless" (*W*, 1:32-34).

²³ Comparison between this set of responses and those in August and September reveals the greater impact upon Byron of Edleston's death than that of the others then lamented. Gothic convention exercises a certain control over his expressions of grief in the late summer; no literary convention—a frequent Byronic constraint against emotional excess—regulates this October mourning, shapes, directs, or contains its discursive representation. That Edleston's is the fifth death in a series no doubt intensifies its horror; and the Edlestonian relationship is morally problematic in ways that the others, even with Matthews, are not. But the passion of the bond, revived and perhaps exaggerated in the imagination of the bereaved, contributes substantially to the inchoate quality of Byron's articulated grief.

²⁴ Crompton (note 1), 175.

²⁵ In the "personal element" of this stanza, in its emphasis upon "loss and departure," Storey (note 15) finds a reminder that "the poem is about parting, from that very opening scene in canto 1 onwards; and parting, as it is put there [is representative of] . . . Byronic paradox . . ." He goes on to suggest that the frequent "'buts' and 'yets'" in Byron's text "are words that help to keep things apart, to remind us of the distances resulting from departure" (96).

²⁶ McGann notices that this stanza "deliberately recalls the conclusion to canto 1, and even echoes a line from the Young passage he had quoted in his earlier note" (McGann, *Fierly Dust* [note 5], 109).

²⁷ Byron's "shall" agreeably alliterates with "shadow" in the just quoted line, but also freights an imperative "must," in the sense of "necessarily and inescapably will."

²⁸ Crompton (note 1), 105. See also Christensen's discussion of Byron's homosexual discourse and practice ([note 17], esp. 54-65). Christensen is right, I suspect, in believing that Byron's initiation into genital homosexuality was postponed until he arrived in Greece (376n).

²⁹ If this reading of the Byron-Edleston relationship appears to resemble Donna Julia's and Don Juan's elaborate rationalizations of their lust in the first canto of *Don Juan*, the parallel may have a point. It seems to me possible that an ironic and irreverent Byron, seven years removed from the immediacy of 1811 sorrow, might have inscribed some of his own Edlestonian ideality in Juan's fatuous naivete, and perhaps some of his own pronouncements on "purity" in Julia's delusive musings. But the differences between John and Juan, and between the two poems and their

authors, are multiple and vast. The Edleston relationship remained for Byron unique, in a way sacred, beyond scoffing, even after and perhaps especially because of the charges of indecency later brought against his friend; and if more sensuously founded than Byron wished to believe or admit, even more precious for that reason, and sacrosanct against *Juanistic* profanation.

³⁰ Not incidentally, Byron's shortage of pocket-money and huge indebtedness, despite the inheritance, burdened his thought during the autumn of 1811.

³¹ Robert F. Gleckner refers "to Byron's total poetic career" the "two major alternatives, which turn out to be no alternatives at all," proposed in this stanza—"the feigned laughter and revelry of the satires so often punctuated by the 'ill-dissembled sneer' on the one hand, and on the other, the romantic poet's 'spirit doubly weak' for every reach after the lost ideal, the fleeting smile that soon trembles into tears" (*Byron and the Ruins of Paradise* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1967], 87). McGann remarks that "the narrating poet's moods and opinions [in 2.97] distinctly echo Harold's circumstances before the pilgrimage was undertaken. . . . [H]ere his [the poet's] equilibrium is shaken, and we find him in a psychological condition similar to Harold's at the beginning of the poem" (McGann, *Fiery Dust* [note 5], 70-71).

³² The following summary of Byron's views of his lameness is based on Moore and Marchand, as noted parenthetically; but see also (*L*, 1:36) and Marchand (note 1), 55-56, 67-69, 78, 89, 168, 273-74, 292, and 312.

³³ Byron's concerns, despite the popular reception he would enjoy, were not without foundation. Of the sixteen contemporaneous reviews of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* 1 and 2 that I have read in *The Romantics Reviewed* (ed. Donald H. Reiman, 9 vols. [New York: Garland, 1972], part B, vols. 1-5), eight may be called generally favorable, four mixed, and four negative. A number of them comparatively recall *English Bards* and its shocks to the British literary community. See also *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, comp. Andrew Rutherford (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 4-5, 35-51.