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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

CONTEXTUALIZING BYRON'S HOMOGRAPHIC SIGNATURE: EXPLORATIONS OF HIS OTHER SELF AND VOICE

A dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

ABIGAIL F. KEEGAN

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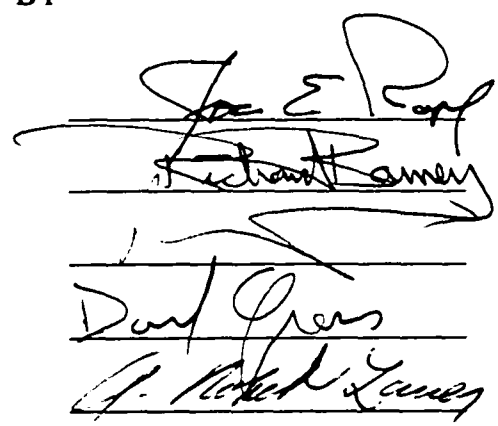
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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY



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Abstract

The redefinition of the sodomite in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses on sexuality produced a new sexual subjectivity in England. The sodomite became a more visible figure in the eighteenth century, but in Regency England, this new subject was increasingly represented as the abject other to what Foucault has called the Malthusian couple. By considering these new representations of the sodomite and George Gordon, Lord Byron's own writings on and experiences of same sex desire, this study contextualizes the influence of homosexuality on Byron's emergence as a public writer and on his development of the Byronic hero in a series of poems he suggested be read together: Childe Harold I and II, The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, and Lara.

Byron's movement into public writing is a critical juncture that forces a displacement of the homoerotic into his poetics and his stylization of the persona of the Byronic hero. His self-dramatizations within these poems reveal a homographic inscription, which my deconstructive and queer reading gives both psychological and social significance. I argue that the creation of the Byronic persona and the Byronic hero are deeply indebted to Byron's relationship to conflicted homosexual meanings within his age and that reading these conflicts exposes the ways discursive constructions of (homo)sexual, gendered, and national identity are imbricated in the emerging heterosexual imperatives of Byron's age.

Introduction

Every Thing Begins and Ends With E: Methodiste and Melancholy

As I consider reading George Gordon, Lord Byron's, Oriental Tales, I am aware that theories of sexuality are (and will probably always be) in process. I do not want to read Byron as a homosexual, pure and simple. Virginia Woolf wrote that it is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple (108); likewise being a homosexual simply, and especially purely, is fatal because no such possibility of inscription exists. In order to contribute to a liberationist politics of producing a legible homosexual difference to counter what has been a long history of unremarked, invisible or imperceptible representations of the homosexual, I read Byron's work to develop a sense of what influence homosexual practice and desire had on his writing.

My intellectual debt implicit throughout this writing is to the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Louis Crompton, and numbers of gay, lesbian, feminist and queer scholars whose studies of sexualities may one day make possible what Jacques Derrida calls a "sexual otherwise" where, as he describes it, "there would be no more sexes, there would be one sex for each time. One sex for each gift. A sexual difference for each gift" (199). Or, as Monique Wittig writes, there might be "as many sexes as there are individuals" (119).

We have punished sexuality for centuries, made it our whipping boy, our streetwalker, our burning fag. In order to come to new understandings of sexuality, and certainly sexualities less inflected with such extreme divisions as the terms heterosexual and homosexual have implied, explorations of how sexuality has been

produced within discourse can help us understand the functions of sexuality. My study of the possibility of reading homosexual meaning in Byron's writing, therefore, locates his writing within the discourses on sodomy that developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through this reading, I seek to explore the varied meanings of sexuality in Byron's work with an understanding that his representations of sexuality are imbricated within other discourses of his day. Byron's representations of sexuality, and hence homosexuality, are placed and displaced in relation to other categories that produce the identity of a speaking subject, categories which include gender, class, nationality and race. My readings of the production of the sodomitic subject and the influence of such discourses on Byron attempt to realize that sexual meaning is never pure and simple but always constituted within discursive frames and structures of power.

I. Homosexuality and Sodomy

As Alan Bray has written of the British homosexual subject, "the socially diffused homosexuality of the early seventeenth century" emerged in the eighteenth century as a "homosexuality [which] could be expressed and therefore recognized; clothes, gestures, language, particular buildings and particular public places—all could be identified as having specific homosexual connotations" (92). With this transition, homosexuality became constituted in ways that have the power to signify; the homosexual "comes to figure and be figured" (Edelman Homographies 6). It is the tension between figuring and being figured that I explore within this writing. The homosexual produced in discourse both speaks and is spoken into being within discourses on sodomy.

The desire to speak of homosexuality immediately provokes a set of problematics. Within gay and lesbian studies, a debate continues over the critical tasks which surround speaking of the homosexual as a trans-historical concept. On the one hand, some critics argue that there has always been a homosexual and then proceed to out such figures as Thomas Gray. On the other hand, Mary MacIntosh, in "The Homosexual Role," argues that such inquiries can only prove to be "inconclusive not because of lack of evidence but because none of these men fits the modern stereotype of the homosexual" (33). And others cite Foucault's insistence that the homosexual did not exist until the end of the nineteenth century. As Gregory Bredbeck suggests, the arguments have developed in a "paranoia of historization, a phenomenon in which the effort to examine sexual difference in the past, especially as it might relate to the inscription of the [homosexual] subject" is blocked (xi). In each case "the homosexual" becomes an "absolute standard of adjudication" (xii).

In the following chapters, I build upon the insights of Louis Crompton and these other critics to consider what the effects of the re-positioning of sodomy during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had on signs of homosexual meaning. To write about Byron's homosexuality cannot be just a matter of assuming I can "out" Byron as a homosexual writer, for, as many readers are now aware, the term homosexuality is a relatively recent invention. In The History of Sexuality, Foucault describes an epistemological break signaled by the term homosexuality as contrasted with the former term sodomy:

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts, their perpetrator nothing more than the

> juridical subject of them. The nineteenth century subject became a personage, a past, a case history. . . . Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of anterior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been temporary; the homosexual was now a species. (1: 43)

When I refer to Byron's homosexuality, then, I do so guardedly, knowing, as Jeffrey Weeks suggests, that "sexual meanings and identities are historical constructs" ("Inverts"128), and discursive constructs.

So, while homoeroticism or sodomitic practice did not constitute "the homosexual" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it does not follow that sodomy or homoeroticism had no significance. While sodomy and the sodomite were positioned within a sex-gender system different from today's, the eighteenth century sodomite is not the same figure he was in the Renaissance, and his constitution within discourse does signify a new sexual subjectivity. The redefinition of sodomy and the sodomite have a significant impact on the ways Byron represents sexuality and on the style of his writing.

The terms sodomy and sodomite were used within law and popular discourses along with the term buggery to denominate sexual acts between men and the men who performed them. I frequently use the eighteenth century's and Foucault's term, sodomy. However, sodomy is too narrow a concept to identify same-sex relations before the 1870s, when the term homosexual came into circulation. As Alice Kuzniar writes in Outing Goethe and His Age, "Foucault's

choice of 'sodomy' to characterize pre-1870 same sex relations is far too limiting, with the result that the very label has restricted not only the nature of texts he and others have chosen to investigate but also what they have discerned in them" (6). Sodomy, Horatian Love, Greek Love, and pederasty were all terms used to describe same-sex love and sexual relations. In addition to these, I use the word homosexual in writing about Byron to describe the array of formulations of desire in his texts, not to be anachronistic, but to avoid the trap of using sodomy to mean only a sexual practice. Byron's struggles with, questions about, expressions of same-sex relationships, desire, and love are more complicated than the term sodomy would imply.

Byron's understanding of homoerotic and homosocial relations between men begins in the childhood of upper class British public school boys. There has been little public discussion of what Byron wanted to admit into his poetry of this experience. Percy Shelley described the attachment of boyhood friendship awkwardly as he attempted to distinguish between love and friendship:

> The latter feeling [friendship]—at least as profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex, wholly divested of the smallest alloy of sensual intermixture, often precedes the former. It is not right to say merely that it is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. (Friendship 143).

The hesitancies of admitting the smallest alloy of sensuality into the public discourse of male-male friendship are not reserved to Shelley. The backward, forward move, the dance later articulated by Freud as same-sex desire preceding real love,

heterosexual object choice, is one of the normativizing strategies of articulating homo/heterosexual difference. As Freud suggests, the poets came before him.[1] But my main point here is the reservation with which such discourse enters public life. In this case, Shelley's writing exposes such discourse as a heterosexualizing imperative, which I will explore further throughout this study. But Louis Crompton has, I think rightly, suggested that the limitations placed on speaking about what Byron called the truth of childhood had also to do with the British mythologizing of "homosexuality as a heinous foreign importation. To admit that English schoolboys entered into such vice with no external prompting would have run counter to this theory" (77). So even the admission of that sensual alloy that Byron publicly admits into discourse is disparaged.[2]

Decoding desire and sexual identities is an ongoing process that requires repeated questioning of our assumptions about gender and sexuality. Hence identification of (homo)sexualities in this writing necessarily defamiliarizes and denaturalizes the present from which I speak, but also offers points of identification. Further, my inquiry is not limited to finding homoerotic expressions in Byron's writings. By considering Byron's Oriental Tales within the context of a historically specific understanding of homosexuality, my readings of Byron's poems can contribute to an understanding of the histories of sexuality. Byron's writings reveal the ways sexual identities are produced within imbricated discourses of race, nationality, gender and class, for, as Byron realized, sexual identity is rarely a mere matter of object choice. Byron's own writings, profoundly influenced by his homosexual desires, were produced within the consequences of sodomitic

prohibitions of the early nineteenth century, often as an array of indirections and textual vacillations which call for a reading historically aware of what same-sex desire might have meant in the early nineteenth century.

I argue throughout this study that (homo)sexual difference is inscribed through rhetorical operations produced within social discourses on gender, sodomy and national subjectivity, which constitute unexpected dependencies and indeterminacies of the sexed subject. What interests me is the impact on Byron's writing of the discourse that produced the sodomite as an eighteenth and nineteenth century figure. At times I point to the ways homosexual desires or eroticism appear in Byron's writings and to what these homoerotic references signify within his work. Yet I do not anachronistically call him a homosexual or simply a sodomite. By recovering historically specific textual subjectivities, we begin to sketch a spectrum of the possible determinants constituting the subject at a given historical moment. In this study, that moment is the time of composition of the Oriental Tales (1809-1814).

II. Hours of Idleness

Byron's homosexual ideals were conceived first in terms of an ideal Greek pederasty, which he discovered in his school days among his peers, in a kind of homosexual coterie. But his early idealization of homoerotic and heroic friendship came into conflict with the public discursive production of the sodomite with his very first publication of poetry for a reading public. Byron's same sex desires are a central part of his Hours of Idleness (1807). His juvenilia are marked by his passions for his school fellows at Harrow. Part of the development of young males in upper class British culture was the boarding school, where young boys were initiated into

male cults, elites bonded through mutual pleasure. Boys' knowledge of their sexuality came through their relations to each other. The schools became models for creating a coherent elite, and, as Aaron Betsky argues, a queer space and a "repressed base for a normal and normative society" (50). Old school ties became a kind of social glue, but sexual and erotic bonds were not to be specified in public discourse when men became adults. As Byron wrote, this glue was a bond of "Friendship, whose truth, let childhood only tell" ("To the Duke of Dorset" 85).

In Hours of Idleness, Byron attempted to celebrate the world of boys' bonds and affections for one another. Wordsworth conceived of a self who in solitude "serve[s] Nature's temple" as the one "who is the most assiduous of her ministers" (Prelude 2: 463-64). In contrast to Wordsworthian solitude, Byron figures himself in his earliest poems within a romantic circle of male friendships. In "On a Distant View of the Village and School of Harrow on the Hill," he says that his school years at Harrow were centered in "friendships . . . form'd too romantic to last" (4). Many of the poems were written to boys for whom Byron held affection. The collection also contains translations of ancient poems about male heroics. One classical poem he reproduces is especially significant. He writes what he calls a paraphrase of Book IX of Virgil's Aeneid, the Episode of Nisus and Euryalus, which is a "kind of Latin analogue of the Achilles-Patroclus romance" (Crompton 97). In this story, Byron expresses his idealized fascination with heroic love between males. Young Euryalus inspires Nisus's affections:

> But thou, my generous youth, whose tender years
> Are near my own, whose worth my heart reveres,

Henceforth affection, sweetly thus begun,

Shall join our bosoms and our souls in one. (163-166)

After Euryalus is captured into an enemy camp, Nisus surrenders to plead for the boy's life. When Euryalus is killed in front of him, Nisus attacks his captors and is slain. The poem ends with what becomes a motif in Byron's writing:

Thus Nisus all his fond affection prov'd

Dying, revenged the fate of him he loved;

Then on his bosom sought his wonted place,

And death was heavenly in his friend's embrace. (397-400)

Byron was a romantic young poet whose sense of the chivalric included a Greek sense of the homoerotic, not encompassed in the words sodomy and sodomite. But the erotic passions of Greek loves were being displaced within British society. As David Hume wrote in "A Dialogue" of comparative sexual morals, "The Greek loves, I care not to examine particularly. I shall only observe that, however blameable, they arose from a very innocent cause . . . and were recommended, though absurdly, as the source of friendship, sympathy and mutual attachment and fidelity" (297). Such affections of the Greeks, blameable and absurd, were out of fashion for modern British men. Byron did not want to realize modernity in his writing; his classical and aristocratic tastes were entwined with his homoerotic desires.

Byron's Hours of Idleness also celebrates erotic sensations unattached to sexed pronouns. Like the hero of Jeanette Winterson's Written on the Body, the sex

of the one experiencing pleasure remains unknown in Byron's poem, "The First Kiss of Love":

> Away with your fictions of flimsy romance,
> Those tissues of falsehood which folly has wove!
> Give me the mild beam of soul-breathing glance
> Or the rapture which dwells on the first kiss of love. (1-4)
> Though prudes may condemn me, and bigots reprove,
> I court the effusions that spring from the heart,
> Which throbs with delight to the first kiss of love. (14-16)

A few poems record affections for girls and one poem, "To Woman," attributes a kind of generic dishonesty to women: "Woman thy vows are traced in sand" (22). Several other poems were Scottish stories and reflections on his own heritage. But the most exuberant and reflective poems are those written about his Harrow bonds. The memories of his male friendships would, he wrote, "rest in the bosom, though hope is denied" ("On a Distant View of .. . Harrow" 8). The hopes of such ongoing innocence between men were in fact denied immediately with Byron's publication of the book.

The review by Henry Brougham, the co-owner of the Edinburgh Review, was vitriolic. Brougham says that Lord Byron's "voluntary tender" of the poems means he has no right to sue if the poems prove unmarketable. He attacks Byron for writing too much about his noble heritage and his "maternal ancestors" (835). He also notes that the author has "dedicated" too much of his "volume to immortalize his employments at school and college" (835). Of particular interest is Brougham's

isolating several lines from Byron's poem "On a Distant View of the Village and School of Harrow Hill" (834):

> Where fancy yet joys to retrace the resemblance
>
> Of comrades, in friendship and mischief allied;
>
> How welcome to me, your ne'er fading remembrance,
>
> Which rests in the bosom, though hope is deny'd! (5-8)

The poem's "hobbling stanzas" when compared to Thomas Gray's are "odious," says Brougham (834). The term odious, which means to arouse hatred or abhorrence, seems hyperbolic, queer in fact. But of course Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," to which Brougham makes the comparison, views Gray's former days at Eton through the eyes of a man who has joined "the grisly troops of manhood" and knows that from within "the painful family of Death," the loss of old school days is not so important. From Gray's perspective of adult manhood, "gay hope" of old days is merely a matter of "fancy fled" (41). And the tears of a man are "forgot as soon as shed" (43). Byron's "hobbling verses" move too close to those boyhood affections and mischiefs. A "youth leaving school should not volunteer such effusions" is Brougham's conclusion (835). Brougham has many other criticisms, but these effusions remain a subtext of the attack on Byron's verse. Byron's body, his deformed foot, becomes the figure of Brougham's attack on "hobbling verses," and these hobblings figure Byron's bodily weaknesses, his desire to represent boyish affection close up. Brougham reads the book as though it performs Byron's peculiar weakness as a blameable or "odious" absurdity.[3]

The weakness Byron performs is speaking the "truth" of boyhood bonds. Even when writing his poems, he was aware that such sentimental love between modern men entering the competitions of public adulthood would have to be treated as "Scenes hail'd as exiles hail their native shore" ("To the Duke of Dorset" 88). In a new world of male adults, competitions would cause their words to cripple one another, and their homoeroticism would become a more discreetly submerged element of masculine writing. The nineteen-year-old Byron intended to tender his book to the public as a gift, without remuneration (Christiansen 22). It was his first move from the private world of aristocratic circulation to the public market of competition, and his gift was not well received. The influence of a "methodistic crew / Who plan[ned a] reformation" ("Granta—A Medley" 57-58) of public morals had much changed the way such aristocratic gifts could be received. Byron's open expressions of sentimental male affections and quasi-erotic celebrations of male bonds in Hours of Idleness met the public's reading eye as a deformity of proper poetic expression. As I will demonstrate, the discourses on sodomy that produced the sodomite as an abject Other changed the terms of public expressions of sensual and sexual attraction between men in British culture, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

III. Transgression: The Byronic Hero and the Figuration of the Sodomite

In the Oriental Tales, Byron attempts to deflect such defamations of his desires. His hopes for homoerotic expression are more often than not displaced, but his resistance to such displacements is central to his production of the Byronic hero. The conflicts, the social prohibitions, the struggle with voice, produced in his initial

conflict with the public, allowed him to evolve a cryptic code to express homoerotic desires, to speak what was unspeakable. Further, and perhaps most importantly, from the discourses that inscribe the sodomite as a reviled figure, Byron extracts the Byronic figure of the Oriental Tales. The language of homosexuality produced, for Byron, what Jerome Christiansen, using a Lacanian term, has identified as a "formal fixation" (61). In a discussion on aggressivity, Lacan says that there are two moments in the constitution of the subject which produce aggression: "when the subject denies himself and when he charges the Other" (Ecrits 20). Such aggression manifests itself in communications of unfinished sentences, hesitations, irregularities, and applications of rules (10). Aggressivity "gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death" (10). Byron's poems are forced into such indirections because of the prohibitions that surround sodomy and homoerotic meaning. Death, digression, and ruptures of rules become characteristic of his style, and as such, they represent a formal fixation as Lacan denominates this aggression. Byron's poetic subjectivity is constituted within the split between the ideal homoerotic boyhood and the demands of publishing. The disjunction between the blissful homoerotic expressions of his youth and his entry into the prohibited public sphere introduced him to a discord between himself and the world. The discord between public and private expressions of homosexuality produced the conditions of his poetic self. This split, this social castration, allowed Byron to evolve poetic strategies, narrative structures, and a Byronic hero who allowed him to mask and reveal homoerotic expression and resistance to heterosexual imperatives.

Byron wrote five works that followed his Hours of Idleness, all of which produced the active character who became known as the Byronic hero. Byron's hobbling expressions of same-sex affection and desire were redirected into the five writings he believed should be read together: Childe Harold, The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, and Lara.[4] Byron's Oriental Tales made him an overnight success and were the best selling poems of the Romantic period.[5] Byron's formal fixation on his relationship to homoeroticism and his conflicts with the nineteenth century's discursive constitution of the sodomite mark the Byronic hero with strategies of indirection and with textual vacillations that both appropriate and resist the prohibitions of speaking of same-sex desire.

Three signs of Byron's "fixation" manifest themselves in his poetry: first, the rhetorical figures which surround the discursive production of the sodomite; second, the strategies of Byron's methodiste; and third, his reproduction of melancholy. By using these signs, Byron both inscribes homosexual meaning within his writing and imposes on that meaning the structures of silence which social prohibitions demand. The first of the three signs, the use of standard tropes of sodomy, is related to the production of discourses on sodomy within popular culture. The primary characteristics of the Byronic hero parallel the tropes used to produce the sodomite within the public discourses of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The sodomite, as I demonstrate in Chapters one and two, was produced as a sexual criminal, a foreigner, a disturbance of codified gender identities, and a figure whose naming became a social impropriety. These figurations are the rhetorical strategies

by which the sodomite is made abject, and they become the dominant signs of Byron's transgressive hero.

My approach to this study, then, is to read the extent to which same-sex relations between men became a site of prohibition within a changing sex-gendered system that sought to establish a legitimized heterosexual couple in Britain. Discourses on sodomy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced the sodomite as a legible figure but prohibited the terms of his signification within society. I demonstrate ways we can read sites of resistance to such prohibition, sites that may incorporate homosexual desire and sites that challenge normative ideals of heterosexuality. My first chapter examines the development of discourses on sodomy in the eighteenth century to explore their function. In chapter two, I move to the discourses on sodomy and the material practices that reinforce prohibitions against sodomy and sodomites in the nineteenth century to analyze the ways these discourses are represented in the first two Cantos of Byron's Childe Harold.

The remaining chapters then proceed to show the ways Byron uses the strategies of signification to inscribe homosexual meaning but also to resist the heterosexualizing imperatives of the early nineteenth century. Within these other tales, Byron realizes the effects sexual discourses have within structures of power, and he struggles both to accommodate and to defy the sex-gendered norms of the early nineteenth century. He does so by making sexual and social transgression a central aspect of the reading and writing self within mass markets. His poetry of transgression became the best selling poetry of his day. Within his poetry, his hobbling affections became a way of establishing digression and transgression as

means of inscribing and problematizing the sexual divisions and instabilities of both hetero/homo and male/female subjectivity. In the Oriental Tales, Byron plays with the significance of sexuality and yet insists that political power and social power are attached to sexuality. Byron's writing displays his awareness that sexual subjectivity is a site which can both produce and disrupt an individual's relationship to the state as well as to social systems.

IV. Methodiste

Because of the prohibitions that surrounded discussions of sodomy, Byron intentionally developed a coded, evasive style for speaking of sexuality. Frequently during these chapters I refer to Byron's "methodiste," which most simply means the way Byron encodes homosexuality within a text. It might refer to his manipulations of pronouns, substitutions or deletions of words, or any of a variety of practices I will point to. Byron's circle of Cambridge friends evolved a code for writing about homosexuality in their letters. They named the coded writing their "methodiste." Before embarking on his journey to the East, Byron wrote to Charles Skinner Matthews:

> I take up the pen which our friend has for a moment laid down to express a vain wish that you were with us in this delectable region. I do not think Georgia itself can emulate in capabilities or incitements to the 'Plen. And optatil.—Coit.' The ports of Falmouth & parts adjacent—We are surrounded by Hyacinths; and other flowers of the most fragrant [na]ture, & I have some intention of culling a

handsome Bouquet to compare with the exotics I hope to meet in Asia." (BLJ 1: 206-7)

Matthews replied by congratulating Byron "on the splendid success of your first efforts in the mysterious, the style in which more is meant than meets the Eye." He further urged Byron to go on with his "Botanical pursuits" and declared "that everyone who professes ma methode do spell the term which designates his calling with an e at the end of it—methodiste, not methodist, and pronounce the word in the French Fashion. Everyone's taste must revolt at confounding ourselves with that sect of horrible sniveling fanatics" (qtd Crompton 161-62). The code can be deciphered. "Plen. And optabil.—Coit," from the Satyricon, refers to "full and to-be-wished-for-intercourse," and the Hyacinths, which refer to Apollo's love for a beautiful boy, are a metaphor for boys that Byron hoped to cultivate as lovers or sexual partners as he traveled East (Christiansen 60).

The letters suggest several important things about Byron's writing. The foundation of his style occurs within a homoerotic circle of friends. It enables and compels his metaphors and produces sexual desire within a necessarily secret code in response to fanatic Methodist reformers who want to silence sodomites. But the coding itself becomes a part of the erotics of the letter. The merging of resistance and erotics to break the enforced codes of silence demonstrates one of the key aspects of Byron's writing, that it combines the production of erotics with a political consciousness. Homosexuality provides a subject for Byron to write about and, at the same time, a style for writing: textuality recapitulates sexuality. There are few boundaries, then, between the personal and political nature of sex for Byron.

Byron's imperial botany suggests the problematics that arise in finding homosexual meaning in a culture that strains all sexual meaning through filters of national power and identity, which I will address in my discussions of sodomy and my reading of The Giaour.

Byron's use of the coded methodiste assumed an audience, the homosexual coterie he developed in Cambridge. However, just after his travels in the East, the central figures, for Byron, in the coterie, Mathews and John Edleston, the most significant boy Byron fell in love with at Cambridge, both died.[6] Their deaths occurred while he was writing the first two Cantos of Childe Harold, the first poems in the Oriental Tales, and resulted in a core characteristic of the Byronic hero, his melancholy.

Byron's third means, then, of marking his poems with homosexual meaning is through the use of melancholy. He himself wrote long after his days in Cambridge,

> People have wondered at the Melancholy which runs through my writings . . . If I could explain the real causes which have contributed to increase this perhaps natural temperament which hath made me a bye-word—nobody would wonder—but this is impossible without doing much mischief. (BLJ 9: 37-38)

Byron's publication of Hours of Idleness left out the poem he had written for John Edleston, but the poem, "The Cornelian," had been circulated among his friends. It reveals the significance Byron gave his relationship to Edleston. It was probably omitted from the public edition because it could have raised even more controversy than his other poems. Byron in letters had identified the object of his love poem by

referring to Edleston as "my Cornelian," or "the Hero of my Cornelian" (BLJ 1: 123). Edleston had given Byron an inexpensive stone, a cornelian. Edleston, being from a lower class, could not afford expensive gifts for Byron, and he burst into tears when he gave the gift. He believed Byron would think it inferior. However, in the poem, Byron writes that "the simple gift I prize,-- / for I am sure the giver loved me" (7-8). Later, Byron wrote that John had given him what no one else ever had, including his first reasons to "love a tear."[7] These early sentiments of Byron mark his writings again and again: the memory of Edleston, his boyhood reveries, his love of "a tear," and his fragmented sense of self converge when Byron writes into his poems the melancholy of these losses.

Byron and Edleston met in 1805. Byron was immediately attracted to the boy's voice when he heard him in the choir. They spent over a year together. Then Byron published Hours of Idleness in June 1807 and received the crushing review of his hobbling verses. One month later, in July of 1807, he and Edleston decided to separate for a year and a half. Edleston was to take a job in London, and after the expiration of Byron's minority, they were then to be coupled again. As Byron wrote, they would, according to John's "decision, either enter as a Partner through [his] Interest' or they would reside together (BLJ 1: 123). At their reunion, Byron imagined that he and Edleston would "put Lady E Butler and Miss Ponsby to the Blush . . . & want nothing but a Catastrophe like Nisus & Euryalus, to give Jonathan and David the 'go by.'"[8] Before Byron and Edleston could be reunited, Edleston died of consumption with the pall of public exposure for sexual indecency over him. Byron's reflections on Edleston's death are full of guilt and loss. He believed he could have

saved Edleston, and he said to Hobhouse, "[Y]ou cannot despise me more than I despise myself" (BLJ 2: 117). In the same letter, Byron, who could not write, sleep, or eat, says "All places are alike, I cannot live under my present feelings" (117). Byron was gone during Edleston's involvement with the law, so it is difficult to determine whether Byron thinks he should not have left him or should never have involved John Edleston in a relationship. But he writes in a number of poems of his loss, and repeatedly his grief is signed in the poems I discuss. In the death of Edleston is the death of Byron's idyllic homoerotic world.[9] When Edleston died, the memory of their plans and the impossibility of their fulfillment added to Byron's grief, as did the necessity for disguising the nature and profundity of his grief. Expressions of melancholy became part of Byron's fixation. In melancholy, he expresses his loss of his ideals of romantic friendship and his desire for a heroic union with his idealized lover. Death, he says, would be heavenly in his friend's embrace. Edleston's name is never spoken in the Tales, but through indirections and displacements and invocations of melancholy and a longing for death, characters reenact Byron's separation from Edleston and his own separation from his sense of himself and his idealized dream of a Greek revival, a homoerotic empire.

Byron ended his life attempting to become his own Greek hero, fighting in Missolonghi for Greek independence. He wrote his last love poems to a Greek boy named Lukas. In "Love and Death," he writes:

> I watched thee in the breakers—when the rock
> Received our prow, and all was storm and fear,
> And bade thee cling to me through every shock—

This arm would be thy bark—or breast thy bier. (BLJ 2: 106)

His final writings return to a heroic death that affirms love between men, to the breast of Nisus and Euryalus denied him all his life.

Byron's movement into public writing is a critical juncture that forces a displaced homoerotics in his poetics and in his stylization of the persona, Byron. Jerome McGann says that Byron was always involved in "self-dramatization." Byron's idea of himself holds his works together (Fiery 24). In the poems of this study, I explore the ways homosexuality figures in the self-dramatizing Byron performs. The creation of the Byronic persona, I argue, is deeply indebted to Byron's relationship to his conflicts with homosexual meaning. I should here make clear that while I point to a literal method that Byron used to code his own sexual communications, my reading of Byron's poetry broadens this conscious sense of encoding. I am concerned not merely with consciously coded communications so much as with the writing of a subjectivity at once conscious and unconscious. Because of the social prohibitions that did not permit Byron to represent his homosexuality directly, his writing of his sense of self, his voice, is necessarily fractured and over-determined in relationship to his representations of gender and sexuality. My deconstructive and queer reading of Byron's poetry gives both psychoanalytic and social significance to this coding of the poetic voice of Byron. Byron's stylization of digression, irony, and repeated attention to failures of sexual relationship and ineffectual male heroes emerge in these writings, significantly influenced by his own struggle with his sense of what homosexuality is for him within British society. After Byron left England, such works as "Beppo" and his most

famous work for twentieth-century readers, Don Juan, attain comic distance. While he was in England, his poems are marked by a poetic voice frequently displaced, redirected and discernibly structured and altered by the ideological formations of historical tropes that mark gendered and sexual difference. My reading then produces, to borrow a term from Lee Edelman's work, a homographic study. This study of writing, of homographesis, is a double operation. The first operation, to produce signs of homosexual subjectivity, serves the "ideological purposes of a conservative intent on codifying identities" (Homographesis 10) within the labors of disciplinary inscriptions. The second operation of my reading is an attempt to resist an over-simplified categorization of sexual subjectivity. I seek to (de)scribe the disciplinary orders that oppressed inscriptions of homosexual meaning and the views of homosexual subjects. These are the complicated terms of my engagement with Byron's homosexuality. While I will read his resistances to the oppression of sodomites in his coded language and attempt to decipher the meanings of homosexuality and resistances to a heterosexual imperative in his writing, I will also question the terms of his positing an identity.

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[1] Byron and Shelley articulate what Freud tries to describe later without admitting to his own theory of object relations the force of normativizing discourse. He says in a footnote on inverts in "The Sexual Aberrations," "All men are capable of homosexual object selections and actually accomplish this in the unconscious. Indeed, attachments of libidinous feelings to persons of the same sex play no small role as factors in normal psychic life, and as causative factors of disease, they play a greater role than those belonging to the opposite sex." Freud then argues that the sole sexual interest of men in women is also a "problem requiring explanation and is not something that is self-evident on the basis of chemical attraction." 528. But Freud's focus on fetishized body parts deters him from discourse and directs his acceptance of a normativized psyche. See his hysteric juggling of the words normal and abnormal in this essay, 531. In Freud's essay, "Mistakes in Reading and Writing," he admits that his desires to see his own name in print allow, as he says of Bleuler, "a form of bad style in scientific works," 56. Ignoring or obscuring the idea of normativizing forces produces the invert as a pervert.

Just so, ignoring or obscuring the emotional and erotic affections between young males from the realm of public discourse for adult males, or insisting that these feelings can only be viewed from a distance of heterosexuality or serious adulthood, produces a perverted discursive order of assuming a masculinity.

[2] Repeatedly sodomy is produced in British novels, poems, and broadsides, especially those handed out at the time of the hanging or pillorying of sodomites, as a foreign import, an Italian vice, buggery, a Turkish vice, a French vice. For example, the lawyer Robert Holloway wrote in The Phoenix of Sodom in 1813, "from the best authority that can be gathered, this crime was first introduced into England about 1315, by a sect of heretics called Lollards, for from the Parliamentary roles it is said, 'A Lollard has committed a sin not to be named among Christians," qtd in Norton Myth 124. Such reiterations were frequent through the eighteenth century. In Tobias Smollett's Roderick Random, Roderick is confronted with the idea that "sodomy prevails not only over all the East, but in most of Europe" by Lord Strutwell, who says it is gaining ground in England. Random's response, adapted from the Satyricon, "Eternal infamy the wretch confound / Who planted first that vice on British ground," 310, ch.51, typifies the attitude that dominates the discourse of the early nineteenth century which I will elaborate in Chapter 2. For discussions of this idea of sodomy as a threatening import see Norton Myth 122-133, Crompton 12-156, McCormick 117-174.

[3] See Christiansen, who reads Brougham's as an attack on the aristocratic body, 22.

[4] In his "Advertisement" to the early editions of Lara, Byron said that he recommended reading the five poems together, and that Lara, "of no great promise separately," was "necessary to the others" because of "its very likeness" to them. Lara, he says, "completes the series, BLJ 4: 165.

[5] Childe Harold's first, expensive edition of 500 copies sold out in three days. Four editions were published within the first year, 1812, and ten by 1815.

[6] Matthews drowned in a swimming accident, but as several biographers of Byron have suggested, because Matthews was an excellent swimmer, it is suspected that his death was a suicide to escape being exposed for sodomy.

[7] In "The Cornelian," he says, "Methought one drop the stone bedew'd, / And ever since I've loved a tear" 15-16.

[8] Ponsby and Butler were a famous female couple who gave up their inheritance to live together. See Faderman 120-125.

[9] See Crompton's critical biography for a full discussion of the Edleston and Byron relationship and Byron's involvement with boys in the East , 63-157. Louis Crompton is the only biographer to date to focus on Byron's homosexuality.

Chapter One

Abject Figures and Subversion

In 1986, in an opinion that concurred with the majority of the United States Supreme Court, Chief Justice Warren Burger explained his ruling on the case of Bowers v. Hardwick. In a strategic sexual power play, Burger took it upon himself to remind the court of the words of the leading English jurist of the eighteenth century, William Blackstone. "Blackstone described 'the infamous crime against nature' as an offense of 'deeper malignity' than rape, an heinous act 'the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature'" (Supreme Court 13). What Burger did not repeat of Blackstone's words on sodomy is also important, for Blackstone's statements continue to underscore the relationship of homosexual practices to linguistic impropriety. "The delicacy of our English law . . . treats it, in its very indictments, as a crime not fit to be named: 'peccatum illud horribile, inter christianos non nominanadum'" (Blackstone 4: 1377). This rhetorical strategy of not naming sodomy while attempting to speak of it has a place in English rhetorical tradition, and it becomes an undergirding structure in the historical process that has constructed the homosexual as a legible sign within our figures of nomination.

Michael Hardwick had been arrested for having a sexual relationship in his own bedroom behind a closed door. Like Blackstone, Justice Burger was unwilling to say exactly what Hardwick and his sexual partner had done. Sodomy laws generally prohibit oral and anal sex, but the court confined its censure of these practices to homosexual sex, while dancing rhetorically around the disgraceful nature

of the crime.[1] My interest here is in this rhetorical slight-of-hand, not in the case itself, although the consequences of the court's decision are devastating to all those whose sexuality is outside a compulsory heterosexual norm, a norm whose limits are at best poorly articulated. For example, the court did not address the practices of heterosexuals who engage in oral or anal sex. The ability to condemn the deep malignity of the crime against nature without naming either the exact nature of that crime or the norm against which it is measured is a skill passed down in British and American law and in literature from the eighteenth century. This rhetorical strategy was formulated in Blackstone and in discourses of the eighteenth century to support mechanisms of power which would ensure that through "themes of progeny, race, the future of the species, the vitality of the social body, power spoke of sexuality and to sexuality" (Foucault History 143), and that certain sexualities would be made illegitimate and illegible within social codes. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the way sodomy and the sodomite were produced and confined within the interactive rhetorical tropes of effeminacy, foreignness, criminality and unspeakability. The crime not fit to be named is the dominant trope that produces sodomitic meaning.

I. Silences

Between 1785 and 1814, Jeremy Bentham produced some two hundred pages of a discussion of pederasty. The first sixty pages are a formal essay, written in 1785. Just before writing the essay, Bentham scribbled a "crowded, irregular and almost miniscule note" (Crompton 47):

> To other subjects it is expected that you sit down cool: but on this subject if you let it be seen you have not sat down in a rage you have given judgment against yourself. . . . There is a kind of punishment annexed to the offense of treating [this crime] with any sort of temper, and that one of the most formidable that a man can be subjected to, the punishment of being suspected at least, if not accused, of a propensity to commit it. . . . When a man attempts . . . this subject it is with a halter about his neck. On this subject a man may indulge his spleen without control. Cruelty and intolerance, the most odious and most mischievous passions in human nature, screen themselves behind a mask of virtue. (qtd in Crompton 47-48)

Bentham's "Essay on Paederasty" was not published until more than one hundred years after his death in the 1978 Journal of Homosexuality. He attempted in his essay to trace the influence of Christianity on changing perceptions of pederasty, and, in general, attempted to analyze and refute the prejudices of his own day. As Bentham's note makes clear, by the late eighteenth century, public discussions of sodomy were limited to irrational forms of condemnation. To speak otherwise about sodomy or sodomites, pederasty or pederasts, jeopardized a man's social reputation and compromised his sexual subjectivity.

A few years later, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Byron's contemporary and friend, wrote a letter on "Greek Love" as a preface to his translation of the Symposium. Like Bentham, Shelley was fearful about writing on such a subject. He said that "Greek love" was a "subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I

cannot or will not practice in other matters" (Letters 2: 229). Shelley was aware of the irony of his stance; he was a writer who attacked monarchy and wrote of atheism and incest, yet here the threat to his subjectivity forces him to practice caution, and finally to be silent. Shelley's essay, like Bentham's writings, remained unpublished until after his death. Even then, against Mary Shelley's wishes, the essay was bowdlerized.[2]

As Michel Foucault argues in The History of Sexuality,

> Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers is less the absolute limit on discourse . . . than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them with-in over-all strategies. (1: 127)

The enforced silences that surrounded Bentham and Shelley are the silences that served to produce the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century sodomite as a reviled figure. As Bentham describes it, to speak of or as a sodomite or pederast, if not in terms of hostility and prejudice, was to perform an offense against one's self, to threaten one's own subjectivity.

The social prohibition of sodomy within codes of silence has meant that readers of the writings of George Gordon, Lord Byron, have had little opportunity to consider the significance of Byron's homosexual interests for his writing. Byron himself was persuaded to destroy his early Cambridge journals, which contained information about the years when he was in love with John Edleston, the years that Byron said held the "romance of the most romantic period of [his] life" (BLJ 8: 24).

As Louis Crompton has demonstrated in Byron and Greek Love, Byron himself and his friends and editors, John Cam Hobhouse, John Murray, and Thomas Moore, expurgated his works by crossing out words and phrases, destroying or changing pronouns or whole manuscripts (131-193, 246, 342). These deletions and substitutions, these varieties of silence, were initially due to the repressive[3] climate of Regency England. However, even after the threats of death and social isolation faced by men of Regency England had ended, the subject of Byron's homosexuality was often regulated by silences. As late as 1975, a reiteration of silence directs Robert Gleckner's introduction to The Poetical Works of Byron. He mentions that the "Thyrza" poems were written for John Edleston, the boy Byron "loved more than [he] ever loved a living thing." Gleckner describes the relationship as a "seemingly homosexual relationship and one that had a profound effect on him." After pointing to the uncertainty of what to call this relationship, Gleckner erases the possibility of the "profound effect" the relationship had on Byron by saying, "Yet too much, of course, can be made of this aspect of Byron's sexual make-up" (xvii). The gesture returns the possibility of homosexual meaning in Byron's writing to the propriety of prohibitive silence. It is a silence that D. A. Miller identifies as an "open secret." Miller describes an open secret as a "subjective practice in which the oppositions of public/private, inside/outside, subject/object are established, and the sanctity of the first terms are kept inviolate . . . The 'open secret' does not, as one might think, bring about the collapse of those binarisms and their ideological effects, but rather attests to their fantasmic recovery" (207). The practice of keeping Byron's homosexuality a secret which can be (re)covered has continued to regulate Byron's critics; it has

determined what resides inside and outside the parameters of the proper role of the critic. To speak too much or to speak at all of Byron's homosexuality becomes a form of citation, a repetition the critic performs to establish his/her authority as a speaking subject. But such secrets have also served to establish heterosexuality as the norm by making homosexuality seem at worst a halter about one's neck and at best insignificant.[4]

Louis Crompton, in 1985, in a critical biography, was the first literary critic to focus on the relationship of Byron's homosexuality to his writing. Crompton did this by exposing the climate of homosexual repression that surrounded Byron's writing and then showing the ways the repression often silenced Byron. Crompton's seminal text on representations of sodomy in Regency England has led to literary studies that have focused on British culture's phobic constructions of sodomy in the Enlightenment. Some scholars have sought to demonstrate the extent of the power of homophobic discourses to repress the sodomite and sodomitic activity, or to analyze what Kevin Kopelson has called the dominant culture's "strong attraction to the socially peripheral Other against which it defines itself"(173). Others have attempted to identify sites of resistance to oppression of sodomites. One such critic, Donald H. Mengay, has read the sodomitic scene in John Cleland's Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure to examine the use of Fanny Hill's "drag act" as Cleland's subversive resistance to the dominant heterosexual discourse of the eighteenth century (185-198). Paul Hammond's Love Between Men in English Literature focuses on the biographies of homosexual men in English literary history. He too reads the eighteenth century as especially repressive for sodomites. He says that the

"longing gaze and the passionate devotion described in Hero and Leander or Shakespeare's Sonnets now had no safe private space to inhabit. . . .There are hardly any descriptions of the male body which are coloured by a homoerotic desire; the pleasure of the desiring gaze and the promises of consummation to follow have vanished" (90).[5] He does, however, point to some of the elements of homosexual biography of several writers, particularly William Beckford, to demonstrate the ways homosexual elements are represented in their works. Further, he examines several instances of the use of Greek texts to represent homosexuality; both parts of these discussions he conducts within the framework of the repressive nature of the era for sodomites. The sodomite, who is derided and reviled within the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, does in fact often speak, despite the many prohibitions that seek to regulate and control his speaking. As I examine eighteenth-century texts and Byron's writing in light of this history, what becomes clear are the ways that the homosexual who speaks in the eighteenth century does so within the terms of the prohibitions which surround the subjectivity of the sodomite.

II. Sodomy and the Normalization of Heterosexuality

Foucault's notions of sodomy under the jurisdiction of canon law are somewhat romantic, for sodomy had political meanings and social consequences in the Renaissance. However, he makes an important contribution by acknowledging the discursive repositioning of sodomy in the eighteenth century. Within the "veritable explosion" of discourses on sexuality in that period, the sodomite became a figure used to police, discipline, and manage sex in public discourse. Sex became a public issue: "it was essential that the state know what was happening with the

citizens' sex, and the use they made of it." As countries decided that "their future and fortune were tied not only to the number and uprightness of citizens, [but also] to their marriage and family organizations" (Foucault History 26), the sodomite became a delegitimized figure.

At the same time that persons identified as sodomites were being increasingly persecuted for particular sexual acts, the body of the sodomite was being constituted within what Foucault has identified as a "steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex." Foucault suggests that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were involved in a "centrifugal movement with respect to heterosexual monogamy" and a process of creating the "legitimate couple and procreative couple . . . [which] imposed itself as a model [and] enforced the norm" (History 3). This is a period that begins to force into speech sexual figures "scarcely noticed in the past" to serve as an Other to the legitimate couple. Sexually active children, mad men and women, and "those who did not like the opposite sex," he says, were "to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were" (History 38-39).

A newly emerging sodomitic identity prefigures the creation of the modern homosexual and the homosexual's place within discursive productions of modern sexualities. What counts, what matters, as sexuality is always variable, political, and discursively constituted. Sexuality depends on the naming or the labeling of the subject within a historically determined domain. Within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attitudes toward and definitions of sexuality, definitions of gender and of desire, began to shift. Recent scholars in various fields of gender studies locate a shift in attitudes toward male sexuality and toward male

homosexuality in the late seventeenth century. Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick argues that this historical fulcrum involved "the transfer of sexual regulation from religious institutions and ideologies to a complex of secular institutions and ideologies such as the state and the sciences of medicine and individual psychology" (134). This secularization of the sodomite, as Alan Bray has argued, makes the figure more available as a descriptive category of sexual experience.

Following the chain of Foucaultian thought on power, Sedgewick argues that the newly categorized sodomite became an "immensely potent tool . . . for the manipulation of every form of power that was refracted through the gender system—that is in European society, of virtually every form of power" (87). Because the sodomite was not the creation of any one agency, he appeared in self-descriptions, in juridical and medical discourses, in satiric poetry and pornographic novels, in pamphlet literature and newspapers, in low and high forms of culture, with the ability to set "proscriptive and descriptive limits" for forms of sexual behavior and social identity. The sodomite became a vehicle for the building of a particularly British sexual empire, within which the reigning value would be a (re)productive heterosexuality. This reproductive sexuality was negotiated between issues of religious morality from the past and a new social morality or social virtue of sexuality. In the process, sodomy was constituted as a significant crime, one which was to be punished by death or pillorying. At the same time, this shift reproduced discourses on sodomy within many public discussions, both clarifying definitions of sodomy and simultaneously reasserting its significance within a social system that

attempted both to produce and to restrict sexuality as a means of identifying a social subject.[6]

Reasons for changing discourses on sodomy and the production of a new figure of the sodomite in the eighteenth century are many. Sedgewick suggests that regulation of male sexuality turns from canon law to the state and other institutions. Foucault says that the sodomite became a figure who was made to embody an Other to a legitimate heterosexual couple who would be socially (re)productive. David Greenberg considers the idea that with new urban environments, new classes of people with money to spend meant that there would be new possibilities for pursuit of pleasures, sexuality being among them, and sodomy being one of those forms of pleasure. The development of a sodomitic subculture, then, means new forms of signification. Molly houses, social centers of a homoerotic subculture, seem to support his idea. At the same time, the molly houses became sites for public displays of sexual regulation. Raids on molly houses reinforced, albeit indirectly, the power of legitimate, heterosexual, procreative, "normal" sex, insisting that sodomy, by contrast, was illegitimate.

Judith Butler uses the term abject to describe sexed subjects who occupy socially and discursively delegitimated sexual identities.[7] Like Foucault, she explains that such delegitimated subjectivities are the means of producing normative ideals. Butler insists that to inculcate and ensure a heterosexual imperative requires the discursive production of a normative ideal with which a subject is to identify. Simultaneously, the normative ideal is dependent upon an identity that is repressed, or in her terms "foreclosed or disavowed" (Bodies 1-23). In eighteenth-century

Britain, Foucault's procreative couple was produced as a heterosexual ideal. The sodomite was produced as the "foreclosed" or disavowed sexual subject that served to legitimize a particularly British heterosexual identity. But these discursive productions of the sodomite, while serving to create an Other, also produced a new sodomite, not the figure of canon law described by Foucault, and not yet the homosexual of the 1870s. He is a figure somewhere in between, one who began to speak for himself at the same time he was spoken into law and into an increasingly abject social position as the eighteenth century progressed, until sodomites were entrapped in a definitional crisis in the early nineteenth century. In this crisis, as Bentham said, a man got his neck in a halter simply by speaking of pederasty/sodomy.

The psychoanalytic explanation of abjection posits that the Subject is formed by Verwerfung (foreclosure). The developing child becomes a particular kind of person by shutting off, or expelling, certain other possibilities. These are so entirely excluded that their impossibility constitutes a boundary to the self. Butler says that those who are excluded in this process are assigned to "the domain of abject beings," a domain that is "unlivable," an "uninhabitable zone" of social life (243). In the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the sodomite's uninhabitable zones were increasingly elaborated as a social, political, geographic and psychological space of abjection, which was represented as that which must be controlled or left behind in order to produce British masculinity.

Pamphlet literature and novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrate that the increasing repetition and delineation of the normative

heterosexual ideal and the figures of abjection multiply the possibilities of contesting the idealized regulatory form of the body. Butler has suggested that because of the phantasmal nature of the normative ideal, enactment is impossible. This impossibility results in the instability and ambiguities of gender and sexuality. The ambiguities then allow for sites to open up which contest the norms. Not only does the impossibility of enacting the norm produce sites that contest it, but the very proliferation of figures who reside within the domain of the abject produces possibilities for new forms of identification for men who want to express same-sex desire. To put it simply, naming sodomy as a transgressive, illegal act opens up the possibility of choosing sodomy as a behavior or, eventually, an identity.

As I focus on the appearance of the eighteenth-century sodomite, I will isolate four tropes that serve to produce the figure of the sodomite as abject. Those tropes were used to produce sodomy as a social prohibition and the sodomite as the abject Other to the proper British gentleman.

III. Creation of the Modern Sodomite

From the Middle Ages through the late seventeenth century, religious and legal opinion conceived of sodomy as any sexual act not aimed at procreation. Sodomy was believed to be an act, though contrary to nature, that anyone could commit. Sodomy did not isolate any special population who were unmanly or effeminate. In Britain a sodomitic subculture emerged in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth centuries. Sodomites were becoming visible. Their meeting places, called molly houses after the mollies (male cross-dressers who frequented the establishments), were private clubs or taverns that held a back room

for patrons interested in having sexual relations with other men. The social lives of the molly houses centered on transvestitism, drinking, dancing, and sexual relations. At first, molly houses catered to lower- and working-class men, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century, such class distinctions within molly houses were not clear. Such categorization would have made simple a sign of sexual difference that could be easily regulated. However, not all sodomites, even among those who frequented the molly houses, were effeminate or cross-dressers or of the lower classes, despite the public desire to believe the contrary.

Within the first decade of the eighteenth century, raids on molly houses became part of the activity of the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The early reformers began their efforts as an attempt to counteract the Restoration.[8] They targeted fairs, gambling, masquerades, taverns, whores, obscene ballads, cockfighting and bull-baiting, as they had in the 1690s, but by the turn of the century, they became more concerned with morals and respectability, and molly houses were included among their targets. The aristocratic influence in the societies meant that their campaigns were often directed at the lower classes, which could be more easily exposed than the aristocrats.[9] Under the influence of the early societies, the first raids on the molly houses occurred in the 1710s, and four men were executed for sodomy in 1726. It was the first time in English history since the institution of a law making sodomy a capital offense in 1533 that men were executed for sodomy and only sodomy, not other political offenses. Many other men faced the pillories during the 1720s. Under the sway of such reform measures, attitudes toward sodomy continued to shift. England assumed a more legally severe and less

literally tolerant position. By the 1760s, censure increasingly prohibited representations of even the word sodomy unless it was derogatory.

Through the eighteenth century, the efforts of the Reform societies rose and subsided, being reestablished in 1738, 1757, and 1770. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, evangelicals became powerfully influential. As Catherine Hall describes the efforts of the Reform Societies in the last part of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, they were the result of the developments of a "new moral majority." New discourses constituted a proposition for the "proper relations between men and women" (51). Central to such developments was the reform movement within the Anglican Church. In part a reaction to Methodism and its "low social connections," Anglican Evangelicalism attempted an appeal to the upper classes to reform what such figures as William Wilberforce and Hannah More saw as moral decadence in the eighteenth century. This did not mean that Methodism stopped its own involvement with reforms, but that Anglican efforts paralleled them.[10] Evangelicals saw the family as central to their struggle for reform. Hannah More also tried to appeal to the "middling" classes with her novel, Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1807). The novel presents Mr. Stanley as an ideal patriarch, a model of Christian manliness. He is a family-based man who lives a proper life outside of London and within a domestic world. Byron, along with much of London and the rest of the British empire, read More. The novel ran into eleven editions during the first nine months.[11] As Hall describes it, in such discourses, moral authority produced power, whatever someone's employment (57). The revival of the societies in the 1790s was diffused within the evangelical upper-class movement and the

bourgeois ethic that permeated all sections of society, giving rise to increased focus and attacks on sodomites. The repeated vilification, prosecution, and execution of sodomites and the clamor for the right to prosecute even attempts at sodomy resulted in the production of the sodomite as a figure that threatened the subjectivity of the English gentleman. Under such regimes of social discipline, the sodomite suffered. Prosecutions and executions, which had been extremely rare in England, began to rise. Only two executions took place in Stuart England, and both also involved other political offenses. Then there were four executions at the beginning of the eighteenth century. But during Byron's lifetime, between 1806 and 1826, sixty men were executed for sodomy and many others sent to the pillories. As Reay Tannahill points out in Sex in History, by 1828, the cries of mobs were heard in parliament, and a new law was passed which allowed even "attempts of sodomy" to be punished by execution. Prosecution no longer required proof of emission of seed.[12] The opposite trend occurred at this time in France, where a reform code inspired by the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" decriminalized same-sex relations in 1791.[13]

The appearance of the subculture in the eighteenth century began to change perceptions of sodomy. The sodomite had become more visible and hence simultaneously more available to formulations of a sodomitic identity, both by sodomites themselves and by those who wanted to isolate and regulate sodomitic behavior. From Ned Ward's first (1709) assignment of the sodomite in public discourse as a threat to phantasmal manly deportment and female delicacy, the representations of the sodomite are often found within discourses that are virulently biased against the newly emerging sodomite. Representations of the sodomite

appeared in legal prosecutions, literary satires, novels, and journalistic reports. Unlike the writing of the Renaissance, in the eighteenth century there were few texts that represented sodomites in any sympathetic or positive fashion. As Byrne R. S. Fone writes, "literature and polemic made the sodomite both monstrous and contemptible, a creature at once the object of everyone's anxiety and the butt of every man's jest" (198). The tropes used to represent sodomy were reproduced variously throughout the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, predominantly to effect the sodomite as an immoral, effeminate, social reprobate. The molly was modernized and made grotesque. The occasional and in the main inconsequential sin of buggery became the terrifying crime of sodomy, and the sodomite a highly over-determined figure in public discourse.

Sodomy comes to figure and be figured in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries within four different tropes. These tropes are circulated through many forms of discourse, from juridical writings to public broadsides and novels. Judge Burger's statement figures sodomy first as a criminal activity and the sodomite a criminal. The emphasis on sodomy as a crime becomes something new in British society during the eighteenth century. This shift in denomination serves to produce the sodomite as an abject figure in British society as a means of normalizing a British heterosexuality.

Sodomy was also figuratively produced as a linguistic impropriety or a muted or silenced form of speech. Not only is sodomy a crime, it is, as Blackstone delineates in detail, an unspeakable term. In 1836 when the Criminal Law Commissioners recommended legislative reforms, sodomy was designated as "a

nameless offense of great enormity" (qtd in Edelman Homographies 3). This compulsion to produce sodomy and (de)scribe it by a gesture of erasure is frequently reproduced in trial records and popular writings.[14] This naming of the unnameable shrouds sodomy in codes of silence. But as the troping itself suggests, it is a particular kind of silence, one that can produce sodomy or the sodomite in order to disfigure it.

Further, the sodomite is denominated as effeminate, or more significantly as a threat to the stable economy of gendered roles and a normativized heterosexual order. This denomination of sodomy serves to produce the sodomite as an abject figure, yet the very suggestion of his existence often reveals the phantasmal nature of normative ideals.

Finally, sodomy is frequently represented as having a foreign origin, as being an invasion of British society, and hence the sodomite figured as a traitor to British masculinity, and the ideology of a racially pure heterosexualized empire.

Within this chapter, I offer examples of the representations of these tropes in several different texts to show the ways the figures of sodomy and the sodomite are reproduced to create an abject figure. As they are reproduced, the abject figure of the sodomite reinforces a racialized heterosexuality which remains unmarked. The figuration of sodomy serves to produce the authority of an ideological heterosexuality. Following my isolating of the tropes, I read John Cleland's representation of sodomy in Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure to examine the ways an author who wants to resist representing the sodomite as an abject figure can do so

only within the discursive framework afforded him. Cleland's work reproduces these figurations of sodomy to parody them.

The first descriptions of the men in molly houses, public houses or alehouses where men looking for sexual relations with other men met, appeared around 1700. Ned Ward's writing about the molly houses in The History of London Clubs (1709) figured the frequenters of molly houses as "so far degenerated from Masculine Deportment or manly exercises that they rather fancy themselves Women, imitating all the little Vanities that Custom has reconcil'd to the Female sex, affecting to speak, walk, talk, curtsy, cry, & Scold and mimic all manner of Effeminacy"(28).[15] Ward's satire was in fact almost aware of its own ironies. Men who don't achieve the sexual ideal of the age make "scoff of the little Effeminacy & Weaknesses which women are subject to" and threaten "to extinguish that Natural Affection which is due to the Fair Sex & to turn their Juvenile desires toward preternatural pollutions" (28). Cross-dressed sodomites threatened the process that naturalized custom. The sodomite threatens to reveal both the fancy, or phantasmal nature, of manly deportment and the female's subjection within performances of weakness and effeminacy. His characterization of effeminate mollies is one repeated in court trials, broadsides distributed outside of pillorying and hanging sites, and many other places.[16] Ward's description of the effeminate molly as a derisive term also reveals the kind of social anxiety the mollies produced. Masculine deportment is easily degenerated, and the vanities reconciled to the Female Sex are outed as matters of masquerade. The representations of the sodomite as effeminate are always haunted

by the possibilities of slippages of meaning; gender is not stable if it is a matter of clothing and performance.

An article in The Gentleman's Magazine, 1752, presents a general call to arms against sodomy in Britain. The casting out of sodomites and traitors is demanded by a national, "natural" order.

> Every man, who is a man and knows anything that belongs to decency or order, will utterly detest the vile attempt [of sodomy]. With as much reason may a man conceal an attempt to murder, as an attempt of Buggery. A love of our species . . . and a love of our country . . . should determine all Britons to do their utmost to expose and bring to condign punishment of the sodomite. (114-115)

A patriotic gentleman exposes another man's traitorous sodomy; decency and the secure order of the state demand it. Sodomy produces the possibility of social or moral decline and threatens to invade the body of the state. Sodomy threatens to expose the possibility that some men are not men, at least within the normativizing regulations of Britain's punishing laws.

In his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (1735), Alexander Pope writes of Lord Hervey, an influential member of Court and friend to Lady Wortley Montague. Montague was known to say of Hervey, a man known to be a sodomite, "[T]here are men, women, and Herveys." Pope was not so kind:

> Now high, now low, master up, now miss
> And he himself one vile antithesis.
> Amphibious thing! That acting either part,

The trifling head or the corrupted heart! . . .

Now trips a lady, now struts a lord . . .

Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust

Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust. (324-333)

Pope's purposes derive from his use of satire, a genre used during the Enlightenment as a mode of social regulation. Through the pejorative display of gendered deviance, his satire attempts to isolate and expel an effeminacy that threatens the integrity of the social order of court. The tripping lady and strutting lord reflect the precarious balance men have within changing social systems where rapier wits replace swords. Pope attacks the court culture as much as he attacks Hervey, whose effeminate body resides within the court. But even as Pope proposes such a strategy, the focus turns back on Pope, whose own social outsidedness, his Catholicism, and his physical disability were often satirized in visual and verbal arts. Amphibious men stand on shaky grounds and try to uphold themselves by making other men's "parts" subject to suspicion and ridicule.

The reproduction of distaste for the sexual ambiguity of sodomy is as common as and often entwined with the elaborations of sodomy as national threat, the sodomite as a traitor. In The Times (1763), writing of sodomy, Charles Churchill begins, "Without our island vices not content / We rob our neighbors on the continent." His poetic polemic doesn't stop with England's French neighbors: "Nor stop we here—the soft luxurious East / Where man his soul degraded from the beast . . . Attracts our eye; and flowing from that source / Sins of blackest character / Would make the best blood run cold / And strike all manhood dead" (169). Sodomy is

elsewhere and everywhere; his particular metaphoric slide moves to establish sodomy's source in a bestial and, of course, non-specific East. Such invasions strike against British masculinity, making its blood lines of racial purity freeze up, rendering the death of "manhood" itself. Manhood, of course, is only British. Sexual and racial crossings-over are commonplaces in discourses on sodomy. They simultaneously Other both non-British people and sodomites.

This association of sodomy with the bestial Eastern Other that threatens racial purity extended into the nineteenth century. In Thomas De Quincey's Confessions of an Opium Eater (1821), the sodomitic Orientalized Other invades De Quincey's autobiography. De Quincey metaphorizes a bestial Asian sodomy within the figure of a phallic crocodile. Sodomy, which is supposedly silenced, is simply forced into metamorphic forms of fascination. De Quincey, most improbably, meets a Malay who becomes a "fearful enemy for months," because the Malay serves as a stimulant to "southern Asian" dreams (108). De Quincy dreams that the Malay leads him into a complete displacement of himself. De Quincey imagines he is "worshipped and sacrificed" in his fantasies of the East. And he is "kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, then laid and confounded with all unutterable slimy things, among reeds and Nilotic mud" (109). Such phallic sexual cominglings are accompanied by his being the object of a host of animals, gods, and people, who glare at him. There is no end to the kinds of displacements of subjectivity that being laid and confounded by cancerous phallic figures can produce. He becomes subject to and the object of his enemies. The bestial enemy fills its victims with "hatred and abomination." In De Quincey, the unspeakable sodomy is represented as contact with a dehumanized

Other. The gothic encounter invests sodomy with the possibilities of social and psychological invasion, for sodomy appears in his dream. This figuration simultaneously renders the Malaysian and Southeast Asia as sites of foreign sexuality, a sodomitic, uninhabitable zone, from which the author struggles heroically back to a normative, British, domestic life.[17] Kissing his children's faces brings De Quincey back from the "damned crocodile . . . monster" that has invaded him. His sodomitic fears are redeemed by his children, the signs of his profitable, reproductive, domestic sexuality; the children are all wearing "new shoes and new frocks" (110). De Quincey casts all such confounding imagery within the context of his opium dreams, an interior state, a fantasy induced through an affinity for foreignness. De Quincey sodomizes the racial difference of the Malay, even as he allows the Eastern world to sodomize him. Such uninhabitable space threatens his very subjectivity as he becomes both worshipper and sacrifice, subject and object. But ultimately such a fantastic voyage must return him to his own (re)productive territory of the self, the space of English domesticity. His imperial travels have reaped new frocks and shoes for the display of the children he has secured for Britain. But the scene makes clear that the lines of British subjectivity are confounded and hazy in a world supplemented by imports, sodomy being one such import.[18]

These metaphors of a sodomy always available elsewhere, always everywhere, are "crocodiles multiplied into a thousand repetitions" in magazines, poems, novels, and scientific treatises, to produce a most reviled figure by the early nineteenth century. The metamorphoses, the figural twists of Sodom and sodomy,

are performed in a century-long process resulting in an abject sodomite who makes his way to the pillory and hanging noose, barely able to walk under the weight of tropes hurled against him.

As early as 1726, amidst the age's productions of many crimes, the sodomite was a favorite figure for attack. A letter that appeared in the London Journal of 1726 says that pillorying and hanging were not enough to "blot out the Names of the Monstrous Wretches." The writer advocated that a skilled surgeon should take out a convicted sodomite's testicles and a "Hangman sear up his Scrotum with a Hot Iron" (qtd in Norton 67). Even in Scotland, where there was no statute against sodomy, the jurist David Hume advocated in 1797 that "the libel of the crime be founded on divine law" and that the punishment of the sodomite should be to "be burnt alive" (qtd in Crompton 14). This was the year Byron was born in Aberdeen, and this the climate in which his poetry was written.

IV. Rhetorical accommodation and resistance: John Cleland

John Cleland both appropriates and challenges these tropes. The absurd and repeated practice of imbricating discourses on sodomy, nationality, and gendered sexuality is exposed in Cleland's novel, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (1749). The novel offers one of the few mimetic representations of sodomy in eighteenth-century literature. Cleland's protagonist, Fanny Hill, is a prostitute in a pornographic novel, both character and genre outside of English law. Ironically, when Fanny, the prostitute, sees two men engaged in sodomy, she objects vociferously to their "project of preposterous pleasure" (157) and she declares the illegality of such an act. But this irony is woven into many others. The novel characterizes Fanny herself

as sexually ambiguous and as a kind of colonialist merchant of pleasures who is repeatedly referred to as a ship, a seaworthy vessel who launches herself from man to man and who amasses personal wealth from combining work with personal pleasures. The novel is at one level "an apocalyptic vision of the tumescent white male member controlling the world of the novel" (Nussbaum 104). The enormity of the giant "machine" swells so large that it obscures the female body represented within it, suggesting that ambiguous male/female sexuality is the novel's concern. The ambiguous gendering of Fanny, whose clitoris resembles a penis, which "grew under the touch of examination . . . stiff and considerable," and her very name, Fanny, metaphorically suggest sexual ambiguity. Fanny's enlarged clitoris and her name, which reflects the bottom or the "front bottom,"[19] are a curious combination of signs. Such ambiguities, however, do not prepare the reader for the censorious language that surrounds the scene of sodomy. Fanny, whose sailing body moves from man to man in the pursuit and delivery of pleasures, comes to the end of her journey in a climactic moment of the text which drives her out of prostitution into the British port of marriage and heterosexual respectability: the scene of sodomy. Fanny accidentally finds herself in a roadside public house. Inverting her female sex, she pierces a paper patch she finds in a wall with her bodkin and finds two young men engaged in play that becomes sexual. When she discovers "what they were," she is taken aback by their "preposterous pleasure." Fanny Hill is scandalized by the sodomites' disruption of gender difference. She describes one of the sodomites' "red-topt ivory toy, that stood perfectly stiff, and shewed, that if he was like his mother behind, he was like his father before" (158). The sodomite's double

sex is "unnatural," a twist of sexual signs. The image of the sodomite "like his mother behind" reinforces the analogical thinking which produced the idea of an effeminate sodomite; he is like a woman. However, the "father before" is perhaps the disturbing sign. He is what he is supposed to be, like a woman, but that does not make him a woman. The sodomite is both inside and outside a two-sexed model of signification. At issue in Fanny's seeing a mother behind and father before is a cultural anxiety about the roles pleasure will have in determining the rules of gender. The logical dependence of perception and cognition on figurative language breaks down. Fanny's tropological claims on kinship and generation fail within representations of sexual pleasure. The sight is so threatening that Fanny intends "to raise the house," but she catches her foot on a floor nail and is "flung on her face with such violence, that she fell senseless to the ground" (159). Face down and fanny up, she ironically and violently represents the instability of sexual difference.[20]

Sexuality is exposed as a set of figural differences. Such exposure confounds. The sign of the "red-topt ivory toy" puts the reproductive legitimate couple into play. The gravity that grounds sex is confounded; it is preposterously disturbed by a sex which is neither reproductive nor productive. These men offer each other only pleasure; no rings, garments, jewels, or money bind them. The prostitute, with "burning . . . rage," declares "all this, so criminal a scene." One criminal in hyperbolic fashion enlists a kind of hierarchy of sexual crimes. She incites a preposterous jockeying of power by invoking the law. By appropriating the regulatory tropes that make the sodomite abject, Cleland repeats and parodies them

to question both the legitimacy of juridic and symbolic laws, and the extreme measures of surveillance that must be used to enforce them.[21]

Fanny runs home to Mrs. Cole, who has been her female educator in the ways of the world of prostitution. Fanny describes the sodomitic scene, and Mrs. Cole's response rehearses some of the standard tropes which surround the sodomite but with revealing irony. Mrs. Cole reassures Fanny that there "was no doubt due vengeance . . . overtaking these miscreants" (159). Mrs. Cole acknowledges that she might be suspected of partiality, "from its being the common cause of woman-kind, out of whose mouths this practice tended to take something more precious than bread" (159). The sexual pun on mouths doesn't erase the fact that sodomy is an economic issue. Women dependent on men for money, wives or prostitutes, see sodomites as a threat to the vulnerability of women in a gendered economy.

But Cleland's insistence about the politics of sexuality and economics is complicated further. Fanny's own gender ambiguity, represented by her genitalia, is reinforced by her imitations of male behavior. After sexually initiating one young man, Will, whom she calls her "treasure, a bit for the bonne bouche of a duchess" (84), she offers him payment, like the money her master, Mr. H., has given to her. Mr. H. has also lavished on her many fineries of jewelry and clothes. Fanny wants Will to use the money to adorn himself with "a silver watch, that great article of subaltern finery," and he, like a woman, accepts (83). In his representation of sex within an economic system, Cleland points to one of the central transformations of gender within capitalism. Love of luxury with its sexual and economic meanings was previously attributed to women and the aristocracy. Now, however, a new

economics brings men and women closer together in their pursuits of pleasure. Capitalism lives and trades on "vices" previously imputed to women. Luxury is a crucial ingredient in production, and therefore the boundaries between men and women are shifting. Pursuits of pleasures might reveal a man to be radically like a woman, or perhaps worse still, to be an indecipherable sex, a mere "bonne bouche of a duchess," a mere imitation of a female or an aristocrat. The prohibition of sodomy, and the increasing emphasis on its illegality throughout the century and on into the next, is a kind of insurance. As men become more like women, the new sodomite in pursuit of "preposterous pleasures," pleasures for which there are no payments and no procreation, becomes one of the signs of men's and women's difference. No matter how alike women and men might become, men's resistance to desiring other men becomes the legitimation of masculinity. But rejection of the sodomite's free pleasures also insists that pleasure will be paid for, whether by direct payments for prostitution or by payment with a wedding ring. As Fanny says at the beginning of her tale, thought is the enemy of capital. "Capital does not seek reflection, but the being tossed about in loose pleasures," and speaking about such things "violates the laws of decency" (1). It might show that pleasures are not as loose as they seem. They are connected to economics. Sodomy and especially speaking of sodomy threaten to disrupt an economy of a precariously balanced gender system.

The same scene also represents sodomy's status as a foreign import which results in infection of the masculine and social body. When Fanny describes the scene, she focuses on the man being penetrated: "he shew'd to the open air, those globular, fleshy eminences that compose the mount-pleasants of Rome" (158).

The metaphor exposes the troping of sodomy as a foreign practice, for Cleland alludes to the English construction of Italians as being buggers. He furthers the complications of the metaphor of foreignness. In her long monologue, Mrs. Cole collapses sexual and national identity:

> whatever effect this infamous passion had in other ages, and other countries, it seem'd a peculiar blessing on our air and climate, that there was a plague-spot visibly imprinted on all that are tainted with it, in this nation . . . . [sodomites' characters are] the most worthless and despicable . . . stript of all manly virtues of their own sex, fill'd up with only the very worst vices and follies of ours. . . . scarce [more] execrable than ridiculous in their monstrous inconsistency, loathing and contemning women, and all the same time, apeing their manners . . . [they are] unsex'd male-misses. (159-160)

Sodomy is a plague to British men, an infection that makes men simultaneously condemn and imitate women. Such infection might manifest itself otherwise in other cultures, but British men succumb to it in the most frightening way; they are metamorphosized into a monstrous inconsistency. Such a violent threat is juxtaposed to the fear that the sodomite will disrupt an economy of gender relations based on women's need of men's money. These assessments have everything to do with the final outcome of the novel.

Fanny, sexual adventurer and trader, is turned to the port of heterosexuality. She marries a British man, Charles, whom she met at the beginning of the novel but was separated from because he had business to attend to in the South Seas. He has

returned to England without the money he intended to acquire from his venture. Fanny inspects his appearance: "the tant [sic.] of his travels . . . at the expence of no more delicacy than what he could better spare" has given him an "air of becoming manliness" and "an air of distinction and empire" (179). Despite his dark color, Charles' virility is still intact after his travels to the South Seas. Her inspection of him and his darkened color and the concern about a "delicate" racial and sexual border imply that his travels might have infected him with the plague of an imbricated effeminating sodomy and racial difference. Fanny will not accept him until his English virility has been inspected and approved, until she is assured that he is distinctly British, which means heterosexual. Surveillance is sexual foreplay in a system of regulations. Fanny and Charles are married only after Charles learns that Fanny has made a fortune from prostitution. She doesn't want him until she has assessed his English masculinity, and he doesn't offer to marry her until he knows she has a fortune.

Fanny's inherited fortune is not an unmarked denominator in the production of heterosexual domestic bliss. The "gentleman" who generously trusted [her] with a genteel, independent settlement . . . by an authentic will" (175) earned his fortune abroad. He had been an orphan who made his way in a merchant's counting house and then, sent to Cadiz, made a fortune. He returned to "his native country" to look for relatives. Not finding any, he decided it was the "principle of electricity produced when the opposite sexes meet" (174) that allowed his fortune to be secured for Britain. Fanny learned from him the "train of cultivation," the rational use of pleasure that would attend her success and secure her domestic future. Heterosexual

pleasure affords national security. Both discursive production of sexual pleasures and the delimiting of them is essential. With his proposal and their marriage, Fanny's wealth, Charles' virility, and "legal parentage" are secured, "snug into [a British] port" (187).

Cleland produces, out of the tropes of sodomitic prohibition, the spectacle of sodomy and inverts the preposterous nature of sodomy's abjection in a satire of British law and custom. He turns the Otherings of sodomy inside out, to expose the social and political uses of sodomy. The prostitute makes the law laughable, and the foreign Othering of sodomy is exposed as an operation of empire building. Cleland ends with a few puns. "You laugh perhaps at this tail piece of morality. . . . You doubt one who seeks to mask a devotee of Vice under a rag of a veil . . . I burn incense to virtue" (187). The ephemeral substance of incense allows the reader to peer through defenses of this heterosexual domestic virtue to its need of varieties of vice.

One thing that becomes apparent in Fanny's scene of surveillance and interpretations of the scene, and as well in Bentham's fear of being suspect, is that sodomites will not speak directly of their own desires. They will be spoken for and interpreted within the terms of a heterosexual subjectivity and placed outside the normative structures of gender and desire. The sodomites had, in fact, developed a large system of their own discourse, sodomitic slang for molly houses and cruising grounds (Norton Myth 112-115). Yet in legitimate public discourse, in the public house where Fanny sees the sodomites, they do not speak. Cleland's fate after the publication of his novel emphasizes my point.

Practicing male sodomites, like John Cleland, who chose to expose sodomy or perform as sodomitic authors in the mid- or late-eighteenth century, were likely to choose satire or the gothic novel, genres often in conflict with the domestic novel, forms which allowed them to inscribe and obscure their homographic signatures. Their renderings of domesticity and gendered relationships usually inscribe their own resistance to sodomitic prohibitions but also offer social critiques of a domestic heterosexuality. Cleland chose a pornographic novel both to challenge sexual conventions and to inscribe homoerotic desire. The ephemeral nature of domestic virtues that Cleland suggests with his incense becomes more socially substantial than he would have hoped as the century goes on and domestic fiction and domestic sexual relations play an increasingly important role in the development of English culture. Jane Austen inscribes the heterosexual credo of the shifting class structures. It is, she says, "universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Pride and Prejudice, 1). Such a declarative statement authorizes a heterosexual self. Hers is a universal declaration of the wedding of fortunes and marriage represented in domestic life.[23] The street-roving, pub-frequenting, foreign-adventuring sodomite does not fare well in such a climate. However, Memoirs suggests that the sodomite, despite (or because of) his abjected identity, his preposterous Otherness, is intrinsic to the bourgeois imaginings of sexuality, evoked to instill revulsion, like a noose, or an anus, and to produce a regulated sexuality.

Cleland himself, however, suffered the consequences of attempting to expose the outside limits of sodomy within heterosexual desires. Cleland was jailed for his

obscene novel. Although most subsequent publications expurgated the scene of sodomy (even in pirated editions), his sodomy was not forgotten. In 1781, thirty years after the publication of Memoirs, Josiah Beckwith wrote that Cleland still "pass[ed] under the censure of being a Sodomite . . . and in consequence thereof Persons of Character decline visiting him, or cultivating his Aquaintance" (qtd. in Sabor xiii).

Cleland's satirical, pornographic form permitted him to speak directly of sodomy, and then to be punished for doing so. By the end of the century, Bentham wrote directly about pederasty and then suppressed the manuscript. Later Shelley, Byron's contemporary, wrote about Greek Love and, like Bentham, suppressed the manuscript. This series of events provides the context for Byron's decisions about how to write about the sexual behavior and ambiguity that he called Horatian or Greek Love.

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[1] The Oklahoma statute is an interesting example: "Section 886. Crime against nature Every person who is guilty of the detestable and abominable crime against nature, committed with mankind or with a beast, is punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary not exceeding ten (10) years." Okla. Stat. Tit. 21 Sec. 886 (1992), qtd in Rubenstein, 79.

[2] When Mary Shelley was editing the Symposium, Leigh Hunt advised her to leave out any traces of "Greek love" by changing pronouns and changing any words about love between men to friendship. She responded by protesting that then "only the learned will know what is meant," Letters 2: 508. Mary Shelley's responses as well as Bentham's and Shelley's fears show the ways in which regulatory silences contribute to the production of normativized sexual subjectivities.

[3] Kristeva would say execrated or excreted.

[4] Elfenbein points out that despite the penalties for sodomy, aspects of Byron's homosexuality were constituted as an open secret that served as symbolic capital among elite members of society. He also traces the ways Byron's secret and rumors of his

effeminacy continued to influence sexual performance of elite circles in the nineteenth century, "Byronism" 535-66.

[5] Hammond does briefly include Byron in the discussion, 88-125.

[6] Hitchcock reviews many theories of changes in sexuality in the eighteenth century. He describes demographic studies of population increase and the development of a taxonomy of pleasures in the novel and pornography, as well as studies of the shifting roles of women toward more domestic functions and power, the maternalization of the female body, and studies of the reorganization of the family. He also includes the restrictions on the male body regarding sodomy. Using letters of men who described their sexual experiences with women in the early eighteenth century, and then men's writing later in the century, he says that on the one hand while discourses on sex liberated interest in sex, on the other they increasingly changed sexual patterns. "In a heterosexual context people increasingly restricted their behavior to phallo-centric, penetrative sex which could be countenanced as procreative," 85. In this process, masculinity and femininity changed. Men and women were spoken of as "naturally" and biologically sexed "with an increasing onus to find the 'opposite' sex'" attractive. What occurred, he suggests, was not a liberation but a reorganization of sexual power which policed men and women through a print culture, 85.

[7] Butler adapts her use of the term "abject" from Julia Kristeva, The Powers of Terror: An Essay in Abjection.

[8] In The Gay and Lesbian Heritage, Rousseau argues that the voices of those demanding reforms "in life styles of the upper classes, whose dissipation they claimed filtered down," were the most vociferous in their persecution of sodomites.

[9] For discussions of the Reform Societies' efforts at suppression of activities associated with libertine and lower-class culture, see Barker-Benfield, who argues that the regendering of men and women in the eighteenth century was essentially an outgrowth of capitalism. "Men gendered and sexualized . . . tried to make sense of a manhood expressing itself in commerce rather than war," xxvii. These efforts meant that men had more in common with women in the pursuits of domestic pleasures, so such inexpensive forms of entertainment as drinking and cockfighting became less acceptable. Stallybrass and White demonstrate the ways places of assembly required different morals and manners which reflected ideological struggles within England. The reformation of manners was a means of inculcating metaphysical, moral and political schemes. Regulations of body functions ("spitting, ejecting mucus, fidgeting, touching, inflicting pain" 89) became the means of producing new social ideologies of a self-regulated bourgeois identity, 88. Sodomy and hence sodomites stood as an outside boundary to the reformed body.

[10] Fielding's "The Female Husband" parodies the Methodists' mid-century attacks on mollys in a very humorous way. His female husband is a cross-dressing lesbian whom he calls Molly. But he explains that she has a "token" name for her sexual activities as a molly only because Methodists gave it to her. His varied sex changes in the character and the use of the term "molly" suggest that he might have been talking about mannish women, sodomitic men or prostitutes. But it is clear that he blames the Methodists for their distorted misnamings of sexuality: "The Methodists gave [their] tokens of brotherly love" to "abominable and unnatural passion," 144, 146.

[11] See Uphaus and Foster on More, 385-86.

[12] The law also narrowed the definition of buggery. "Every person convicted of the abominable act of Buggery, committed with Mankind or any Animal, shall suffer death as a Felon" qtd. in Tannahill 378. Previously buggery, the legal word for sodomy, borrowed from the Italians (and English lawmakers frequently noted the foreign origin of the terms buggery and pederasty), had included child molestation and bestiality. Charges were often compounded with such other offenses as witchcraft and sorcery. Until the eighteenth century, buggery itself was not believed worth prosecuting. See Burg.

[13] Many Enlightenment claims were made for changing laws on sodomy because of ideas that sodomy was natural in certain climates, which were supported by such figures as Montesquieu or Voltaire. Others believed sodomy was a culturally formed behavior, and unnatural, a belief that usually meant support of criminalization. For a discussion of the complications of these positions as well as a tracing of the European desire to map sodomy onto particular parts of the world and associate it with racial characteristics, see Bleys. However, in terms of law it should be noted that while in England many laws were reformed in the 1830s, the punishment of death remained for sodomy until 1861. In 1841, a bill was introduced to reduce the penalty for rape and sodomy. Public sentiment was still hostile toward "crimes so heinous as to deserve death," argued the Earl of Widelow. The penalty for rape was reduced, but not for sodomy. Finally in 1861, the sentence was reduced from death to life imprisonment, and the sentence remained thus for over a century, Crompton 359. These processes stand in direct contrast to Russia, Germany, and Italy. Each had abolished the death penalty for sodomy by the end of the eighteenth century, and France had decriminalized sodomy in 1791.

[14] See writings collected in Norton's Mother Clap's or McCormick's trial records in Secret Sexualities.

[15] Ward ends the sketch happy that the Reform Society closed down such places. But in fact they continued through the early nineteenth century.

[16] See Norton, Mother Clap's 9 and McCormick, Secret Sexualities.

[17] De Quincey also uses prostitution in a similar way. When he takes up with Ann the streetwalker, he becomes a peripatetic. But then he finds a better existence. Sexual transgressions serve to produce what is normative.

[18] Earlier in the autobiography, De Quincey more directly figures his own hand-to-mouth existence as a journalist in his association with the prostitute, Ann. As Jacobus noted, his journalism made him an "outcast or prostitute of contemporary letters. But here De Quincey's addictive autobiography attempts a kind of Othering of himself which will allow him to perform his own skillful redemption via a heterosexual domestic return at the expense of a gothic Orientalizing of sodomy. See Jacobus 215-50 on De Quincey's use of the figure of the prostitute.

[19] Daniel Cottom brought this English reading of "fanny," gleaned from a television interview, to my attention. The OED does not list "fanny" as any sort of "bottom," so as is often the case, queer readings rely on popular culture.

[20] See Edelman for a discussion of the Western metaphysics of sexual difference regarding this passage, Homographesis 95.

[21] Davenport-Hines describes the emergence of new policing tactics used to capture sodomites in the eighteenth-century molly houses and parks. In addition to raids promoted

by the reform societies, the police instituted the strategy of baiting men to entice them into sodomy and then arrest them. It was a practice created in France, borrowed by the English 55-104. We Americans still use such tactics for prostitution, drug arrests, and sodomy. As I wrote this, a school teacher in Edmond, Oklahoma, was arrested for indecent exposure because a male police officer in a park baited him. Indecent exposure laws mean that a man doesn't even have to attempt sodomy to be arrested.

[22] Armstrong traces the rise of the influence of the domestic novel and conduct manuals, which inscribe women as the center of a domestic sphere. This ideal served as a means for producing a productive and regulated middle-class woman and man. Women, with discretion, modesty, frugality and regularity, were to ensure both sexes' domestic happiness by being financial and moral guardians of men and their income, 86. To this day we hear the echoes of these domestic virtues: *men make money; women spend it.*

Chapter Two

Byron's Poetics: Permutations of Silence

Sodomy, Rhetoric, and Pre-texts to Childe Harold

In 1810 a London mob attacked a group of six men who were being taken to a pillory. The men had been arrested in a Vere Street club, a molly house known as the White Swan, and were convicted of assault with intent to commit sodomy. The occasion of sodomites in pillors brought large, violent mobs; an estimated thirty to fifty thousand people attended the London spectacle. Every London paper and many pamphlets reported on the event. After reading of the attack on these "wretches convicted of vile indecencies," Louis Simond, a Frenchman visiting Coleridge and Southey in the Lake District, wrote in his journal, "I can conceive of nothing more dangerous, offensive and unwise, than the brutality and unrestrained publicity of such infliction. The imagination itself is sullied by the exposition of enormities, that ought never to be supposed to exist; and what are we to think of a people, and women too, who can for hours indulge in the cowardly and ferocious amusement of bruising and maiming men tied to the stake" (qtd. in Crompton 169). In an article entitled "Seeing Things," Lee Edelman argues that Simond's contempt for the publicity of the mob's violent acts, rather than for the acts themselves, "makes evident the brutalizing effects on the populace of any public discourse on sexual relations between men" (93). The public discourse in the pamphlets and newspaper accounts of the attack on the Vere Street prisoners reveals much about the discursive positioning of sodomy and the sodomite at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The public discourse which surrounds this particular spectacle of a policed and disciplined sodomitic body produces through the figure of the sodomite an abject Other to the socially sanctioned, procreative couple. This legitimate couple stood in the service of a morally sound and economically productive England. The rhetoric of this scene makes clear the way the Malthusian couple "imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. . . . Nothing that was not ordered in terms of generation . . . could expect sanction or protection" (Foucault History 4). The figure of the sodomite is produced as that which must be foreclosed to instate this (proto)heterosexual couple as a social ideal and a social norm. But the scene also reinforces a particular British heterosexual masculinity. Social discourse produces psychological as well as physiological threat. Within the published accounts of the scene of the persecution of the sodomitic men, the sodomite is imprisoned in language as a criminal who cannot be reconciled within the public body. He is represented as an invasive foreigner who must be resisted and defeated. The sodomite is made a species and sodomy configured as a material practice set apart from and threatening to a natural economy of a male/female gender-based system. And, finally, the nominative, sodomite, is made illegible and sodomy configured as an unmentionable category within the symbolic system. The figure of a sodomite is written into public discourse as an abject being. I stress both the nominative and the verb because the development of discourse on sodomy, even in this passage, reveals that the meaning of the sodomite is in transition. At certain points, acts of sodomy

are a threat to any good man's standing. Yet, at other times, the sodomite is a personage, a "race" apart, and a man who is characterized by his effeminacy. As I isolate these representations of the sodomite within the discussions of the Vere Street massacre, their function and dysfunction in producing a heterosexual norm for British society will out these dual operations. But, concomitantly, I intend to show that one of the "brutalizing effects on the public" of the publicity surrounding the spectacle of sodomitic persecution is that it advertises sodomy as an eroticized practice. The greatest fears of the Frenchman are true: sodomy makes good copy.

The most complete account of the attack on the Vere Street men appears in a pamphlet entitled "The Trying and Pilloring of the Vere Street Club," and while I will rely on it extensively, I will intersperse my comments with other newspaper accounts.[1] "The disgust felt by all ranks in Society at the detestable conduct of these wretches occasioned many thousands to become spectators of their punishment" (211). Shops were closed from Haymarket to Newgate for this ritual of abjection, this "liturgy of punishment" (Foucault, Discipline 34). People came armed with a variety of weapons for the purpose of attacking the sodomites. Carts carried offal and dung from the slaughter houses. People carried baskets on their heads filled with "apples, potatoes, turnips, cabbage-stalks, and other vegetables, together with the remains of divers dogs and cats. The whole of these were sold to the populace at a high price, who spared no expence to provide themselves with the necessary articles of assault" (212). Only the fishwomen who "attended with stinking flounders and the entrails of fish, which had been in preparation for several days," kept their

property because "hearty in the cause, [they] declared they wanted them 'for their own use'" (212). The assailants came prepared to do battle and to inscribe the sodomitic body.

The unnamed pamphleteer says of the scene, "It is impossible for language to convey an adequate idea of the universal expressions of execration which accompanied these monsters on their journey. . . . . the wretches were so thickly covered with filth, that a vestige of the human figure was scarcely discernible. . . . Some of them were cut in the head with brickbrats, and bled profusely. The streets, as they passed, resounded with the universal shouts and execrations of the populace" (213). The faces of the men were completely disfigured by the time they reached the pillories: "They were not discernible as human beings" (212). The repetitions of the inhuman figure and of execration become crucial in this spectacle. As the sodomites became more "universally covered with filth," and less discernibly human, the crowd became more vocally universal in its decrees of execration. The crowd's unified voice, its unified identity, is defined as a desire to control and to obscure the humanity of the sodomite. The ritual and the ritualized accounts of persecution mark the victims as abject by leaving scars and by the spectacle that accompanies the marked body. The crowd and the accounts of the crowd "brand the victim with infamy . . .; torture does not reconcile; it traces around [and] on the . . . body of the condemned man signs that cannot be effaced. . . . Men will remember public exhibition" (Foucault, Discipline 34), and the lessons written on the abjected body. The body of the sodomite cannot be reconciled within any rank of British society.

Men will remember and internalize the fear of sodomy and the sodomite: the action and being are conjoined traitors to British identity. The criminal is sealed within the communal memory in the image of a gothic figure, a non-human and monstrous Other. Sacrificing the sodomite is a ritual; it enacts a rite of passage, an entry into British identity. Sacrifice in public, or sacrificing sodomy in one's own person, inscribes British law upon the British citizen's body. Such signs keep one safe within the tribe, protected from monsters.

The universal expression of execration echoed through all London newspapers; almost every London paper had a sizable account. There were questions about whether the men would even make it to the pillories. But there were no expressions of sympathy for the men, no challenges to the laws on sodomy. In fact, with no suggestion of regret, the writers for the General Evening Post and Bells Weekly Messenger both commented that the men might not survive such punishment. The Post writer went so far as to declare that "if it should prove to be their death, they will not only die unpitied, but justly execrated by every moral mind throughout the universe" (167). The Morning Advertiser had only one complaint, that the punishment was not enough; the writer called for "an Act passed . . . to make the attempt of this abominable offence capital" (qtd in Crompton 167), and a rousing repetition of this declaration followed in five other papers. Like the newspaper journalists, the pamphlet writer calls for capital punishment for attempts of sodomy. "The monsters must be crushed, or the vengeance of Heaven will fall upon the land. Annihilation to so detestable a race can no otherwise be effected than

by making every attempt of this abominable offence punishable with instant death" (qtd. in Crompton 168).

Newspaper writers and the pamphlet writer not only repeat the demands for a new, more aggressive law, they also repeat a rhetorical strategy: the abjected state of sodomy and the sodomite are designated without producing the actual sign of sodomy. The figures of sodomy and the sodomite are troped as figures too invidious to name. The journalists repeatedly call the crime an abominable offense, a vile indecency, an offense abhorrent to human nature, while the words sodomy and sodomite go unnamed (164-169). The sodomite is registered as unsymbolizable, an illegibility, isolated within linguistic impropriety, obscured within the filth of language. The abject sodomitic subject exceeds the structure of juridical and linguistic laws; even the mention of sodomy is outside the boundaries of English propriety.

The sodomite's over-determined meaning does not end with a vile, irreconcilable criminal, a figure of linguistic impropriety that might infect a man's use of language; the sodomite is also figured as a foreign invader, a threat to national security. In the Morning Chronicle, a writer exploits English anxieties about race and issues surrounding national subjectivity. The Chronicle writer calls the crime "horrible to the nature of Englishmen, the prevalence of which we fear we must ascribe, among other calamities, to the unnecessary war in which we have been so long involved. It is not merely the favour which has been shewn to foreigners, to foreign servants, to foreign troops, but the sending our own troops to associate with

foreigners, that may truly be regarded as the sources of the evil" (166-167). Sodom threatens to invade the nature of English men. Fraternizing with the foreigner and penetrating foreign boundaries threaten to infect the national body. In the face of a plurality of meanings associated with the sodomite, the monstrous non-human criminal, who exists as an utter outsider, fascinates and is the source of the Chronicle writer's formulation of attraction and repulsion. This manifests a particular social paranoia: sodomy knows no bounds. The production of the universal voice requires a pluralized Other, a universal threat, an overwhelming danger large enough to require universal surveillance—inside and outside the boundaries of Britain itself. The British subject attracted to foreign countries and customs risks dissolution by favoring the Other. The British self is threatened by its own desires for Otherness. However, the writer's idea of showing favor to foreigners also implies that the British believe sodomy to be a form of sexual opportunity available in other places.[2]

Foucault has argued that reproduction was enlisted in the service of power and production. For Britain, productivity was intimately linked to its colonial efforts and foreign trade. Policing the British body was required in domestic and foreign affairs. The entrepreneurs and soldiers, the roving men of empire, had to be regulated to ensure that they would maintain their British identity. The only people executed for sodomy from this particular Vere Street raid were a sailor and his sixteen-year-old-companion; this was no coincidence. They served as signs that British morality was the law of the seas and the law of the land. Renando Camus's suggestive description of homosexuality helps elucidate the kind of fear that had to

be generated around sodomy as a foreign threat: it is "always out there because it is everywhere" (qtd in Bredbeck 192). Like a sexual disease, it can infect British men wherever they go. One writer's call for universal abjection reaches imperial heights when he says that the death of the sodomites is demanded by "every moral mind throughout the universe" (Crompton 167). This imperative gives license to British men to take their "moral mind" into their imperial quests. But with this idea of the moral mind, sodomy is produced as a means of Othering anyone non-British. The foreign practice of sodomy, its attraction and repulsion, serves to produce a British male identity, to Other any non-British man by associating him with sodomitic practices. Yet it also implies that the other places, foreign destinations, are available for the pursuit of sodomy.

The sodomite provides limits that seem endless. The abject sodomite is also the domestic boundary of British masculinity. The fiction of the resounding universal is registered as the voice of the people (and women too) who represent an idealized British (proto)heterosexuality. Determining what the relations between men and women must be requires the production of that which must not be included. And British universality does not include a man who performs, or attempts to perform, acts of sodomy. Without the abject sodomite, there would in fact be no universal voice, but even as it speaks, there are signs that the voice is not as universal as it purports to be. The Frenchman, Simond, is surprised by the presence of women, but the universal abjection of sodomy requires the sign of woman to define appropriately the terms of a man's proper sexual fit. However, the attempts to secure the sign of

women in their rightful place with men prove improvident. Triangulated Otherings become a complication. The pamphlet writer who described the fishwomen as "hearty in their cause" says later in his writing, "[T]he present punishment cannot sure be deemed commensurate to an offence so abhorrent and shocking to human nature; besides is it not dreadful to have female delicacy and manly feeling shocked[?]" (168). "Female delicacy," which might procure a mark of difference between man and woman, is effectively elided; in such a scene, delicacy is a fishy proposition. "Upward of fifty [women] were permitted to stand in the ring" to assail the men, and rather than selling their weapons, they wanted them all for themselves. Women were allowed to stand in the ring; like a wedding ring, it is a circle of containment. Women are permitted by men to be hearty in their cause as long as it is a cause which is defended by men, but who is to regulate how this sign of women is to be read? While the women may be contained within men's power and may be defending the cause of men, they may have their own agenda and desires, as they often do within the boundary implied in a wedding ring. Working women with their fish as weapons, phallicized women, sully the imaginings of delicate woman. But they may do much more: woman's contradictory sign within this ring of sodomitic terror marks the instability of heterosexuality produced and conditioned within a system of surveillance and punishment. Violence and violation can always erupt in more than one direction, and these indelicate women are asserting a right to control the sexuality of men. The ring around the women, like the sodomite, opens up a hole in the body politic which, like any hole in a body, a mouth, an anus, a vagina, leaves

it vulnerable. This ring of women is a potential danger to the propriety of the social body, an improper place of indecipherability, in the people.

The appearance of one of the sodomites also trips the limited imagination of the crowd. The manliness of the owner of the Vere Street Club disrupts sex-gendered expectations. The landlord of the house, " a fellow of a stout bulky figure was . . . attacked with double fury . . . [H]is apparently manly appearance drew down peculiar execrations on him" (212). A century of writing had reproduced sodomites in molly houses as effeminate, but the reproductions often lost Ned Ward's first satiric irony and instead repeated naturalizations of effeminacy until the figure no longer appeared to be a figure. The manly sodomite suffered the "double fury" of the crowd's cognitive dissonance and a universal lack of irony. The production of masculinity required a double fury, a "delicate" woman and an effeminate man; the fishwoman and the masculine sodomite suggest that such manly exercise requires constant vigilance and violence.

Sodomy threatens the containment of sexuality on several fronts. The scene attempts a kind of mapping, a cartography of a battle ground: British (hetero)sexuality against Vere Street and against foreign bodies. A (proto)heterosexuality is at war with its boundaries. "The imagination is sullied by the exposition of [the] enormities" against which the English must defend their borders, for attacks come from within and without.

This universal, this representation of a sex which need not speak its name, is of course a fiction. The idea of a universal order of sex seeks to close over any

wounds in the British body: differences between men and women; professional men vs. laboring classes; the problematic internal vs. external favors in manners and trade. In short, this universal spirit abroad romantically seeks to shore up borders at a point in history when boundaries are expanding. Many fictions are contained within this universal that speaks in execration. It tells stories of a sex that is identified through denials, regulations, controls. It is a sex that spends its resources of words and food on abominations, on rituals of degradation, on formulations of a nation state which needs captives. It spends its self on territories of desire—violate and inviolate. It is an economic and colonizing sex. It bargains, trades and makes spectacles of sacrifice for its pleasure. It demands command performances of a proper sex to ensure survival and power in a social system. And it repeats, repeats, repeats its demands. It seeks like an evangelist to convert. It tries to bring the myth of Sodom into the modern world; it turns men's bodies, their vital organs, into salt and produce for sale, dispersal or trade.

This spectacle is the primal ontological scene of a heterosexual/sodomitic divide, which precipitates the emergence of the homosexual/heterosexual split of the mid-nineteenth century. The pamphlet and the other papers demand that an act be passed which would make even an "attempt of this abominable vice a capital offence." This is a pivotal point in demarcating sexual subjectivity. The identification of the sodomite as another species, which means that "annihilation [of] so detestable a race" can be the only answer, places the sodomite in new category. Sodomy, which has been perceived as an act in which any man can participate, is

now a desire that defines a man's nationality; the sodomite is a distinct race, an utter alien within the normalized state of heterosexuality. Throughout the eighteenth century, many writers sought ways to elucidate further the significance of the sodomite; such efforts culminate in squeezing a new definition, a new personality, out of an old term. The sodomite, as a race and a non-human species that breaks the laws, is "transported beyond nature" (Foucault, History 38), a nature naturalized by the discursive boundaries of British men. Such a subjectivity was materialized and consolidated over time.

I. Byron, Abjection and Desire

Byron was traveling in Greece at the time of the Vere Street massacre. However, he was aware of the danger such distorted representations held for him and his circle of friends. Charles Skinner Matthews, a long time friend and college mate, and a member of what Crompton calls Byron's coterie, wrote to apprise him of all the events which surrounded the Vere Street arrests, the massacre and the two executions which followed the pillorying. Mockingly, Matthews writes of the event I have elaborated:

> The grand feature, I take it, in the last year of our history, is the enormous increase of [paiderastia] (that damn'd vice).
> Good God! were the old times of Sodom & Gomorroh to return, fire not water wd be the Englishman's element. At no place or time, I suppose, since the creation of the world, has Sodomy been so rife. With your friends the Turcomans to be sure,

it's value (compared with fornication) is 5 to 2. But that wch you get for five pounds we must risque our necks for; and are content to risque them.

Your Lordship's delicacy wd I know be shocked by the pillorification (in the Hay M.) of a club gents who were wont to meet in Vere Street (St. Clement's)—how all London was in an uproar on that day, & how the said gents were bemired and beordured . . . . Every Newsp that one casts one's eye upon, presents one with some instance. (qtd. in Crompton 161-62)

"We risque our necks" suggests that even Byron's aristocratic status will not protect him from persecution.[3] Matthews flippantly reproduces some of the tropes associated with sodomy. His Orientalizing gesture might be read as consolidating the foreign Other within a fixed reality which is at once "other" and yet entirely knowable in the image of the Turk as a practicing sodomite. But the irony of the letter, "sodomy is rife," turns back to Britain, the prohibited site of sodomy, and links Turkey and Britain's Vere Street in an eroticized Otherness, into which Matthews willingly lets his "self" slide—he will risk a loop around his neck. The repeated prohibitions, the repeated exposures of sodomy seem to realize the fear both the Frenchman and the pamphlet writer suggest. The pamphleteer writes, "feminine delicacy and manly feeling [are] shocked, and the infant mind perhaps polluted by such disgusting spectacles [both sodomy and the pillorying], and the conversation to which they unavoidably give rise" (qtd. in Crompton 168). Chronicling the events

can never be a simple matter of observation; rather, the very condition and constitution of sodomy within its conscription into a public battle produce it as a sign of abjection, but its necessary reproductions position it as a part of the universal sex, and as such the meaning of sodomy cannot be contained within Vere Street. Sodomy, once spoken even indirectly as a prohibition, opens itself as a topoi of conversation to be reproduced in letters, and in bedroom conversations. Identification of the sodomite always leaves open the possibility of identification with the sodomite, the Other. No matter how occluded or abject, the repeated categorization of the unmentionable sodomite admits the intrusive and destabilizing force of signs. The sodomite, "disfigured by blows and mud" (166), marks public memory, but as the figure is transcribed and reproduced, the old ways of discipline break down, as does the too often repeated universal voice. As William Beckford writes of the palace which supports memory, "Here a well managed perspective attracted the sight, there the magic of objects agreeably deceived" (2). Despite the attempts at a well-managed perspective, repeating sodomy in many mirrored images of language takes on its own magic; abjection and desire conjoin within voices of readers and speakers. Containment through public discipline and discursive marking within the arena of publicity proves impossible, for each reiteration of sodomy affords new signification.

These discursive constructions of sodomy define the context of my study of Byron. The tropes of abjection I have identified were produced variously to naturalize the sodomite as an abject being through a process of repetitive

reproduction. There are, however, as in Matthew' letters, writers who used the same tropes to achieve some forms of sodomitic agency by reworking or inverting the figures of abjection. The prohibitions of sodomy appear both as sites of brutal oppression and as an "array of indirections, substitutions and vacillations that call for a specific kind of reading" (Butler 144). Byron understands what it means to reproduce, to twist and turn a figure, for such is the work of poetics. While he cannot, for fear of risking his neck, mimetically produce figures of sodomy or sodomites, his reproductions of the tropes of abjection, unspeakability, threats to stable economies of genders, irreconcilable criminality, and a fascination with foreignness are the stock and trade of the Byronic hero, wrenched from the stocks of pillorying and its publication, to produce a sodomitic desire that is always elsewhere and always signed within the tropes of sodomy.

The discursive productions of sodomy provide a context for reading Byron's Oriental Tales, but, as the scene of the abuse of the Vere Street men reveals, the meanings of sodomy are many, conflicting, and, as Byron describes his own sense of identity, mobile. This sense of the sodomite as a shifting signifier, as sexuality dispersed across racial, national, gendered, linguistic and juridical identifications, is the sign of modernity itself.

II. Sodomy and the Gothic

By the 1780s, the dehumanized image of vileness produced in the newspaper accounts led to the perception of the sodomite as a monster of gothic proportions. The sodomite, a figure at once inscribed and obscured, made manifest to be

displaced, is forced to haunt gothic caverns in Matthew Lewis's novel, The Monk, or to roam as an exoticized figure in the eastern climes of William Beckford's Vathek, where, at times, cross-dressing is obscured by cross-cultured costumes. Stuart Curran has argued that the gothic is unsatisfying because such sexual transgressors as Beckford's Vathek are ultimately punished. His "unrestrained passions and atrocious actions" lead him into a special hell in which he is "prey to grief without end and remorse without mitigation" (239). The punishment is a "ritualistic enactment of homosexual self-hatred" released in "paranoid fantasy." For Curran, this debasement, combined with the increasing misogyny of these novels, shows that gothic writers participate "in the cultural pathology they affect to be purging" (239). Representations of charnel houses, wasting diseases, corpses, multiple deaths, unspeakable fears, androgyny, misogyny, and abiding monstrous acts are the machinery of tropes that mark what Curran suggests is pathology. Sexuality produced within discourses of oppression cannot be completely free of its systems of representation. Curran argues that figures of literary transgression in the gothic novel link homosexuals to self-loathing and self-destructiveness. But the scene I have just described might well mean the gothic pathology offered resistance to a sexuality produced in terror. Further, Beckford's and Byron's works, while relying on some of the conventions of the gothic, are also produced within the frames of the oriental tale, which may account for some of the differences between the gothic's homophobic themes and Beckford's and Byron's inscriptions of sexuality. But the differences I see may have to do with my willingness to read prohibitions both as

sites of productive resistance and as sites of pathologizing oppressions. For while I seek my own identifications with and of a queer past, I am always mindful of the pathologizing potential of such essentialized identifications. Byron's links with Beckford and Vathek allow him to offer critiques of British sexing practices from an imaginary Outsidedness, even as they offer forms of self-destruction.

At the end of Vathek (1786), Beckford offers two figures, Vathek and Gulchenrouz. The caliph, Vathek, is a sexual and social transgressor who has pursued his will for a world empire, as the narrator frequently suggests, beyond all human bounds. He has killed and replaced the women of his harems, and he ignores every teaching of Mohamet. He takes the princess Nouranihar away from her betrothed lover Gulchenrouz. After having boys stripped in front of him, Vathek abandons them to a corrupt Giaour (foreigner). But in the final scene of the book, the young Gulchenrouz and the young boys he has rescued are the only survivors of Vathek's attempts at conquest. The novel ends, "Thus the Caliph Vathek . . . for the sake of empty pomp and forbidden power . . . became prey to grief without end and Gulchenrouz passed whole ages in undisturbed tranquillity and in the pure happiness of childhood" (120). Vathek's great fifteen-hundred-stair phallic tower, with which he thought to "penetrat[e] the secrets of heaven," burns down. Gulchenrouz is a figure who opposes Vathek and, says the narrator, he is "the most lovely and delicate creature in the world." Weary of a world of conquest, Gulchenrouz imagines himself in a world of death with all the young boys "kissing his serene head and beautiful eyelids.—Remote from the inequities of the world; the importance of harems; the

brutality of eunuchs, and the inconstancy of women; there he found a place truly congenial to the delights of his soul . . . nor was [he] less happy than the rest of his companions: who were not burdened with perishable riches and the boon of perpetual childhood" (98-99). Beckford's Vathek is a figure driven with the desire for conquest, for the penetration of heaven and earth; his is the fantasy of a phallic erection that will dominate the world. Gulchenrouz, the survivor, lives in "an inviolable asylum, a pretended death," an eternal childhood of association, the death wish of a kind of dream state into which Vathek's imperial drives have sent him. Idealizing the image of Gulchenrouz is Beckford's ultimate transgression. He cares not for the future, not for progress, not conquest, not satisfaction of curiosity, but, says Beckford, he experiences ongoing "wonder" at what he already has. His is the world of night, a "Midsummer Night's Dream," where the sign of the phallus, instead of being an insistent state of symbolic erection, is at rest. Such signs are rarely spoken or imagined; they are far removed from the forces of production and reproduction.[4]

Byron and Beckford employ mixtures of the gothic, melodrama, and oriental machinery to attempt to break down the restrictions of the world which Byron says is "savage" and "new" (Childe 2: 385). Byron turned to Beckford in particular because Vathek incorporated representations of homoeroticism. In fact, after hearing Samuel Rogers' account of a reading of the entire Vathek at Fonthill, Byron tried to get Beckford to let him borrow some of the sections. There are three stories within the story, one about two male lovers; these were not translated from the

French Beckford wrote them in until after his death. Accusations of sodomy that forced Beckford to leave England made him unwilling to disperse the more erotic parts of Vathek, which were published posthumously in England. Despite the fact that they never met, Beckford remained important to Byron throughout his life.[5] Andre Parreaux, who traced Vathek's influence on Byron from the Oriental Tales to Don Juan, says that "Vathek etait por lui un livre de chevet, ou, comme il le dit un jour, son evangile" (22) [Vathek was for him his bedside book or his gospel].[6] In subsequent tales, Beckford's Orientalist world influences Byron to wrest homoerotic desire from unspeakability and to challenge sexual conventions of Britain. However, in Childe Harold, the first of the five Oriental Tales, Beckford plays an important role, but it is not as the inspiration for an erotic world. Rather, Beckford's forced exile becomes a focus of the tale. Beckford, who is referred to as Vathek, becomes a central figure in Byron's protest against the treatment of sodomitic men in Britain. In subsequent tales, it is Beckford's ability to incorporate homoerotic representations and criticism of sexual conventions that influence Byron's writing, but in Childe Harold I, Beckford becomes the vehicle of Byron's protest. Byron's focus in the tale is to speak of the "unspeakable vice" of sodomy, but because of the very dangerous climate in England, the protest is necessarily indirect.

III. Childe Harold, Canto I

The Spenserian stanzas and references to Spenser's knights in the advertisement of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt suggest that the poem is an allegorical pilgrimage. The Byron who set out to gather hyacinth boys in his tour

of the Iberian Peninsula and the Levant attempts to escape his previous sense of self-debasement and the prohibitions that surround speaking about sodomy. The pilgrimage of the Byronic hero is an inverted one, which seeks to escape the crippling of his homoerotic expressions and to combine assertions against sodomitic exhibition with hobbling indirections and displacements of his protest. I read the pilgrimage as an allegory, an incomplete one, but suggestive even in its subverted nature. Certainly Byron's allegory displaces the possibility of The Faerie Queen's spirituality; instead he foregrounds political tyranny.

According to Paul de Man, allegory is an interpretative genre. It "realizes" prior occurrences of itself. Although it is rarely straightforward, "the allegorical sign must refer to another sign that precedes it" (190). Jeanne P. Brownlow has written, "Allegory is the language of other-speaking" (294). It is characteristic of de Man that his argument insists that rhetorically, allegory is not possible because of the impossibility of any exactness in the reference or repetition of signs. Nevertheless, the idea of an anteriority remains, which leads readers to seek the Ur-text behind the allegory. I argue here that the Ur-text of this allegory is the oppressive text of the law against sodomy and its effects on sodomitic men. In my conclusion I will again defer to de Man's impossibilities of allegory. Finally, the poem ends in an elegy and I will posit a link between the allegory of silence and oppression and the elegy.

The problems of poetic voice to be addressed in Childe Harold already point to the problems of the silences that surround sodomy and link the Byronic hero to sodomy's unspeakability. Peter Thorslev, when identifying the characteristic of the

Byronic hero, identifies his gothic nature (he is a character with a secret past), and simultaneously argues that he is a "Man of Feeling . . . suffering from unrequited love; in spite of his often confessed preference for solitude." Further, Thorslev identifies the Byronic hero as a "humanitarian sternly against tyranny in all forms" (750). Arguing for a view of Byron as a poet who is afraid of the feminine aspects of himself, Marlon B. Ross writes that "as a poet and a man, Byron identifies softness with vulnerability, vulnerability with earnest feeling and earnest feeling with weakness. Any display of emotional feeling must be given a feminine cause or undercut with masculine derision or both." According to Ross, Byron "consciously avoids becoming the effeminate poet he often criticizes" (31). Ross finds a personal, psychological failing in Byron's inability to express emotions. Both critics point to central tensions within the poem, Thorslev to the confused or fused identities of Childe Harold, and Ross to questions about the relationship between emotive expression and gendered subjectivity. Byron himself points to a third difficulty for interpreting the poem: there are very indistinct lines among poet, narrator and character.[7] Byron writes, "I tried to draw a distinction between the author and the pilgrim, but the very anxiety to preserve the difference and the disappointment at finding it unavailing, so far crushed my efforts of composition, that I determined to abandon it (the difference, not the composition)" (CPW 2: 223). Byron's original naming of the poem suggests the difficulties of separating himself from the poem. It was first called "Childe Burun," an archaic form of the Scottish Byron. Such confusions of naming and displacing himself from the poem will prove significant

throughout. The tensions that interest me here are the questions which surround sexuality and subjectivity in Childe Harold, for I believe the difficulties of speaking about sodomy directly produce the poem's conflicts of poetic subjectivity.

These critics and Byron himself point to inherent anxieties represented in the poem, which produce forms of "masculine derision," and the displacement of feeling, or a proliferation of confused feelings. I read these proliferations and deferrals of subjective feeling in the poem as paralleling the displacements of narrative voice. Childe Harold is a protest against England's tyranny against sodomites. However, because this is a prohibited subject, Byron is forced to perform several crossing-overs of several boundaries, and even double-crossings of authorized subjects and subjectivities. Within Childe Harold, the "unspeakability" of sodomy that troubles and impinges on history is mapped onto the disturbing history of the tyranny of battlefields of the Iberian peninsula and the mob violence of Spain's bullfight audience. The historical frame of violence and violations serves to display Byron's anger and despair at both the double-crossing of the law against William Beckford and against the persecuted sodomites who have been victims of mob violence. If Byron is anxious to preserve the difference between himself and Harold, it is because the difference that allows for distance from the thematic subject of the poem might in fact preserve Byron from Beckford's fate. But the emotions that connect Byron to his subject prove too difficult for him to suppress. While Byron was writing Childe Harold, Charles Skinner Matthews and John Eddleston died.[8] Toward the end of Childe Harold, in the bullfight scene, Byron writes, "Now is the time, to perish, or

display, / The skill that yet may check his mad career." This is the tension that undergirds the poem, the feeling that the poet must choose between silence and death. It is an allegory of silence.

As evidence of Byron's psychological ineptitude at displaying emotions, Ross cites Harold's inability to express remorse at leaving his family and his reference to other men who do express this loss as being "unmanly." These losses, Ross says, are representative of Byron's fear of being effeminized, but this fear might point outside the poem to a fear of execution or public castration, social or literary. Other men on board the ship on which Harold sails have wives and parents whom they find it difficult to leave, and the narrator says, "[W]hilst others sate and wept / And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept" (1: 107-8), Harold held his "silent thought, nor from his lips did come / One word of wail" (1: 105-6). But Harold does respond to a young page, who is crying, that "tears become [his] eye," and he offers comfort to him as well as to a yeoman who is crying. Assuming that Harold can only express heterosexual emotion for a wife or even parents at home misses Harold's response to men on board. The assumption that Harold cannot express feelings also overlooks the reasons why he is not unhappy to be going from England, and a crucial point, that the pilgrim is not headed toward anything, but is trying to escape. One of the few times Childe Harold actually speaks in the poem (for usually Harold disappears into the voice of the narrator, the way the author slips into the narrator and Harold), he says in a tone of desperation, "I'll swiftly go . . . / Nor care what land though bears 't me to / So not again to mine" (1: 190-3). Harold, who, the narrator tells us,

is satiated with a sense of corruption, because he has "revel[ed] in ungodly glee" (1: 15), "loathed . . . in his native land to dwell" (1: 35). Like Andre Gide's homosexual outlaw in The Immoralist, Harold leaves "[h]is house, his home, his heritage, his lands, / The laughing dames" (1: 91-2).[9] He leaves the "domestic peace he never deign'd to taste" (1: 45). And he seeks a crossing over of identities: "Without a sign he left / To cross the brine / And traverse Paynim's shores, and pass Earth's central line" (1: 98-99). He passes over the domestic spaces of Britain that "mote to luxury invite" (97), the domestic forms of luxury, British property and sexual improprieties, to an unknown, not quite speakable destiny of the self, but the self outside the heterosexual domestic boundaries that have left him saturated with a sense of displacement.

If his leaving happens without a sign of remorse for the loss of his nationality, there is a contradictory sense of this character. For as he leaves Britain, a "disappointed passion . . . lurk[s] below" (1: 67). He had "sigh'd to many though he lov'd but one / And that loved one, alas! Could ne'er be his" (1: 40-41). Finally the narrator uses a feminine pronoun: "happy she to escape from him whose kiss / Had been pollution unto aught so chaste" (1: 42-3). But the use of "one," and "aught," and the use of the word "pollution" suggest Byron's methodiste at work here, for the "she" slips so quickly into the pronoun "aught," which implies that the one Harold loved could have been "anything whatsoever" (aught), perhaps any pronoun. But the homonym "ought" implies a term of command: the pronoun must be written as a she instead of a he. The one whom Harold loved above all others and polluted with

kisses, but of course could not have in "domestic peace," might well be a he.[10] The only escape is in crossing over "Earth's central lines," the lines which divide speaking from not speaking. Harold crosses the brine, the salt line of the ocean, the fear that looking at Sodom will turn one to salt. But such display must play torturously, madly, like the red cape of the bullfight at the end of Canto I, and "swiftly" as a narrative trying to leave and escape its own tracks. "Pride" must congeal the tears (1: 49), the salt of such a passing.

After Harold spends a long time explaining his desire to leave, the narrator's voice returns and from then on dominates the poem. "The land is gone" (1: 198), and Harold too seems to drift into the lines of the narrator's voice. The poem's narration suggests its own strategic moves of letting one subject slip into another. Harold will return intermittently as a kind of accent, just as Byron's footnotes will turn the nature of the poem from one focus to another.

Lisboa is the first stopping off point for the narrator/pilgrim. A place of horrid crags, a toppling convent, and tender azure and orange tints are "Mix'd in one mighty scene" on one of the cliffs of Lisboa. The narrator guides the pen to "dialate" a view on a grove and glen "rife" with a thousand "rude-carved" crosses which mark the graves of those whose blood has "pour'd forth" beneath the "assassin's knife" (1: 238,266). The narrator's sense of tourism takes on a gothic cast by turning to an abandoned convent, "Our Lady's House of Woe" (255):

> And here and there, as up the crags you spring,
> Mark many rude-carved crosses near the path:

Yet deem not these devotion's offering—
These are memorials frail of murderous wrath:
For wheresoe'er the shrieking victim hath
Pour'd forth his blood beneath the assassin's knife,
Some hand erects a cross of mouldering lath;
And grove and glen with thousand such are rife
Throughout this purple land, where law secures not life. (1: 261-269)

These are "memorials frail of murderous wrath"; such graves are "rife" in "a land where law secures not life" (1: 264, 268-269). The word "rife" echoes Matthews' claims for the "threat" of sodomy in Britain. It is here that Byron enters the poem. He adds a footnote to the scene to explain that this is the site of a former convent that he calls "Our Lady of Punishment," Nossa Senora de Pena. The narrator in the convent calls it "Our Lady of Woe." Byron, however, explains in the note that the word actually had a tilde above the n in Pena, which would mean that the Convent is really called "Our lady of the Rock." But, after offering two of his own meanings, sorrow and punishment, he says, "I do not think it necessary to alter the passage" (note on 1: 255). His willingness to admit "misapprehensions" is curious and crucial. The scene itself suggests the sacrifice of people, the punishment and woe of people whose lives are not secured by the law.

Such memorials are frail, the narrator suggests, so he immediately offers another marker, which emphasizes a connection between woe and punishment in a

scene haunted by those insecure because of the failure of laws. In the stanza immediately following this scene, Harold makes a detour on his pilgrimage to the shrine of William Beckford, who was forced to live outside the protection of English law. In a letter home while on his journey, Byron referred to Beckford as "the Apostle of Paederast" and "the martyr of prejudice" (BLJ 1: 210). In this vast landscape of failures of the law, and sloping mounds, Harold or the narrator (the voice is not clear) spots Vathek's towers:

> There thou too, Vathek! England's wealthiest son,
> Once form'd thy Paradise, as not aware
> When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,
> Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.
> Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan . . . (1: 275-79)

Here Byron marks his terrain. This insertion of Vathek, "England's wealthiest son," into Childe Harold's pilgrim landscape allows for an intercourse between Beckford and Byron. Byron has already entered the poem with the anxieties of his footnote. At this juncture, the historical figure of the writer Beckford is conjoined with his character. Beckford, not Vathek, is the wealthy English son who had to escape the accusations of sodomy by leaving England and living in Portugal. The fiction of an author separated from his character breaks down, as do the lines between politics and art. Byron's fear and anger penetrate the poem as he goes on to describe Beckford's social displacement as a citizen whose life, like the lives of the Portugese, was not

secured by law. Byron gives permission to his reader to make the connections he is forced continually to map and displace.

Byron's expression of sympathy for Beckford is also an expression of his own fear and anger. Beckford has become "a thing unblest by Man" (1: 282). He has been "Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide!" (1: 287). Beckford's life was endangered, and his voice lost because of the laws of an ungentle tide of the times. He was forced to choose between "murderous wrath" and escape into "fairy dwelling[s]" "alone and unblest": These are the choices of sodomites whose sexual decisions and speaking about them stand outside of the law. Byron's identification of Vathek/Beckford serves to signify his identification with Beckford as a pederastic outlaw. Beckford and Byron are united as homeless wanderers, as queer exotic exiles; the vast territories of the pilgrimage serve to display and displace their connection.

In the next section, Harold assumes the narration. He seems to change the subject by turning to the "Convention of Cintra." However, the use of a double entendre suggests a link between Byron's protests against the treatment of Beckford and Harold's mocking of the ill effects of the "martial synod" which "sickens" Britain because of its "folly" and "failure" (1: 307). Harold "deems" that "Convention is the dwarfish demon styled" (1: 297). The absence of an article before convention and the use of "dwarfish demons," characters in Vathek, link the two targets of the poem's protest. The Convention of Cintra broke the promise of England to defend the Portugese and it left British citizens unprotected in Portugal. And English sexual

conventions have allowed the attacks against Beckford. Manipulations of conventions mean that law and life are at odds with each other.

After such protest, the narrator resumes the narrative by saying, "So demmed the Childe" (1: 315). Such figural turns diffuse the voice of protest in the poem. The poet creates a text that constantly recoils from itself and its subject by evoking the character of Childe Harold. Such a system of obfuscation implicates the subject of the poem and the poet in a system of displaying and preventing the display of the poem's topoi. In the next section of the poem, Harold is confronted with the spectacle of war in Spain. The historic turn redirects Byron and the narrator from the attacks against England's oppression of sodomites, leaving the section on Vathek as a "frail memorial" to the subjects of sodomitic persecution. However, before the narrator describes the scenes of annihilation in Spain, he formulates a phrase that ties the pieces of the poem together. Speaking of the endangered Spanish population, he says that "all must shield their all, or share Subjection's woes" (1: 359). The fear of being made an abject subject, threatened by "woes" or "punishment," like the woe of Beckford's being forced to flee or face the punishment of pillorying or death, remain the footnote to this poem. And here at a crossing over of protests, the poem announces the terms of speaking about sodomy: "all must shield their all." The poem will remain directed by Byron's footnote, however tenuous or indirect the connection may seem.

Byron's criticism of manipulations of subjectivity continues and broadens within the poem. From his protest against the failure of the English to protect such

citizens as Beckford, he moves to consider the uses of productions of heterosexual desire as a weapon of the state. Harold "wends his way through many a pleasant place" (1: 345) only to find himself at the battlefields of the Iberian Peninsula. The battlefields of Spain are described as a scene of "mingling bounds," "mixed and bleeding streams," mountain streams dyed "with Gothic gore": it is "a glorious field of grief" (1: 459). The oxymoron "glorious grief," of the mixing and mingling of streams of blood, admits a mixing of the horror of war with Byron's anxieties about the tyranny against sodomites. The bloody theater of war and the bloody spectacles of attacks on sodomites are merged in some of the most famous passages of the poem:

> Enough of battle's minions! Let them play
> Their game of lives, and barter breath for fame:
> Fame that will scarce reanimate their clay,
> Though thousands fall to deck some single name.
> In sooth 'twere sad to thwart their noble aim,
> Who strike, blest hirelings! for their country's good,
> And die, that living might be proved their shame;
> Perish'd, perchance, in some domestic feud,
> Or in a narrower sphere where Rapine's path pursued. (1: 468-76)

Fame is purchased through death, and living would defame or shame in the "game of lives." Desires of life and death are manipulated and inverted in order to make men willing to sacrifice their lives for rulers who trade in lives for their own power. But

in a moment that seems almost oxymoronic, he says, better to die, as a "blest" pawn of power plays than to die in shame. The shame is then connected to a domestic realm, rather than the zone of war. To die in shame would be to die in the "unblest" state of William Beckford, being a sodomite in a "domestic feud," or to die suffering the shame of exposure for pursuit of sexual transgression, signified by the "narrower path" of Rape.[11] His comparisons should sully the imagination: better for men to die being used as tools of another man's power than to die being used as another man's object of desire.

"Full swiftly, Harold wends his lonely way" (1: 477), but there is no escape from the bloodshed. He travels on to encounter a Spanish maid who, for him, holds in her smile "Danger's Gorgon face" (1: 574), for it is "her lips" which demand that a man "be valiant ere he merit such" (1: 597). This gorgon-woman has "the tender fierceness of the dove / Pecking the hand that hovers o'er her mate" (1: 589-90). Structures of sexual difference and desire "swell one bloated Chief's unwholesome reign" and "the power that man ordains," to provide rulers with men who will fight. Such "Spanish maid[s are] aroused" to produce a masculinity willing to sacrifice itself (1: 558). The repetitions of art and myth, the "painter's powers," myths of Minerva and Mars, fairy forms of "female grace," and "the witching arts of love" are all forms that "Thin the closed ranks and lead in Glory's fearful chase" (1: 566, 570, 575). Creations of heterosexual difference and desire assure the reader, "[T]hou shalt view thy sons in crowd's of Hades hurl'd" (1: 548) and assert that the bodies of men will go willingly to battlefields to secure the myths of women's desirability. The

painter's powers and myth suggest the necessity of reproducing such images to secure the myths of woman's desirability. The cynic strains to avow that such beauty is worth dying or sacrificing young men for. Sexual subjectivity is a matter of identity by default, a surrender to power: "I strike my strain, far distant to applaud / Beauties that even a cynic can avow" (1: 604-5), but no distance is far enough. And the beauty of poetry is made banal to a poet who tries to speak and occlude the meanings of his protest. Even as he tries to find the happiness of mighty bards "whose fate to distant homes confined their lot," he is called back to his own theme: "Now to my theme . . . / Let me have some remnant, some memorial bear; /. . . of Daphne's deathless plant" (1: 644-5). But the memorials turn back to "frail memorial of murderous wrath"; the poem traps itself in theaters of violence. And to his theme, after several indirections, he says:

> Ah Vice! how soft are thy voluptuous ways!
> While boyish manhood is mantling, who can 'scape
> The fascination of thy magic gaze?
> A Cherub-hydra round us dost thou gape,
> And mould to every taste thy dear delusive shape. (1: 661-65)

Byron inverts Mary Wollstonecraft's attack on the vice which makes him an equivocal being. Wollstonecraft had written that Beckford, a "lustful prowler," was so "voluptuous that he refine[d] on female softness," so that "in Italy or Portugal, men attend the levees of equivocal beings to sigh for more than female languor" (152). In Byron's view, the "dear delusive shape" of beautiful cherub boys and

phallic hydra-headed consuming women are both the productions and vectors of power, the tools and toys of nation. Sexed bodies, because of their plasticity, not their essence, can be harnessed into fascinations and "magic gazes" and figural phantasms to entice populations into spells that will elicit even human sacrifice from them, sacrifice of one body, one sex or another, depending on the opportunity of the tides.

If Byron's protests against the tyranny of homophobia have become indistinguishable from his resistance to the productions of heterosexuality, it is because his voice is confounded and spurred on by the regulatory productions of desire and abjection, which require and make demands on each other. Each of the poet's protests against the betrayal of subjects by laws or nation states is contained within another, like the relationships of poet, narrator, and pilgrim. They frame and cross over their boundaries. The refusal of English law to protect Beckford as a citizen is framed by England's refusal to protect Portugal, its ally, from the French. The protest against the humiliation of sodomites in Britain appears with protests against "glorious grief" which uses young men as tools of corrupt powers. The protest against the circulation of women as objects of desire within a heterosexual system is connected to the demands of the nation state to sacrifice some men as the demonstration of other men's power. The intersections of figures, the manipulation of sexualities, appear in response to the attempts of British society to produce a voice of universal execration of sodomy. Byron has some certainty of support from his British audience in regard to his rejection of war, as indicated by the newspaper

accounts of sodomy; the British are anxious and burdened by the war with France. He uses the contexts of war, then, to enunciate his own orientation, his own sense of burden and anxiety in regard to the war on sodomites. The indecipherability, the equivocal intersections of figures subject to manipulation and deployment, becomes the direct focus of the forced indirections of a prohibited speaking.

The last destination for Harold in Canto I is a bullfight in Cadiz. Harold disappears again and the poet and narrator surrender to the previous gloom of the poem. The indirections of the episode are both confusing and clarifying. The scene begins with a reference to the Christian Sabbath. The narrator says that Harold has come upon a "Solemn Feast" attended by a "forest-monarch's roar," a lance, a creature snuffing the spouting gore, "a man and steed, o'erthrown beneath his horn" (I 684-689). The scene seems deliberately disorienting; before the bullfight is clearly named, the images of violence are hurled about on the page. And for a moment in this ungentle tide of words, the lines echo back to Newgate:

> The throng'd arena shakes with shouts for more;
>
> Yells the mad crowd o'er entrails freshly torn,
>
> Nor shrinks the female eye, nor ev'n affects to mourn. (I: 690-693)

The disorientation caused by the narrator's not using the word bullfight displaces the reader in time and space. The entrails, the indelicate female spectator, the unified voice of the crowd calling for more, encrypt within the bullfight the mob who hurled entrails at the sodomites of London.

Immediately the narrator disrupts his narrative. Before he makes clear that this is a bullfight or finishes the episode, he turns to British customs. He says they have their own Sabbath afternoon entertainments of drinking, satirically calling it their "worship of the solemn Horn . . . In whose dread name both men and maids are sworn" (1: 709-710). The bullfighting mob and British drinking are the "fooleries" of cultures (1: 711). But it is the dread he registers here, and the harkening back to entrails, that suggest the Spanish bullfights have more in common with English custom than first meets the eye. The "ungentle sport" of the Spanish is not unlike the "ungentle tide of the times" in Britain which invites the "maid" and the "swain," nurtured in blood and "humble homes" to "meditate 'gainst friends the secret blow" in the "private feuds" of a "troubled village" (1: 791-800). The economic anxieties, the troubles of the French war, the emphasis on humble homes, and the struggles of class values threaten Byron's friends with surveillance and the possibilities of exposure as sodomites. "Young, old, high, low, at once the same diversion share" (1: 719), the universal voice that calls for execration against sodomites. Byron ironically notes that "the crimes [are] as numerous as [the Virgin's] beadsmen" (1: 716-718). The idea that sodomy is limited to a few, a foreign affair, he suggests, is absurd.

Within the bullfight, Byron leads himself to the slaughter (1: 738-90). The fated intersection of pathetic identification of poet and narrator with the bull produces the final theater of violence and the trial of what can be encrypted within a gothic scene. The wild animal, sexed by his very name, figures the abject sodomite

whom the boy must kill to enter manhood. Byron's metaphoric name for his sodomitic subject enacts a disfigurement. As well, the use of the bull reinforces a connection to England in its allusion to John Bull.

Byron, like the bull, waves "to and fro / His angry tail" (1: 755). The pun on tail, both the suggestive homonym and the allusion to the narrative, suggests his anger and staginess. But this indirection of the narrative of sodomites' oppression produces a "[v]ain rage . . . [that] sinks upon the sand" while a "vast neck just mingles with the spine, [and] sheathed in his form the deadly weapon lies" (1: 781-784). While vast numbers of sodomites dangle by their necks, Byron escapes into a form of many displacements, and his protest, like the bull, "falls, amidst triumphant cries" (1: 786). The bull, with which Byron identifies, "without a groan, without a struggle dies" (1: 787). To groan too loudly might be perceived as an "unmanly moan." And while the "corses" of men are piled "on high" for the "sweet [cosmetic] sight for vulgar eyes," the deadly weapon, the fear of sexual abjection, kills the voice of the poet, except in the "swift as shy / Hurl of the dark bull" (1: 789, 791).

From the brutality of the bullfight, the narrator, in an absurd gesture, turns from his subject again to Harold's former loves, which have been numerous, to say that "now his wayward bosom was unmoved" and that love's only recourse is to have "grateful wing" (1: 815). The song that Harold sings says he bears a "secret woe" that springs from his realization that there is no "[e]xile from himself," for the "Vice that digs her own voluptuous tomb" leaves Harold with a "life abhorring gloom / Wrote on his faded brow" (1: 826-827), like the mark on the heads of

Cleland's sodomites. The mark is a sign Byron will leave on his Byronic hero. It will be the sign revealed and concealed as a "frail memorial" to the ungentle tides of punishment and woe. His "mantling blood," while he lives, will remember in his writings the ones "boast slain," those dead because of laws that did not protect them, and crowds, which believed boastfully that even attempts at sodomy deserved death. Even as Byron eulogizes here, he declares the terms of his future writings about sexuality.

Following Harold's song, the narrator again returns to the savage scenes of Spain's war with their "unbleach'd bones and blood's unbleaching stain" (1: 906), to ask when the "Frank robber" will "turn from his spoil / And Freedom's stranger-tree grow native of the soil" (1: 926). The inability to escape from the self and the "stranger-tree" of freedom realize the irony of the poem. The poet cannot escape his own entrapments as a speaker or the parallels he has seen between violence abroad and violence in Britain. Hence freedom itself is nothing straight and clear; its limits and entanglements rise out of the native soil of nation states.

In the last stanzas of the canto, the poet emerges as the final narrative voice with elegiac lines and footnote. In his footnote, he acknowledges and eulogizes two of his Cambridge fellows, John Wingfield and Charles Skinner Matthews. Another, unnamed, friend is eulogized here; it is John Edleston.[12] None of the men Byron eulogizes are laurelled in death because they have not died in battle; they will be forgotten by all but Byron, whose "woe" is mixed "with the strain" of his already burdened voice:

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 e'en 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?

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. (1: 927-944)

His public mourning for his beloved Edleston and for Matthews, his compatriot in his methodiste, strains to reveal and conceal the profound impact the deaths had on Byron. Matthews was believed to have committed suicide. Crompton and others have speculated that the suicide was to prevent public exposure as a sodomite.

Byron must "[m]orn in secret," but such mourning "shall renew the tear / Of Consciousness awaking to her woes / And Fancy" (1: 940-942). The tear repeats the tear that makes a boy attractive at the beginning of the poem, and the tear also echoes Byron's earlier writing about his attachment to Edleston.

"The Cornelian" is the only place Byron admitted he knew himself to be loved. He said there that he knew for "sure the giver loved me." He says that Edleston taught him "to love . . . a tear." And in "To Thyrza," the first of a series of elegies written for Edleston, Byron marked his affections for Edleston in lines about "[a]ffection's mingling tears," "the glance none was between them," and the "whisper'd thought of hearts."[13] The overlapping of these tears for Edleston is extremely important to Byron's poetics. This is a "frail memorial" to Edleston only if it is read in isolation. Byron's repeated use of the tear is here the marking of Byron's poetic voice. The tear of consciousness, the physical involuntary sign of emotion, suggests Byron's spontaneous and essential marking of the poem with his awareness of a kind of tear in his voice, a double-voiced expression. His is and will be an always-speaking-otherwise of his most deeply felt emotions. Only this will be left, "Dear to a heart where nought was left so dear." A double speaking of repetitions and distanced connections will be the structure of desire and poetics in Byron's work.

In this secreted mourning, this language conscious only to itself, Byron will fashion a figure whose "frail frame [will repeatedly] return to whence it rose, / And mourn'd and mourner lie united in repose" (1: 943-944). In Byron's longing to be

buried with the unnamed Edleston, burial is revealed as the metaphor for the strategy of silencing the meaning of sodomy: it is buried within the poem. It is more honorable to bury sodomy than to speak of it, and honor for the nobleman who has already been disgraced by men of letters is more important than speaking as a sodomite.

Protests against the treatment of sodomites circulate through Childe Harold. If we are to read homosexual meaning in Byron's text, it might be produced in the otherwise of the text. Within cultures which seek to construct subjectivity by delineating sodomitic or sexual practice as an indicator of identity, choosing not to speak the abject name displaces it and thus removes it from possible political engagement. While we may argue endlessly about what constitutes women and men, they are discreet signs we can problematize. Without the word sodomite, all meaning of the sodomite can simply remain unspoken, not just unproblematized in interpretive discourse. Homosexual meaning then depends upon and insists upon a division of signs, however problematic that separation might be.

The poem might then be merely read as a reaction against and a reproduction of a desire for violence. Or it might be read as a point of identification of an author attempting to allegorize the violence against sodomites. But because allegory always fails in direct relationship to meaning, the poem might be read as a criticism of the Spanish thirst for blood and a commentary on British religious hypocrisy that is equally productive of cultures of violence, which rely on sensation to produce community. Sensation, then, is what Byron's poem offers. Although a name

violates, it produces a subject. Without a name, sodomy and the sodomitic subject remain prohibited sites of meaning, and deep attachments are noble only in the death of the subject. So the poem itself operates as a kind of sacrifice of the male subject whose muted meaning might be translated into respectable mourning for dead heroes, if no one directly names who the dead are.

The longing to be buried with is also a longing to bury the subject. Byron has already sacrificed by dispersing its meanings into so many sites of misdirection. The sodomite, like the homosexual without a name, cannot speak in ways that engage political discourse. The failure of allegory then reinforces the silencing power of the law. But the poem's sign of the "ungentle times" looks forward to an anteriority and the interpretive search for an Ur-text in better times. Jeremy Bentham's writings about sodomy represent a similar hope: "I am ashamed to own that I have often hesitated . . . to expose my personal interest [in sodomy] by free discussion of the subject." But he adds, "At any rate when I am dead mankind will be the better for it" (106). Such writings look toward (re)interpretations of the meaning of sodomy, that sodomy might mean otherwise, inside and outside the law.

Byron's formulation of a hopeless wanderer in search of repose reenacts the loss of an ideal love but also enacts a kind of interiorization of abjection. Secrets and silences are to become the most dramatic aspects of the Byronic hero. This slippage of Byron's own voice into the end of the canto is an outing of himself as the voice of the poem. Boundaries of the writing self, the characters, concede time and again to burials, martyring of the self, and making one's self an apostle of transgression. This

is the "fytte" Byron makes between character and self in order both to mask and to reveal the disparate being the poet becomes.

IV. Childe Harold, Canto II

In Canto II, Harold bids Christian tongues "a long adieu" and finds himself struggling with the poet's question, "What is my being?" now that the parent, friend, and "more than friend" have "ceased to be" (2: 895, 906). Many critics have called Canto II "Byron's 'self discovery' Canto," the poetic narrative space in which Byron "invented the myth of himself" (Blackstone Survey 93; McGann Beauty 255-62). The allegorical impulse gives way to a biographical one in this canto, in which Byron attempts to realize his poetic voice. The thin lines between Byron, the narrator, and Harold are worn to almost nothing as Byron relates his travel experiences in the Levant. The poet narrator completely forgets about Harold until line 106, where he asks, "Where is Harold?" What I want to call attention to within this work is not only that the poet asks, "What is my being?" and then seeks to create a poetic voice, but that he asks the question in relational terms. What is his poetic being now that his reason for being has ceased to be? Edleston was conceived as his Muse, his audience, his mirror to himself as a poet. Having lost Edleston, Byron will hereafter be inventing, re-reflecting on his idealization of Edleston, and hence on how he conceives of himself in writing.

If one of the attempts of Harold and Byron was to escape from England in 1809 by going to the Levant, the realities of his identity as an Englishman are only forced into greater awareness in this poem. Two impulses dominate the poem, the

grief that is elegized at the end of Canto I and Byron's desire to displace and remake his own sense of poetic masculinity. In extreme signs of grief, the poem marks Byron's sense of a loss of a sympathetic audience as well as the personal loss of self and of Edleston. Byron's losses and his travels in the Levant force upon him a realization. He is an alien, a traitor to British masculinity because of his homoerotic desires. Grief punctuates the poem with intermittent occurrences throughout. At times the whole world becomes subservient to the poet's display of grief and displaced emotions; he "deface[s] scenes" as he defaces himself in what he calls a "too protracted song" (2: 884).

This grief, which is an expression of a loss of self, as well as a loss of his homoerotic ideal world and of Edleston, in its sense of displacement also frees Byron to imagine an Othered sense of himself.[14] Lacan has written that to say "I'm a man" means that one says, "I'm like he whom I recognize to be a man, and so recognize myself as such" (23). He concludes, then, that the truth of the "I" is an "Other." Byron's sense of self was split open by grief, and this split allowed him to recognize in his travels Other kinds of men, and hence another kind of poetic self. In his grief and travel, his voice is merged with others; loss and displacement recreate the poetic man. The fast movement through spaces and cultures is dizzying; the journey of self becomes a "mimic train of merry Carnival" (2: 746). Byron turns the Middle Eastern world of the Levant into "some samples of the finest Orientalism" as he calls his writing in "Beppo" (408), but at the same time he overturns the idea of a stable British voice and in particular a stable British masculinity. His digressions and

carnivalesque movements force a violation on readers; they are subjected to the continual displacements of one new scene after another. Within a world of exchanges, sexual and otherwise, a self, as Byron is famous for saying, is mobility. Byron's identity is penetrated by foreigness and foreign desires. Byron buries British sodomy in this poem to evolve his own homoerotic masculinity within a series of displacements as part of his poetic voice.

This seems a poem corrupted by the "ills of Eld," an inverted anagram for Edleston (2: 926). It is a poem that almost contemptuously wants to have no focus and to have no meaning, to trap the reader in a "heart . . . divided and hope . . . destroyed" (2: 923). Byron ends each of the first two Cantos using the antiquated form Eld. In Canto I, the narrator says Harold is doomed to travel to "Lands that contain the monuments of Eld," and in Canto II, he associates the ills of Eld with his youth. The Eld is an inverted EDL, a mark of his methodiste, marking a nexus between his poetic, political and personal griefs. The ungentle times of war merge with personal and social violence and violations, as the poet writes himself in and out of historic consciousness.

As a young boy, the poet had imagined Greece as a "school boy's tale, the wonder of an hour," where "men of might" have had "grand soul[s]," but instead Greece proves to be an occupied nation (2: 11,15,16). It is a "Land of lost gods" whose "sublime record / Of hero sires . . . shame thy now degenerate horde!" (2: 790-791). Byron's loss is personal and political; his dream of a land of idyllic masculinity and freedom is shattered by the reality of modern Greece. The narrative

voice's expression of grief at the loss of idyllic Greece makes the poem's voice inseparable from the poet's own elegiac revelation of himself in Childe Harold I. Within his account of disillusion, he several times invokes his loss of Edleston. The two losses are fused. His grief continues to punctuate this poem and the poet's sense of selfhood through the second Canto of Childe Harold and to do so with disruptions similar to those in the narrative voice found in Canto I. The whole of the Canto is an elegy for the loss of his boyhood Greek ideal and his loss of Edleston masqueraded as a pilgrimage to "spare relics" and "scenes . . . defaced" (2: 875-76). But the poem also recognizes the possibilities of a poetic remaking through displacement of a British heterosexual masculinity. Byron's sense of selfhood is scattered through a vast landscape of loss, where "Time hath reft what 'er my soul enjoy'd, / And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd" (2: 925-926).

But there is more to the question, "What is my being?" (2: 895).[15] The question is posed by a British subject who presents himself as a man in the very process of producing an oriental Other. As his movements suggest, his own masculinity, inflected by a treasonous homosexual desire to speak, makes answering the question "What is my being?" an impossible task. There is no finalized self in the poem, certainly no definitive British man. But there are many questions raised about the intersections of sexual and national identity. Byron's identifications of an Other to produce a speaking self also include an identification with Albanian men. The very idea of Others becomes confused. Being is not stable, but a fiction, an illusory set of exchanges and inscriptions. Byron's English identity is (mis)conceived and

reconceived as the relationships to signs, as is his masculinity. The self is often foreign, a stranger to itself. Forced beyond the national boundaries symptomatic of the romantic age, Byron reveals the incoherences, the foreignness, of a self that obliterates its unity.[16]

Canto II begins to anticipate the tensions of Byron's Oriental Tales. The poet uses the East as a site for theater of the grieving self, where the "Poor child of Doubt and Death" (2: 27) bemoans a personal loss of Greece as a state and as a "masquerade" for a "heart . . . that throb[s] with secret pain" (2: 774-75). Byron criticizes Lord Elgin for defacing the "mouldering shrines" (2: 130) and plundering the relics of Greece, but his own gesture of extracting sentiment from "shrinking Gods" (2: 135) is a strategic form of plunder. Byron's representation of a panoramic view of the East, which represents his travels in the Levant, attempts to open up oriental space for liberatory possibilities of personal expression. As he maps the Eastern world, he offers a collection of indecipherable meanings:

> The wild Albanian kirtled to his knee,
> With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun,
> And gold-embroider'd garments, fair to see:
> The crimson-scarfed men of Macedon;
> The Delhi with his cap of terror on,
> And crooked glaive; the lively supple Greek;
> And swarthy Nubia's mutilated son;
> The bearded Turk, that rarely deigns to speak,

Master of all around, too potent to be meek,

Are mix'd conspicuous . . . (2: 514-23)

The "wild Albanian kirtled to his knee" is like a Scot. The "crimson-scarfed men of Macedon," "swarthy Nubia's mutilated son; / the bearded Turk, that rarely deigns to speak" are "mix'd conspicuous" into activities of reclining, praying, and smoking. Against such a background, the poet's narrated lament is repeated through the poem: "Fair Greece! Sad relic of departed worth!" (2: 693). This loss is echoed and merged into the melancholy voice of loss of the "O! ever loving, lovely and beloved!"--the "now more than friend" (2: 900, 905).

The problem of historical discourses that merge sexual and national identities begins to emerge in the poem. The space of Otherness as Byron conceives it becomes a panoramic backdrop for the Westerner.[17] However, identifications of Othered figures of masculinity also open possibilities of identification with an Other. The narrator, who has attempted to colonize the object world of Othered men, opens up a panorama of choices for the subjective self. One such point of identification with Other men is represented in Harold's connections to the Albanians. At a point where Childe Harold finally is returned to the poem, the distances among the narrator, Harold, and the Albanian "Other" break down.

Nodding at midnight o'er the calm bay's breast

As winds come lightly whispering from the west,

Kissing, not ruffling, the blue deep's serene:--

Here Harold was received a welcome guest;

Nor did he pass unmoved the gentle scene,

For many a joy could he from Night's soft presence glean. (2: 625-30)

The bay's breast, the whispering one from the west, kisses the blue deep, allow the pass between worlds. Such whisperings and kisses allow him to be received into a dark soft joy. He is "moved" by the scene; his position to this Other form of masculinity stands at "a little distance" from the scene, where he is "not displeased" (2: 640-41). The homoerotic pleasures of the scene change his relationship to these Othered men. The gliding eye, this subject moved by the scene, recognizes the unstable ground of heterosexual identity when placed in a different social context. The dancers' "native revels" begin:

Each Palikar his sabre from him cast,

And bounding hand in hand, man link'd to man,

Yelling their uncouth dirge, long daunced the kirtled clan. (637-39)

Harold is won over to these other men, who dance, "bounding hand in hand," "man link'd to man." The line,"Yelling an uncouth dirge, long daunced the kirtled clan," places Byron's own Scottish identity inside the Albanian scene. The "not indecent glee" of these men is embraced in a concert of song, which the poet then incorporates into his own poem.[18] The song embraces another form of masculinity within Byron's poetic voice. He includes their translated song, which glorifies war, into his poem (2: 649-92). This enables the poet to identify with (an)other kind of masculinity in which he wants to recognize himself. The empire of the British self, which seeks to identify sexuality and sexual practice as a marker of national identity,

opens itself up to fraternizing treason. The slippages of a self cast abroad to exploit new worlds is inevitable, as is a war within the self.

The indirect revelations of a seductive homoerotic embrace and the "dark soft joys" that penetrate the poem resist the security of a British masculinity. However, the placement of the scene among the many diversions of men's differences compels the law of silencing sodomy. Its meaning is almost lost among so many shifting scenes. Sodomy again seems silenced. But the dominant impression of the Levant remains a place of exotic figures that destabilize the British masculine subject.

When the poet thinks of a return to England, the sense of a self which finds joy in being Other predicts an anxious return home. The embrace he felt with Albanians and soothing of grief in Greece are lost as he imagines a return. The poet's expressions of fear and doubt close the poem. The only thing the poet can say about his own country and his return is that he is very ambiguous about embracing his national identity. When thinking of the fall of Greece, he says, "So may our country's name be undisgraced" (879). With none to "welcome home [the] wanderer" (886), he looks on his return with a feeling of being lost, "plunge[d] into the crowd" (909), which will force him "to feign pleasure or conceal pique" (914). The sense of pleasure he has experienced in the Levant "form[s] the channel of a future tear / Or raise[s] the writhing lip with ill-dissembled sneer" (915-16). He returns from his quest no more reconciled to British customs than when he left. Knowing himself in other places makes him only more aware of his distaste for the prohibitions of "writhing lips" which "feign" or deform his own pleasures. He ends

the poem again in personal lament, which views the loved one "blotted from life's page" (920). He can only then imagine a personal, privatized poetic voice silenced.

Finally, Byron's reservations about returning to England, his desires to live Otherwise, are recorded in a letter that he sent to John Hanson from Albania. "I will never revisit England again if I can avoid it . . . it is no country for me.—Why I say this is best known to myself" (BLJ 1: 232). After explaining that he did leave to escape creditors, he repeats again the same lines. But because of finances, he could not avoid return. He returned to England a man caught between worlds.

Upon his return, he learned of the deaths of his two friends and wrote his melancholy and mourning into these Cantos of Childe Harold. He also entered on a period of active testing of a heterosexual role. He had an affair with Lady Caroline Lamb, who dressed like a boy at his request, then an affair with his half sister, and finally a marriage of one year to Annabella Milbanke. Five years after his return to England, he did finally leave the country again permanently after a divorce and amid rumors of incest and accusations of sodomy.

During the years of return, he wrote the Oriental Tales that he said should be read with the two cantos of Childe Harold.[19] The poems continue to explore conflicted definitions of sexual identity and its relationship to the politics of sex. They are poems in which textuality recapitulates the ambiguities and anxieties of sexuality.

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[1] This pamphlet is very rare, so I rely here on a reprinted edition in Fone: 211-213.

[2] Hyam has argued that the belief that there were many forms of sexual opportunity to be found outside of England was a driving force in empire building.

[3] This universal voice, it might be pointed out, united the working class and the professional writing class, which would pressure aristocratic law makers to enact a change of law. Although the full development of class distinctions registered within this scene are beyond my scope here, they are a distinctive feature which resulted in legal changes regarding sodomy in the next decade. In a later letter, Matthews and another college friend of Byron's have gone to visit the two men who are to be executed from Vere Street, the sailor and the sixteen year old boy. Matthews reveals that some of their friends were having dinner before the raids on the very night that the sailor and the young boy had gone into the club. This suggests that Vere Street practices were not unfamiliar to Byron's friends and Byron. Vere Street disperses the sign of sodomy throughout the social hierarchies of class structures, and though not the focus of this study, it does suggest the possibilities for further research. See Crompton 170.

[4] Beckford's sense of wonder is, as Rapf says of Byron's male muse, "Not . . . an affirmation of the regeneration of human kind, a progressive [or imperialist] vision, but an affirmation of the regeneration of the now, a self conscious sense of display embodied in the art of performance" (62).

[5] As Lonsdale points out in his introduction to Vathek, overall the novel was well received at first because it "showed the fate of those who pursue immoral pleasures." The end was thought to border on the sublime. Only the English Review questioned Beckford's "moral" of the tale, which pointed to Beckford's "childishness" as a "source of happiness," qtd. in Longdale xxi. However, after Beckford was driven out of the country by a scandal over his involvement with a young boy, interest in the novel at times created more autobiographical interpretations, such as Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi's 1791 statement that "Mr. Beckford's favourite Propensity is all along visible . . . particularly in the luscious Descriptions of Gulchenrouz," qtd in Lonsdale xxi.

[6] Lady Caroline Lamb, when first visiting Byron, discovered Vathek on Byron's bedside table. And despite Byron's vast collection of books on Turkey, Greece and other parts of the Asian world, it was Vathek he kept. Not long before Byron's death in Greece, he wrote to his banker and requested that he sell all of his belongings in Italy except for his travel car, a portrait of his daughter, and four books, one of which was his copy of Vathek ,Parreaux 22. Byron, when traveling in Lisbon, sent a letter home to Francis Hodgson to tell him his traveling group had "On Hartford Bridge . . . changed horses at an Inn where the great Apostle of Paederasty Beckford! Sojourned for the night." And he goes on to explain, "We tried in vain to see the Martyr of prejudice, but could not," BLJ 1: 210. Byron's interest in Beckford exceeds an interest in his writings.

[7] See McConnell 224, note 1.

[8] Before this, Byron had said of Edleston that he "loved him more than any other human being," BLJ 1: 124. In his poem "The Cornelian," Byron said something he says of no other lovers, "I am sure the giver loved me." He also wrote of the tear on the gift which Edleston gave him that "ever since he loved a tear," BLJ 2. Byron reproduces the image of a boy's tear which makes him attractive in this poem.

[9] See Bersani's discussion of the gay outlaw in Gide's The Immoralist. Bersani, like Byron, questions whether a homosexual should be a good citizen.

[10] Byron did in fact worry that he had corrupted Edleston. The fear of pollution permeates everything, the relations between character and author, between Edleston and Byron, between the sense of sexual selfhood and national character.

[11] Matthews and other sodomites live (and then die) suffering this shame.

[12] See the editorial notes of Wolfson and Manning 787. Byron's relative Dallas and his publisher Murray would not allow the mention of Edleston.

[13] The Thyrza poems were read by the public to be about a woman. See Wolfson and Manning 785.

[14] In a letter of 1812 to Francis Hodgson, Byron writes that he hopes to leave England again forever in 1813. He ends the letter by saying of Edleston, "I believe the only human being that ever loved me in truth and entirely, was of, or belonging to, Cambridge, and, in that, no change can now take place. There is no consolation in death—where he sets his seal, the impression can neither be melted or broken, but endureth forever," BLJ 2: 163-64.

[15] Many critics have called Canto II Byron's romantic self-discovery canto. As both McGann and Blackstone observe, Byron's self-discovery or self-invention takes place in a fantastic Orient. Blackstone 93, McGann 255-62.

[16] See Kristeva Strangers 2-3.

[17] For a discussion of Byron's imperializing gestures in Childe Harold, see Makdisi, who argues that the "ghosts and specters haunting the tombs and temples do not torment the Orientals, by whom they are not seen. They are, rather, the private projections and possessions of the European tourist . . . and not simply as European, for not all Europeans . . . feel the sepulchral gloom that pervades Byron's Greece" 126. Also see Leask 13-25.

[18] Byron's favorite portrait of himself, the one included to represent him in many collections, is of him dressed as an Albanian. The crossing-over of boundaries of identity can be construed as an allusion to an appropriating imperialism. Or it might suggest a kind of "interpenetration of difference—an almost erotic commingling with the alien." Mimicry, as with the song Byron inserts in his poem, performs a kind of "embracing, quite literally, [of] the unfamiliar," Castle 61.

[19] Cantos III and IV were written much later and so are excluded from this study.

Chapter Three

The Sexual Outlaw

Foucault argued that there was a "discursive explosion" surrounding sex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (History 10). Yet such discursive productions were also a means of administering silences, determining vocabularies of prohibitions and prejudices, all of which circulate through populations as mechanisms of power within discursive fields (36). Within British society, the sodomite was produced as a sign of sexual prohibition, a criminal, a sexual outlaw, an unnameability, and a traitor. Such figurations served to produce legitimate heterosexuality. However, discourses that produced this alien sodomy ensured that the themes of progeny, race, the future of the species and the vitality of the social body would serve as motifs in the constitution of the sexual subject (143). In Bodies That Matter, Judith Butler asks what it would mean "to consider the assumption of sexual positions, the disjunctive ordering of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as taking place not only through a heterosexualizing symbolic with its taboo on homosexuality, but through a complex set of racial injunctions which operate in part through the taboo of miscegenation" (168). My focus in this reading of Byron's first oriental tale, The Giaour, is the regulation of sexuality to produce racial and sexual difference through vectors of power that are not fully separable. Questions of what can and cannot be spoken, what can and cannot be publicly exposed, raised throughout the tale, are related to the links between racial and sexual taboos. The narrative structure, the genre of the oriental gothic tale, and the narrative point of view are all attempts to give an account of a sexual outlaw, first from a spuriously

constructed Eastern point of view, and then from a Western point of view. The Giaour, a sexual outlaw, must be named, his crime positioned in relation to the regulations and ideas of the Ottoman empire, and then his confession offered from a Western point of view as he attempts an explanation of his sexual transgression to justify the sodomitic murder of (an)other man.

I. Narrating an Oriental Tale

Byron's turn to an oriental tale suggests his interest in William Beckford's Vathek, for he takes the name Giaour from an indisputable miscreant in Vathek. However, Beckford's sadistic representation of a sexual license that allows boys to be stripped and placed in a hell-like underworld to be devoured is abandoned by Byron. Only the trace of the name and the use of footnotes demonstrate Byron's authoritative knowledge of Turkish customs, and a few Persian symbols, such as the rose and the nightingale, are taken from Vathek.[1] The possibility of sexual license and the climatological passions of Eastern climes are suggested but muted in Byron's poem.[2] Robert Mack has argued that "[h]omosexual writers were at home in the oriental tale" because it is a place where they, like female writers, could "be free of the restrictions of the mundane realism tied to the demands . . . and the goings on of 'real' society" (xvii). The Eastern world of the oriental tales was a site writers used for the machinery of houris, magic carpets, harems, and despotic rulers to "satisfy the West's urge for exotic experience" (Maryanne Stevens qtd in Oueijan 77), and often to obscure homoeroticism or to resist regulatory heterosexual norms.[3] Jerome McGann explains that Byron uses a foreign world and the claims of a realistic historic source for the tale, but that the use of such devices does not mean that

Byron's story is "far removed from England" (143). Sexual prohibitions, especially those related to sodomy, remain a concern of the tale. The advertisement promises the reader "disjointed fragments" of a heterosexual tale about a female slave girl, her lover, and her sadistic murder by a despotic Muslim ruler. The advertisement by the British editor/poet of the tale says: "The story when entire, contained the adventures of a female slave, who was thrown Muslman [sic.] manner into the sea, for infidelity, avenged by a young Venetian lover" (CPW 3: 40). The tale does not deliver the woman's adventures or a Venetian lover and barely touches the Muslim's execution of the girl. What it does deliver is a story of sexual politics in "disjointed fragments" of a tale which could not "entirely" be written. The advertisement seems a ruse of enticement, to offer an oriental souvenir, "an object without a complete context" (Stewart, 151); it is an invitation into disorientation. And, as Frederick Shilstone suggests, the story itself seems more "an attempt to conceal [the] plot . . . than reveal and comment on its significance" (49). Such disorientations can wrap the familiar world in an unfamiliar one (Leask 169), both to reveal and to conceal Byron's challenges to the normalizing functions of juridical discourses and discourses on sexuality that locate the affective and the sexual pleasure of the individual within heterosexual marriage and coupling (Stone 236)[4] and that simultaneously displace the homoerotic.

The advertisement and the disjunctive plot point to the two principal difficulties in reading The Giaour. One is the narrative voice and the other is the confusing order of the plot. In my reading, I assume an English/editor/poet, the one compiling the fragments, as the primary narrator. The name inscribed as being

responsible for the tale's production is Byron. The narrating poet-editor allows for changes in point of view in the tale. The first half is sympathetic to a Turkish point of view, and the second half relates a non-specific Western point of view. These perspectives are achieved at times by the narrator's voice giving itself over to a variety of characters within the poem.[5] But the editing of the fragments is then the responsibility of the poet Byron. Andrew Rutherford said that Byron had little regard for "the poem's plot or coherence" (36). But I believe that these experiments in perspective, the disruptions in linear sequence, are a strategy of evasion. Byron says of the poem that his "experiment" in "disjointed fragments" (BLJ 3: 34) was another attempt to "vanquish his demon" (BLJ 3: 124). The demon was not his homosexuality, but his anger at the suppression of a central part of his experience. At least on one level, the poem is an attempt to represent his understanding of the power relations among sexuality, social identity, and the politics of nation states.

The tale is a story of a non-Muslim living in Muslim territory, who refuses to subject himself to the laws of the land. His lover, the slave girl Leila, is killed because of their illicit affair, and the Giaour avenges her death by killing her master, the Black Hassan. Shifting points of views of different narrators and the disjointed, fragmentary plot attempt to tell a tale of sexual transgressions. Disgression and displacement are the most significant strategies for representing the intersections of an ideology of racial purity and displacements of sodomitic meanings. However, following the advertisement, the poet-editor who has collected the disjointed fragments of the tale begins the poem with a melancholy invocation to the muse,

which marks the poem with Byron's self-dramatization and his previous concerns of lost lovers and lost homoerotic, homosocial ideals.

II. Invocation

The invocation to the muse, combined with an elegy, expresses the poet's melancholy over the loss of Greece and its heroes. Looking over an Athenian's grave, the poet asks, "When shall such a hero live again?" (6). The poet says that "living Greece is no more" (91) and that "Soul is wanting there" (93). If a muse is to be found, it will be the muse of "Death revealed" (89). The poet describes bending over a corpse, which, he says, "[a]pals the gazing mourner's heart" (82). The unsexed body of the corpse is a representation of an idyllic Greece, which in its fall is referred to as she: "her sorrows I bewail" (164). From the poet's point of view, this is an effeminized Greece. Greece's demise lies in its betrayal of a manly, heroic code that had created "fiery souls that might have led / The sons to deeds sublime" (147-48). The Greece of Byron's boyhood, the one in which Greek heroes loved one another and led the nation, as Themistocles led them to victory over Persia, is gone. As the poet describes the loss, it becomes personal. The fragments of his methodiste letter impinge upon his reading of history, as does the surreal, unidentified corpse. The Greece which once had "the forest hue and fragrant sign," of "many summer flower[s]" (33-34) is now a place where "lust and rapine wildly reign" (60), and each flower has been trampled, "brutelike" (52). The past of Greece intersects with the past of the poet; this is his paradise lost. The botanical boys Byron gathered in his letter on methodiste have been deflowered. Byron's hobbling verses of The Hours of Idleness are metamorphosized to trample over any clear traces of his boyish

affectional bonds and desires for Greek heroes like Nisus who lay his breast upon Euryalus.

The surreal image of the unidentified corpse that rises up in the poem with its "placid cheek" just before the "dark day of Nothingness" and "Decay's effacing fingers" (70-71) is unsexed. The corpse breaks through the lines like a nightmare, like "The graves of those that cannot die" (135). The cannot is ambiguous; it might be an imperative, an insistence that the dead must be memorialized. But the haunting image of the corpse also suggests that the speaker cannot be rid of the dead, even as he tries to exorcise them like demons. Freud has written that when an ambivalent relationship is severed by death, the individual internalizes the ambiguity of that relationship as a self-debasing position. The role of the Other is then occupied by the Ego. "The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person, the loved relationship need not be given up" (170). The death of Edleston after having been charged with "gross indecency" and Matthews' probable suicide psychically mar Byron's ability to sustain an idealized homoerotic. All sexual ideals seem tenuous as Byron's poem evolves. The haunting corpse, the dead who will not die, remains the frame for Byron's depiction of a sexual outlaw. Dead men and violations remain a frame of reference for the homographic signature of this poem. The poet-narrator says that he will "no more [Greece's] sorrows bewail" (164). He declares his intention to put this form of grief behind him and develop a new way of speaking. In this poem, he turns to sexualities and desires split apart, adulterated and divided like nation states.

The territory of the Byronic hero changes. He turns from Greece and all it stands for to tell "another mournful tale" (165). The poet turns from the "splendour of ideals lost" to a hero of "villain-bonds and despot sway" (140). Instead of attempting "in vain" to invoke the "Liberty" to speak (161), which might "raise the neck that courts the yoke" (163), Byron's strategy is to invent a hero who accepts the terms of the "spirit of bondage" (160). Byron will become a "subtle Greek" who finds renown in the "proverbial wiles and the ancient craft" of poetry (158-160). He creates an anti- hero out of the phobic prohibitions that produced the sodomite as an abject other. The Giaour, the protagonist of the tale whose story follows the invocation, is a sexual outlaw who cannot speak directly of his own crime but can only whisper a confession at the end of the tale. He is a foreigner who cannot name himself within the culture whose laws he breaks. The "spirit of bondage" becomes the soul of Byron's muse. As the poet writes later in the tale, the "love imperfect / That mortals by the name miscall; / Then deem it evil" (1143-44) will become the central fascination of the tale, The Giaour. The "very crimes that mar[red his] youth," in this "bed of death—attest [his] truth" in this tale. The "cherish'd madness" of the poet becomes the core of his oriental gothic art (1186-91), for "prying stranger[s]" to read (1327).

III. Narrating an Outlaw Other

Finally the story begins to be plotted. The poet-narrator identifies a Turkish fisherman who will begin the tale. From his point of view, the character, the Giaour, the sexual outlaw, will first be named. But the identification of the fisherman performs a kind of tromp d'oeil in the narrative point of view. The poet, whose

westernizing gaze distorted the landscape of Greece, refocuses the perspective from a distorting mirror into a two-sided mirror:

> Far, dark, along the blue sea glancing,
>
> The shadows of the rocks advancing
>
> Start on the fisher's eye like boat
>
> Of island-pirate or Mainote . . .
>
> Slowly, yet strongly, plies the oar
>
> Till Port Leone's safer shore
>
> Receives him by the lovely light
>
> That best becomes an Eastern night. (168-70, 176-79)

The blue glancing and the shadowed eye suggest a Western eye gazing on a darkened or obscure Turkish point of view. It is but a reflecting gaze, which turns back to British readers. Points of view, supposedly reflective of a Turkish world view, will always be glancing back toward the English blue eye (I). The final deciphering of distortions will be the task of reading.

The poet-narrator briefly turns the narration over to the Turkish fisherman for the naming of the Giaour. The fisherman describes the Giaour's foreignness; his is a dangerous mien that threatens the generation of an empire's sons:

> . . . young Giaour!
>
> I know thee not, I loathe thy race,
>
> But in thy lineaments I trace
>
> What time shall strengthen, not efface:
>
> Though young and pale, that sallow front

Is scathed by fiery passion's brunt

Though bent on earth thine evil eye,

As meteor-like thou glidest by,

Right well I view and deem thee one

Whom Othman's sons should slay or shun. (190-99)

The outlaw's otherness is marked by his being a figure not quite nameable. The word Giaour is an Arabic word meaning infidel and non-Muslim. He is a man delegitimized by a name that serves as a negation. He is of no country, only of a despised race. The fisherman proceeds to survey the foreigner's body. The fisherman's surveillance of the "evil eye" turns an eye back onto the Western reader in a play of double figures. Like Fanny Hill or the London mob, the fisherman traces on the body the marks of difference. The strategies of his reading are familiar. The Giaour's skin tones are foreign: he is "young and pale" says the narrator, his whiteness suspicious in this world, a marking of race that becomes crucial later in the poem. His infidelities lie in his passions: "[his] sallow front / Is scathed by fiery passion's brunt" (194-95). The marking of the Otherness of the Giaour with this frontal exposure raises questions. The sallow front suggests a European willow, a soft, effeminized passion. The color yellow suggests a not quite white, a sickly sign, and simultaneously a figure damaged, burnt by fiery passions or the brunt of the force placed against such passions. This Other, whose transgressions are not yet named in the poem, is ambiguous in these signs. His is a limp but passionate transgression. But the Turkish narrator's accusations of the Giaour seem misreadings. He maps the Giaour according to his own cultural prejudices, but his

conclusions offer no clear explanation of the Giaour. The narration fails the reader because of what seems an over-simplified translation of the signs of the Giaour's difference.

The poet-narrator, almost persuaded by the Turkish fisherman's accusations, takes up the narration again to describe the Giaour as a "Demon in the night" who "passed" and "vanished from [his] sight" (202-3). The narrator's use of the word demon suggests mixed motivations for this creation of the Giaour infidel. It turns the shifting perspective back toward a biographical impulse. Byron said of his writing of the tale, "I have tried & hardly to vanquish my demon" (BLJ 3: 124). This Romantic impulse alludes to a Satanic figure who will challenge God or stand against the law of religion and custom. The Satanic figure is fused into the Giaour, and after this, into all Byronic heroes. The Eastern world is again turned back by the hand of the poet-editor to a British Christian culture.[6] "The aspect" impresses the narrator as does the very sound of the Giaour's escape; the narrator fixes his "glance . . . on those that flee" (213), who trouble "a memory in [his] breast" (205). The plural pronoun "those" suggests that the Giaour's escape is not his alone but an allusion to the escape of criminals, or sexual infidels. The sound of the Giaour's escape impinges "long upon [the narrator's] startled ear" (206). The escape of the Giaour

> Rung his dark courser's hoofs of fear.
> He spurs his steed; he nears the steep,
> That, jutting, shadows o'er the deep. (207-9)

Continuing to attempt to demonize the Giaour, the narrator repeats some of the fisherman's point of view by noting that the Giaour has a "foreign garb and fearful brow" (231). With the "meteor-like" language, the courser gallop of the narrator's words attempts to produce a fearful figure. His fast-paced narrative offers information by sensation, like a newspaper; this brings the poet to a pause. He asks, "What felt he"? (267), "What art thou"? (230). The narration breaks down. The figure of the infidel bears down on the narrator with a "troubled memory" (205), as he struggles to give an account of an outlaw in a "life of pain, an age of crime" (264). The time and place of the narrative becomes confused. The reader, wrapped in the pace of words, does not know what the criminal has done, where or against whom his demonic infidelity has been committed. The infidel and his indiscretions remain shadowy. The plot is obscured in sensations of fear and in the narrator's own unspoken memories. The doubled narrative effort has led to fragmentary conjectures as to who the central character is.

The identifications of the infidel, the enumeration of his differences, and the narration and repetition of his actions lead to points of the poet-narrator's identification with the Giaour. A pure opposition or separation becomes impossible. Some ungrieved loss, some inability to speak fully of the Giaour, breaks down barriers between the narrator and his abject Other. "What felt he then at once opprest/ By all that most distracts the brest?" (267-68), the narrator asks. The referent for he is underscored and unclear. Placing the infidel, the outcast, within a set of impressions, a not quite narrative, not quite lyric, forces the narrator-protagonist to blur, and the reader must rely on sensations, impressions, sentiment,

feeling to determine a response. The infidel loses his impression of absolute difference. The poet-narrator, trying to be sympathetic to a Turkish point of view, is disrupted from his narration by a disturbing memory of something familiar, but not quite nameable, some "thought that Conscience must embrace" (274), some view, a "glance . . . fixed on those that flee" (213). If an outlaw is going to be named in this tale, the narrator may have to surrender his voice to other voices, or to the disturbing editorial orderings of fragments.

If this outlaw and his crime are to have significance within the narrative, it must be found in relation to the world in which he is an alien, the Ottoman empire. The poem is returned to the Turkish fisherman who finally reveals, a fourth of the way into the poem, that the Giaour has violated the Hassan, whose turban was "cleft by the infidel's sabre" (351). With the death of the Hassan, the fisherman says, "Courtesy and pity died" (346). From his point of view, we learn major elements of the plot. But the Giaour's connection to the story the fisherman reveals is not immediately clear because he offers an adulterated narration as he resumes the tale. The only connection the fisherman makes between the Giaour and the Hassan is in the one line about the cleft turban. The fisherman then proceeds to what almost seems to be a different plot.

IV. Death of an Ideal Couple

The fisherman turns to the relationship between Leila, the slave girl of the advertisement, and the Hassan, the ruler of the Ottoman empire. Leila is not going to have the promised adventures; she has been killed before the tale began. She has been executed because she "broke her bower, / And, worse than faithless, for a

Giaour!" (535-36). This link between Leila and the Giaour is not made until the fisherman has described, first, the execution of Leila, and then, her value within the Ottoman empire. What does become clear is that executions and dead bodies whose identities and significance are hard to determine are motifs of the narrative.

This second section of the tale, narrated by the fisherman, is an attempt at a point of view sympathetic to Turkish law and custom. After explaining that the social order he has respected has been destroyed, the fisherman begins to relate how the Hassan was betrayed by his slave girl Leila. Like other Byron characters, Astarte in Manfred and Francesca in The Siege of Corinth, Leila's significance is viewed entirely from the point of her death (see Franklin 39) and from Turkish male narrators. The dropping of the slave girl's body into the sea is revealed in a flashback of a conversation between an Emir and the fisherman narrator. In the flashback, the Emir enlists the aid of the fisherman in taking the body out to sea. The Emir's voice is lost as the narrator watches the girl's body drop into the sea, a vanishing point:

> Sullen it plunged, and slowly sank,
> The calm wave rippled to the bank;
> I watch'd it as it sank, methought
> Some motion from the current caught
> Bestirred it more,--twas but the beam
> That checker'd o'er the living stream:
> I gazed, till vanishing from view,
> Like lessening pebble it withdrew;

Still less and less, a speck of white

That gemm'd the tide, then mocked the sight;

And all its hidden secrets sleep . . . (374-84)

The disposal of the "freight" (362) reveals the woman's status as cargo. In the overheard narration, it is not clear what is dropped into the water: "Sullen it plunged, and slowly sank." The fisherman says he saw the woman disappear like a point of view, and because this executed figure cannot speak, "its hidden secrets sleep." The reader knows only from the advertisement that a woman is being killed for her sexual infidelity. Otherwise, the horror of the scene would simply escape the reader. The fragmentation of the narrative and the dispersal of voices blunts the horror of the event but also disrupts the fascination of mutilating the female body that one might find in other gothic or oriental tales, like Lewis's The Monk.

Leila's story is finally told in part by a series of male narrators: her master and the Turkish fisherman who assisted in her execution, imperfectly relayed by the English poet-editor. Leila had tried to escape the Hassan's rage "[i]n likeness of a Georgian page" (456), but her attempt at cross-dressing equivocation to escape the restrictions of her sex ended in the execution already narrated. Only after her execution does the reader hear about Leila's position as an ideal partner to the Hassan, who has just killed her; the inverted sequence of the narration points to Leila's ironic positioning in the tale and within a supposedly ideal social order.

From the Hassan's point of view, the narrator tells us, Leila was the "bright jewel of Giamschid" and her "Soul beamed forth in every spark / That darted from beneath the lid" of her dark eyes (479, 476). But as always in this tale, the eyes

reveal the twisting, refracting inversion of the world. The narrator's description of Leila is significant:

> On her might the Muftis gaze, and own
> That through her eye the Immortal shone;
> On her fair cheek's unfading hue
> The young pomegranate's blossoms strew
> Their bloom in blushes ever new;
> Her hair in hyacinthine flow
> When left to roll its folds below . . . (491-97)

He goes on to describe her feet, which

> Gleam'd whiter than the mountain sleet
> Ere from the cloud that gave it birth
> It fell, and caught one stain of earth. (501-3)

Even to the Muslim religious judges, the Muftis, she is a perfect beauty--"superior to them all," says the narrator (499). And in relation to the Hassan,

> Thus rose fair Leila's whiter neck:--
> Thus armed with beauty would she check
> Intrusion's glance, till Folly's gaze
> Shrunk from the charms it meant to praise.
> Thus high and graceful was her gait;
> Her heart as tender to her mate;
> Her mate—stern Hassan . . . (511-516)

All this looking, gazing, and judging of Leila glides swiftly over several important facts. First, she is a slave girl and "Circassia's daughter" (505), a native of northern Caucasus, a white European. Leila's white feet and neck and her European background seem a "stain" on the narration the fisherman presents. He shunned the pale infidel because of his threat to a pure line of "Othman's sons" (199), but he doesn't notice Leila's whiteness as a threat to a pure Turkish line. The marks of sexuality, race and empire flow through one another in the narrator's unexamined fiction of ideal mates. In this world, Leila's whiteness falls like mountain sleet, with the possibility of being "caught [in] stain of earth."

In the narration, there are several other slippages of the significance of Leila as an ideal mate. "Her heart as tender to her mate" suggests ironies in the presentation of the perfect heterosexual mates. She is tender to his sternness; the ideal heterosexual couple is a cliché of opposites brought together. But, more significantly, she is tender for her mate; she holds for him the promissory note of his sex; she is the sign of his masculinity and the sign of his heterosexual desire.[7] But because she is a figure who has dropped out of sight before the reader ever got to see this ideal couple, the weight of her meaning seems unbalanced. And still there is more to the sign of Leila's mobility. Her hyacinth flow of hair, which folds below, suggests another vanishing point in the narrative, the use of this particular botanical metaphor alludes to the poet's own hyacinthine boys in his methodiste letter. The meanings of the poem flow outside its own boundaries to the poet's own displaced desires. Ideals and loss wash in and out of the poem.

The fact that the editor brings together these disparate signs into a narrative that has already adulterated the possibility of Leila's having any real significance as an ideal in the poem suggests several things. Prior to this phantasmal consolidation of Leila as the perfect mate, the story has shown Leila to be disloyal to the laws of coupling. Moreover, Leila's association with pomegranates and flowers suggests her position as the natural mate of this man, but these Edenic allusions point to other perfect states already mythically conceived and destroyed. Eve in the Bible and Eve in Milton have already revealed the impossibility of perfect nations built on the enslavement of men and women in ideal relationship to one another. The narrative begins to expose the enslavement of narrative ideal. The repetitive citations which attempt to cultivate sexual identity within myths of an ideal empire seem at best unstable, at worst secretively murderous. Byron subverts the idea that ideal heterosexual unions will produce a more perfect union of the state.[8] Within the Edenic waves of Eastern writing, these ruptures and incisions into the narrative leave a love story never told. Leila's unruly nature as a sign confuses the ability to read her. The narrative cripples, circumcises, denies and deters the pleasure of any homo/heterosexual narrative; all meanings are deferred. She, as corpse, cross-dresser, pomegranate, hyacinth, is nothing but an equivocal being.

The Turkish narrator's sympathetic perspective on the Hassan represents his rule as an empire of "courtesy and pity." The Hassan's ideological basis for power lies in his subject's desire for polite discourse: his "frown and furious word / Are dreaded more than hostile sword" (599-600). None of the narrators speaks against him. The Turkish fisherman, the poetic voice, and Hassan's voice all agree that

Leila "deserved the grave" (406). The Hassan, as the representation of a symbolic order, stands as a sign of a conservative social order, one that preserves itself through courtesy and propriety. No one mentions Leila's execution. And the fisherman suggests that the Hassan's rule requires racial purity and women confined within the social order to preserve that purity. Yet the editor of the tale, using the ironic, inverted placement of the revelation of the execution before the exposition of an ideal order, challenges unexamined fictions and mindless repetitions of sexual ideals produced and enforced in relation to violating, violent laws and narratives of empires, sexual and social.

However, Leila, who was dropped into a sea of meaning, then vanishes from sight.[9] She becomes a transparent image, a passageway, an opening to the virulent embrace of the two men, the Black Hassan and the Giaour. And it is here that we witness the crime of the Giaour.

IV. Sodomitic Violence

The editor-narrator says of the confrontation between the Black Hassan and the Giaour,

> . . . Love itself could never pant
> For all that Beauty sighs to grant
> With half the fervour Hate bestows
> Upon the last embrace of foes,
> When grappling in the fight they fold
> Those arms that ne'er shall lose their hold. (647-52)

In the absence of the female sign, the grappling fervour in this embrace of the two men exposes the erotics of male competition, the homosexual nature of Irigaray's hom(m)-o-sexuality of male-structured cultures.[10] The language of embrace, the arms that "ne'er shall lose their hold," also suggests the necessity of a suppressed homoerotic to maintain competition between men. But Byron insists that the imperative of the homoerotic be forced out of silence. The strain of the language that fuses terms of intimacy with the terms of combat, implying the creation of men as competing Others to preserve ideals already dead, bears the weight of conflicted meanings.

The anonymous narrator seeks to penetrate the ear of the listener with sensations of the battle:

> The bickering sabres' shivering jar;
> And pealing wide or ringing near
> Its echoes on the throbbing ear,
> The deathshot hissing from afar;
> The shock, the shout, the groan of war
> Reverberate . . . (636-41)

The poet knows fear; the groan echoes and throbs with what once was wandering (or hobbling) verse, but is now "the sea-tide's opposing motion" (622). The narrative displacements refocus to subject the reader to the "hideous tale" that "speaks itself, unspeakable" degradation. The embrace of the men begins in medias res and moves to metaphors of penetration:

> With sabre shiver'd to the hilt,

Yet dripping with the blood he spilt;

Yet strain'd within the sever'd hand

Which quivers round that faithless brand;

His turban far behind him roll'd,

And cleft in twain its firmest fold;

His flowing robe by falchion torn,

And crimson as those clouds of morn

That, streak'd with dusky red, portend

The day shall have a stormy end;

A stain on every bush that bore

A fragment of his palampore,

His breast with wounds unnumber'd riven,

His back to earth, his face to heaven,

Fall'n Hassan lies—his unclosed eye

Yet lowering on his enemy,

As if the hour that seal'd his fate

Surviving left his quenchless hate;

And o'er him bends that foe with brow

As dark as his that bled below. (655-674)

The soft curved turban, "rolled behind" the Black Hassan, is penetrated like a hyacinth, in its "firmest fold." The falchion, a curved form, tears open the robe, like the curved narration disrobing what it has veiled. The Hassan's breast is riven unnumbered times. The Giaour has embraced, disrobed, and penetrated another man

until he sees himself in the other man's unclosed eye. The Giaour lowers his body on the Hassan until his fate is sealed into another man. This metaphoric sodomitic murder forces an exasperated inversion of the laws that silence and murder sodomy. The scene enacts an attempt at the reversal of a life of silence. The erotic impulse of the scene is released into a destruction of another man, who has become merely an object of rage. When the Tartar returns the body of the Hassan to his mother, he says, "Lady, a fearful bride thy Son hath wed" (718). Sexual murder disorders sex and gender. The Giaour and the Hassan have become one in a marriage which forces the death of an othered man. Cultural and sexual boundaries of the self are anxiously merged. This is an act of fearful and liberating oppression. Byron exposes the threat of sodomy as Otherness and at the same time murders the possibility of mimetic representation. Perspectives are lost as one man rapaciously murders an Other.

The quivering, severed hand inscribes a crisis of meaning in the scene. It points to a kind of surreal distance in the narrative voice and the poet's psyche. Like an unidentifiable body on shore, it reveals disturbances in signification. The climax of the poem is queerly voiced. The turban is cleft; the robe, torn. The breast is riven. An exercise in passive voice exposes this anxious crisis of naming. The defiant posturing takes place as a polite deferral. Even the scene of the crime defers agency. The center spins; things fall apart, like a voice, a narrative, an object world. But the empire of silence that haunts Byron's consciousness still remains. The former ruler of courtesy is now a site of severed limbs and the death of signs. Like figures in a Gericault painting, this body is distortion and pain. But the quivering hand may mark the poet-narrator's own fear of exposing such a scene of violent

desires and denials between men.[11] The forces of psychological and sociological rupture force the quivering hand of the poet into racialized sodomy and violence, the expression and the displacement of his own desires and his resistance to social repression converge. These embedded images are easily passed over, easily denied. But the violence leads to death and to the hero's loss of self.

The murder eroticizes violence, but it is a violence between a European and an Islamic man. The scene ends with the Giaour bending over the Hassan, "with brow / As dark as his that bled below" (674). In the dark blood now reflected in a brow previously pallid, the lines are the signs of race and sexuality bled out. The scene exposes the tenuous borders of "the sea tide's opposing motions" (622) that wash through the poem. Prohibitions that require heterosexual compulsions to ensure racial purity require enemies and the "quenchless hate" of empires. Here the regulatory forces that seek to control sexuality and boundaries of racial purity are uncontained. They bleed out of the scene to show their violent intimacies. The sky and the land are stained with the color of blood.

The attempt to violate the laws of sexual ordering and polite discourse to speak what cannot be spoken suffers from what Gayatri Spivak has called a participation in the logic of "translation as violation," rather than the ideal of a "pure freedom in troping" (525).[12] The self-conscious coloring of the tale to violate the boundaries of British sexual regulation evokes two clichéd images of the Muslim male: first, the despotic ruler of women and, second, a sodomitic threat. The Muslim ruler as a standard trope for oppressors of women can be found in such writings as Mary Wollstonecraft's The Vindication of the Rights of Women. She refers to

"Mahometanism" as an enemy, for it represents woman as a "subordinated being, and not part of the human species" (80).[13] Byron tries to erase the particularization of woman and Muslim men as despots in his deconstruction of the regulation of sexed ideals. He even attempts, with the allusions to Eden and Eve, to turn the gaze from Eastern despotism to the Western despotic mythologizing of sexual idealizations. But such translations still violate the Muslim world, and here in the scene of eroticized violence between the non-Muslim and the Hassan, Byron inverts the tropes of the Turkish Muslim warriors. The earliest examples of homosexual rape in Western writings were used as examples of Muslim immorality. The Turkish vice had been presented as a threat in literature since the crusades of the Middle ages. In the Present State of the Ottman Empire (1668), which Byron claimed to have read before he was ten years old, Paul Rycault says that the Turkish world idealizes sodomy; they "color [it as] virtue, they paint over the deformity" of the depravity of their "libidinous flames for each other, with which they burn so violently, that banishment and death have not been examples sufficient to deter them." Rycault insists that their passions for each other make them "strangers to the Sex" of women (33).[14] Byron's infidel does not escape the local color of the British discourses that have presented the Muslim world as oppressive to women and as "depraved" because of sodomitic excesses. The discourses echo on the ears of a British audience. The poet's will to power, to rattle the saber of his severed "quivering hand" (surrealistically represented in the scene), splits the narrative pen in what Giyatry Spivak calls the "failure of translation" in its turning between worlds.[15]

Byron effects scenes and costumes but no real knowledge of the Muslim world except as a corrective for the English world he challenges. This mistranslation was prefigured, foreshadowed, in the Turkish fisherman's misreading of the Giaour's pallid brow. Cross-cultural mappings, information by sensation, fragmentary narratives, (in)significant signs, reveal only the impossibility of narrativizing the meaning(s) of sex. As quickly as this narrative tries to stab into the center of its meaning, at the breast of a man, its point is withdrawn, to be riven again. The tale turns from an imaginary East to a Western world as obscured as that of the East. After the murder, the criminal Giaour wanders to a Western monastery.

The Giaour, the violator of the law, speaks. He attempts to justify his killing of the Hassan. Like the fisherman at the beginning of the tale, who seeks to interpret the Giaour in terms of his own customs and laws without clear explanations, the Giaour tries to interpret the scene of death and violence from a perspective too limited to be convincing. The irony of his justification for murder tries to point directly toward British society.

V. Confession

Before wandering to a Western monastery where the Giaour begins to tell part of his own story, he is cursed by a Monkir to wander in hell. The two warriors, after the death of the Hassan, are released to a Heaven and a Hell of women. The Hassan, who "died by a stranger's hand . . . in his native land" (735-36) rests attended by Houris, the Islamic "maids of Paradise" (739). The Infidel, however is condemned to return to "ghastly haunt his native place" (757), Eblis, an "inward hell" (754). Here the Giaour temporarily becomes a vampire who must suck the blood of all [his]

race" (757), from his "daughter, sister and wife" (759). The outlaw is condemned to return to his native land, which can only be imagined as a place of gruesome blood ties and flowers "wither'd on the stem" (766). Any imagination of fulfillment in relationships marked by the imperatives of bloodlines makes even the enjoyment of fatherhood impossible, for when the Giaour becomes a father he will be cursed, and his "unhallow'd hand shall tear / The tresses of her yellow hair" (775-76). The imperative of racial ties is a curse. There will be no redemption and no ideal worlds for criminals who commit crimes against the boundaries of social custom and racial purity.

Like the inscription of the quivering hand that marked the crisis of naming sodomy, the Giaour's voice is obscure and passive. Instead of naming his own agency, he attributes his defeat of the Hassan to Leila, whose "spirit pointed well the steel" (677). He says, "My rath is wreaked, the deed is done" (687) as if somehow the Giaour is not responsible for what he has done. He offers as an explanation for the murder of another man his own form of despotism, a monogamous, romantic love. After the Giaour returns to a Western monastery, he does not confess a crime but continues to attempt to justify his actions:

> Still, ere thou dost condemn me, pause;
> Not mine the act, though I the cause.
> Yet did he but what I had done
> Had she been false to more than one. (1060-63)

The Giaour would have acted as the Hassan did. For despite his belief in Leila's right to love and choose her mate, it is his own Western pathological devotion to

love and monogamy that gives him the right to kill the man who spoiled his naturalized ideal mate. The Giaour's rhapsodizing about an ideal mating, like the fisherman's before him, ignores the execution just performed.

> The swan that swims upon the lake,
> One mate, and one alone, will take. (1170-71

> Leila! Each thought was only thine!
> My good, my guilt, my weal, my woe,
> My hope on high—my all below. (1181-83)

Like the Turkish narrators who found no fault with the Hassan's execution of a transgressive woman, the Giaour's narration is blind to its failed perceptions. He justifies his sodomitic murder by claiming that his own monogamous heterosexual ideology prompted and necessitated murderous vengeance.[16] Natural laws, monogamy, and an ideal heterosexual love are his good, his guilt, his own civilized reasons for murdering another man. He overlooks the reality of Leila's adultery by saying, "[H]er treachery is truth to me" (1067). Western despotism willingly violates sodomitic men and love between men by forcing its forms of representation into endless displacements. Like an Eastern slave dropped out of sight, the assassination of an Othered man is discounted as a just execution of a villainized foreign despot who has no concern for women, or who is a "stranger to the Sex" of women. The Giaour says in his paranoic narration, "They told me—'twas a hideous tale" (1308). To speak or not to speak? To sign or not to assign meaning to nameless desires is the question the tale evokes and forecloses. The Giaour says,

Such is my name, and such my tale.

I breathe the sorrows I bewail.

Then lay me with the humblest dead,

And, save the Cross above my head,

Be neither name nor emblem spread,

By prying stranger to be read" (1319-26).

He speaks to cloud his name, to shroud his desires and simultaneously to leave their traces. Tales in which racial, sexual and gendered norms are not merely parallel narratives, but narratives produced in and through one another, resist telling.

Finally, the attempts of narrative to evolve a single story of sexual meaning, especially in relation to the regulatory orders of the state, fail miserably and lead only to fragmentation, forced transgression, floating bodies whose deaths become overlooked ruptures in the tales of civilized nations. Personal desires (because they have been named, even if secretly), failures of signification, the attempts at ordering a narrative, all insist that the sexual meaning will escape the noose, the yoke of bondage, just as much as it will reinforce such bondage in these slippages and secrets.

VII. Interpreting the Unspeakable Tale

The tale of the Giaour clearly means to be unclear. Without a social framework for interpreting a system of signs, without the certainty of living under an order of law, the Giaour's significance "lurks [in a] nameless spell / Which speaks, itself unspeakable" (838-39). Finally, neither the Giaour nor the narrator is sure whether this is a tale of violence or love, whether this is a story "of her he loved or

him he slew" (1334). This is the tale of a figure somewhere between a man and a woman. The narrative digressions and ruptures reinforce and critique laws of race, silence, and sexuality. The project of concealing rather than revealing becomes part of a poetics of speaking what cannot otherwise be spoken.

Assuming the spirit of bondage, Byron writes against normalizing heterosexual idealized imperatives of British society. He writes attempting to deconstruct an ideal heterosexual couple. He writes to rupture silences that violently displace sodomy into an unassignable, unspeakable category of meaning. However, the force of the laws of silence and the mistranslations that the poem suffers produce a "hideous tale" (1308) of sexuality, race, and gender entrapped in social narratives of ideal societies and sexed identities. The end of the tale attempts to divorce the Giaour from any name, any nation, any sex. It ends in a monastery, its specific location unknown. The Giaour erotically whispers into the monk's "secret ear" the "sorrow [he] bewail[s]" (1321). He says, "Such is my name and such is my tale" (1319). The penetrated ear and the "hideous tale" which cause the monk to respond with a "generous tear" mark a penetration without "name or emblem spread" (1325); it is an unmarked emission of seed into a male ear.

When the monk repeats the Giaour's whisperings, all he says is that we are left without a "token or a trace" of "his name or his race" (1330, 1329). Byron sets out to erase the lines of sexual boundaries and identities from names and the laws of nations. But neither his final puns nor his efforts at erasures of race and of the name of sex can efface the traces of the laws of miscegenation, homosexual taboo, and

mysogynistic entrapment which cross-dress and cross over and through this deconstructive narrative.

Byron attempts a deconstruction of the idealization of heterosexual coupling and a violation of discourses that permit discussions of sodomy only as linguistic impropriety. However, the layers of subterfuge in the narrative and the reflecting mirrors between Eastern and Western worlds produce too many failures in translation and narration. The Giaour tells and silences every version of the tale several times. The deferrals of the tale end in a state of exhausted meaning.

The sodomite, a homosexual without a name, is not a man who, as Foucault suggests, "overturned the law of marriage and the order of desires" (40). He is an alien, an ambiguity, an indistinguishable sign. And his wayward narrative is a deferral, a drive to digress rather than transgress. Byron's tale demonstrates that for this poet, the quivering hand that holds the pen and the style of his sexual voice are tightly coiled together. He said that the tale "snaked itself out." His voice, "which speaks itself unspeakable," remains "A serpent round [his] heart" (1194). It is a style in which "bondage" and "digression" are inseparable. Byron's demonic Romantic hero, iconoclast and sinner, is tightly locked into the sexual and racial discourses of his age.

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[1] Said observes that the popular orientalism of tales like Beckford's and Byron's represented the "Orient as an exotic locale," and used it as a "free floating signifier" to represent "sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, [and] intense energy," 118. But the "free floating Orient" was severely curtailed with the advent of academic Orientalism by the mid-nineteenth century. Guest, acknowledging Said's work, says the exoticism of late eighteenth-century romantic Orientalism served "to assimilate its objects to a generalized homogeneity, a wealth of inscrutable detail that is the perquisite of the knowing European to articulate," 170.

[2] Nussbaum's study of female sexuality and empire defines what she calls "torrid zones." She examines the ways Europeans mapped out a sexual geography in natural histories. Sexual license and

libidinous energy are repeatedly associated with hot climates. British domesticity was represented as "antithetical to sexual heat," 8. See her discussions of Oliver Goldsmith and David Hume, 2-21. She and Bleys locate the discourses on the homoerotic within the torrid zones. Bleys calls this tropicalization, 36-39.

[3] Conant and Franklin, 13-25, both argue that sexual politics have been a primary interest in oriental tales since the early eighteenth century. Byron's interest in the tales as a means of sexual expression came through Beckford's Vathek, his bedside book.

[4] These discourses would include the novels , conduct books, and sermons. See Preus and Stone for discussion of marriage.

[5] Among late-twentieth-century critics, opinions about the number of narrators range from one to twelve. McGann argues that there is one controlling narrator. Leask says two; Firestone suggests four; Wolfson and Manning as many as ten, 790-91. I am assuming an initial bard, for the Invocation, an editor-poet who reveals a fragmented plot and who allows several other perspectives to be voiced, a monk, and the Giaour.

[6] See Praz for discussion of the Miltonic Satan in Byron's Giaour, 64.

[7] Butler describes this position of the female Other in relation to the heterosexual man using Lacan's idea of the phallic possession depending on lack. Leila serves as "the Phallus to be the signifier of the desire of the Other . . . the Other of a (heterosexualized) masculine desire . . . This is an Other that constitutes not the limits of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of masculine self-elabortion," 44. The phallus is the sign of power in the socially symbolic order. So a woman in a heterosexual order provides the sign of a man's social authority.

[8] In her discussion of Don Juan, Franklin argues that Byron as a Romantic individualist rejects "the notion of reforming society through propagating an ideal of female chastity," 100-101. I agree with Franklin but believe that Byron formulates the idea in this poem, and that his own experience of lost ideals of nation-states as well as his rejection of sodomy laws and their enforcement are what produce his anxiety about nation-states producing sexual ideals. Only later does he really consider the social realities of women. And, as Franklin asserts, in Don Juan, Byron resists the "suppression and control of the female libido, for the imbalance of power fuels male aggression and leads to female manipulativeness," 101. Byron was already considering this effect of male power on gender relations (and vice versa) in the Spanish maid segment of Childe Harold I.

[9] Byron's tale is marked by the characteristics Sedgewick has identified with gothic novels, which expose the homosexual panic of the early nineteenth century. The tale is preoccupied with absolutes of license and prohibition and dominated by threats of violence. Sedgewick says that terror in the gothic novel is generated by the threat that the sign of woman, which mediates homosocial desires between two men, will drop out of the love triangle and expose the dominant desire of one man for another within the compulsory heterosexual system of early modernity, 82. This, she argues, dramatizes the necessary identification of male homosexuality as a structuring term for male heterosexual empowerment, 105.

[10] Irigaray describes the order of modern homosocial life as an order of hom(m)o-sexuality: "Reigning everywhere, although prohibited in practice, hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women, matter, or signs, and heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, or relations among men," 172. In this poem, the body of exchange is finally exposed as the sodomitic body.

[11] For a study of European writers' fascination with the orient as a site of voyeuristic homoeroticism, and in particular with the ways male writers inscribe the death of foreign sodomitic relations, see Boone, 89-107. Boone argues an anxiety over the loss of narrative authority, which writers associate with heterosexual potency. Henry Miller, for example, writes, "One could not continue to live here without practicing a sort of death—hashish or boys or food," qtd in Boone 96.

[12] Spivak says that Kipling uses images of India's non-progressiveness as a point of contrast to support the New Woman of Western culture. Such failure does not provide any real knowledge of another culture, only superficial images. This is translation as violation, and I would suggest an accurate description of Byron's concern for the "costume" of the oriental world with little recognition of the culture of the Ottoman world.

[13] See Nussbaum's discussion of the fetishized trope of the Muslim religion and despotic patriarch 191-210.

[14] For a discussion of the condemnation of Islam and subsequently the Ottoman empire by Westerners using sodomy as a sign of their perversion, see Boswell 279 and Bleys 19-53.

[15] Byron's own letters and notes on the Ottoman empire from his visits to the Levant do not portray Turkish men in these racially stereotyped ways. He comments on the kindness of his Turkish hosts, becomes enamoured of a young Turkish prince, and admits he did not learn enough about them, and hence, "If it is difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say: they are not treacherous; they are not cowardly; they do not burn heretics" CPW 2:210. His use of the Muslim ruler, however, is not without knowledge of the many allusions such a figure has in British writing. When Byron describes his Greek lover, Euthathius Georgiou, he says they shared "embraces enough to ruin a county in England" BLJ 2:7. Byron's perspective is myopic. He uses his creation of an Eastern world as an object to direct an attack on England. I think it is important to continue to work at "unfixing" racialized stereotypes as Bhabha suggests 18-36. The beautiful brown boys and the sodomitic tyrant of Turkey cannot be written and rewritten unproblematically by just identifying an expressed or repressed homosexuality.

[16] Thorslev points out the irony of the Byronic anti-hero; his comment is especially pertinent in regard to the unexamined imperatives of an idealized heterosexuality: "Make your protagonist a Hero of Sensibility in his regard for women, and this characteristic alone will mitigate all other crimes, no matter how Gothic" Byronic 55. Gothic might be translated as being marked by homophobia or racial anxiety.

Chapter Four

Disturbing Gender: The Bride of Abydos

Following the publication of The Giaour, Byron capitalized on the success of his oriental tale and wrote two more, The Bride of Abydos (1813) and The Corsair (1814). Each of these tales is at least superficially different from The Giaour. Byron abandons the complex narrator and fragmented plot for more straightforward plotting and a singular narrative voice with some use of dialogue. The poems also seem to have a more autobiographical imagination; the impulse of a romantic poet to express and even confess himself, though veiled, is never completely absent from Byron's writing. Melancholy and the coded language of Byron's methodiste mark the poems with traces of the homographesis that continues to underwrite Byron's interest in exploring the relationship of sexed bodies to social regulation and the law. In Fiery Dust, Jerome McGann writes, "The tales are repetitive to a fault, not so much in the matter of theme as of versification" (162). McGann does not in his brief comments talk about versification; rather, he points to the similarity of tone in the tales and to a thematic connection. In his discussion of the thematics of the poems, McGann suggests that each is a study of Eros. Each "tells the story of a frustrated love and the war of repression within a context where time and contingency are . . . emphasized" (162). McGann goes on to argue that Byron tries to unite the parallel worlds of the gods and mortals within his theme of Eros. Provocatively, McGann writes that the themes of the tales are the same as those of the "Thyrza Cycle" poems and are handled with the same tone. McGann makes no mention of Byron's

homosexuality and offers no explanation of what the link between the tone of the Thyrza lyrics and the tales might imply. Homosexual desire and its thematics almost escape having meaning in McGann's discussion. However, McGann's suggestion is significant and the "war of repression" that Byron fights is the repression of homosexuality in an increasingly heterosexual culture. The Thyrza poems are the series of six grief poems Byron wrote for his lover, John Edleston, between October, 1811, and March of 1812. Byron (like McGann) does not use Edleston's name; instead he substitutes the name Thyrza—an ungendered name for an English audience. Byron does obliquely identify Edleston in a letter to Robert Dallas written just after he wrote the October poems: "They relate to the same person I have mentioned in canto 2d, and the conclusion of the poem" (BLJ 2:121), which I have previously discussed in my writing on Childe Harold as elegiac lyrics written for Edleston. It is perhaps ironic that when the poems were published with Childe Harold in 1812, in the Edinburgh Review, the same publication in which Henry Brougham had panned Hours of Idleness, Francis Jeffrey, believing Thyrza to be a woman, singled out the Thyrza lyrics as especially praiseworthy, including among the best lines of the volume, this one: "Ours too the glance none saw beside" (Jeffrey, "Childe" B 2: 841). Obscured desires seem to please the regulated sexuality of British society, and Byron, skilled at diving into the difficult currents of public discourse, is no longer the writer of hobbling verses.

I want to return to McGann and turn from gods to focus more on mortality, contingency, and what McGann calls parallel worlds, to suggest that throughout the tales Byron uses the Eastern world to turn back on British society his criticism of

sexing practices and discursive constructions of sexed identities. McGann has previously described this as always being a strategy of Byron's writing. The elegiac tone of the Thyrza lyrics becomes a very important link between the inscription of homosexuality and Byron's subversive renderings of the regulations of sexual subjectivity.[1] I read these poems to give attention to the significance of Byron's homography within this examination of Byron's tales. The ever ghostly presence of homosexuality continues to signify, predominantly in the elegiac and finally tragic tone of the poem. This tone provides a frame for Byron's subersive representations of the gendered relations of heterosexual marriage and the laws of nation-states. I consider here the ways the death of the bride and groom, the not-quite-ideal couple of The Bride of Abydos, owes a debt to Byron's reactions to the restrictions against homosexual meaning in British society. I also explore how the conflicts of particular silences of homosexual meaning permeate the constitution of Byron as a speaking subject, as a writer whose sexual subjectivity is contingent upon the sexual discourses of his day.

In her discussion of drag, Judith Butler writes that sexed subjects can find "ways of being occupied and occupying the law" that disarticulate the power of the law that compels the fear of punishment (122). Butler argues that one means of calling the legitimacy of the law into question is through hyperbolic repetition. I would argue that another means of occupying the law to disarticulate the regulations of sexing practices is through a use of irony. Within these tales, Byron uses both irony and hyperbolic representations of gender to reiterate and to disarticulate the regulatory laws of marriage that legitimate a normalized heterosexual couple. Male

and female bodies, presented as series metonymies hyperbolically strung together, are costumed, denaturalized, and made foreign. The characters over-dramatize the significance of the sexed body in relation to the laws and constitution of an empire. Like the figures of mollies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Byron's use of irony and hyperbolic representations of gender and heterosexual performance in this tale denaturalize gender and desire. They point toward homosexual camp of the twentieth century, which offers an oppositional critique of bourgeois essentialism of the subject and a dominant heterosexual order. However, Byron's writing of the early nineteenth century differs from camp in its gravity of tone, the poetic commitment to elegy, and a sense of the tragedy of sexual regulation.[2] Characters die as they assume in exaggerated fashion the sexual subjectivity assigned to them by the state's laws and the laws of discourse. In The Bride of Abydos and, as I will show in the next chapter, in The Corsair, sexual subjectivity is constituted as a form of sacrifice. Ironically, the characters, who are over-defined in relation to gendered signification, do not achieve union within bonds of marriage as the title, Bride, might indicate, nor do they find any satisfying heterosexual union. They end as impossible, phantasmal signs.

I. The Bride: Marriage and Empire

In The Bride of Abydos, marriage is presented as a tyrannical and unattainable bond, rather than as a system for the safe transmission of property, Edmund Burke's description of marriage and the domestic family in his argument for a conservatism based on an idealized past and on historical continuity. In Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Burke says that within the British

political system, legitimate inheritance and the patriarchal family secure the nation state:

> In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame
> of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up
> the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties;
> adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family
> affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing the warmth of all their
> combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our
> sepulchers, and our altars. . . . The idea of inheritance furnishes a sure
> principle of conservation . . . .we transmit our government
> and our privileges in the same manner in which
> we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives." (119-120)

This passage reveals the ways marriage and the domestic couple are conceptualized as a central part of securing the inheritance, the customs, and the resources of the nation-state. Keeping boundaries "inseparable" would seem at best illusory in a nation that during the eighteenth century had come to depend upon overseas trade for its economic base. Despite the loss of the American colonies, between 1700 and 1800 in Britain, imports had quadrupled and exports had greatly increased. Ship-building, marine insurance, brokerage activities and professional seamen were only a few of the results of such economic development. With the wars between 1793 and 1815, economic stability was threatened a number of times, but still dependent on foreign trade. Such organizations as the East India Company became vehicles for the expansion of empire (Elton 160-235). Seemingly, then, the regulation of

(re)production is a highly significant aspect of the nation's discursive insistence on conserving an illusory unity of national identity. But the tastes of Englishmen and of domestic ties, changing because of imports and roving seamen, continued to escape into the anxious meanings of the sexed subject. Byron's ironic presentation of the death of marriage and of gendered subjects underscores the difficulty of such idealistic formulations within an emerging empire. Byron's poem also represents the tyranny of using sexuality to tighten national boundaries.

In The Bride of Abydos, gendered bodies cannot survive the compulsions of the state's laws. The female character, Zuleika, figures femininity as an imperial prop within the confinement of an oppressive social system. The male character, Selim, figures masculinity as a foreign territory one enters at great risk, whether he assumes a legitimate or delegitimated form of masculinity. Byron both reproduces and exposes the collective material and social forces that produce and regulate sexed bodies as readable signs within social systems, systems of an empire: the meanings of bodies are contingent upon an empire of signs.

II. Methodiste and Mistranslation

I want to stress that all sexual meaning within the tale is contingent upon the tone, which enslaves and at times breaks into the meaning of the tale and into the narrative voice. The grief of naming and misnaming sets the tone of the poem. What might have proved to be witty satire like that found Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock," from which Byron borrows in this tale, turns in the end toward the ambiguity of mistranslation; finally its effectiveness is weighted down by its tone.

No matter how the poet or the poem seek to escape the regulations of the laws of sexual discourse, complete escape proves impossible.

The Bride of Abydos begins with Byron's inscription as narrator; he signs his name to the beginning of the poem and offers it as a gift to a friend, Lord Holland. But he also offers another signature within the poem itself, the homographesis of his methodiste at both the beginning and the end of the poem. The Bride begins with a landscape of botanical metaphors:

> Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
> Where flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
> Where the light wings of Zephyr oppressed with perfume,
> Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;
> Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
> And the voice of the nightingale never is mute. (1: 5-10)

The Gul, the name for a rose, though geographically distant from the Greek hyacinth, is not far removed from the homoerotic denominations of his letters on methodiste to Charles Skinner Matthews. The image of the nightingale and the Gul appears in Beckford's Vathek several times as it does in Byron's tales. Besides Vathek, Byron had read Stephen Weston's pederastic gloss on the nightingale imagery found in Moral Aphorisms in Arabic (1805) (Murray 132-41, Blackstone "Triple" 333). The rose and the nightingale, in Persian writings, are traditional symbols for sexual ecstasy in intercourse, whether between a man and woman or between two men. This replacing of the hyacinths with other botanical metaphors leaves the traces of Byron's attempt to sign what is "never mute," but is muted by the air of a poetry

oppressed by a desire for perfume, the desire to cover over what might otherwise prove to be an odious signature of homosexual significance.

Byron's homographesis is found at the beginning and the end of the tale. The homoerotic allusions to Beckford and Persian writing, as well as the grief of the nightingale's song at the end of the poem, mark this writing with the thematics of the Thyrza cycle; the loss of the ideal Edleston is the frame for this tale. At the end of the tale, the nightingale's song offers a "note so piercing and profound," that it "will shape and syllable its sound / Into Zuleika's name" (2: 710-12). To these poetic lines, which seem perfectly clear on their own, Byron adds a footnote, a line from Milton: "And airy tongues that syllable men's names." Rather than clarify the lines, the note reshapes the poem's meaning to point outside the poem, to men's names. Oppressive air and airy tongues waft together in Byron's allusions to the muse of the dead and beautiful men; such allusions both cloud and signify the names that must be syllabized, broken apart and allowed to drift in the airy tongue of a speaking homosexual subject who cannot easily be caught or traced. The use of Milton secures and obscures Byron's signature. By connecting himself with Milton, the poet places himself in British tradition, so as not to be lost in the obscurity of a foreign tale or a misplaced name, like Edleston's or Matthews' or even Beckford's. Finally, with this elusive embrace of English names, Byron turns his poem toward a British audience. Byron commandeers and covers the thematic turnings of this poem with the Miltonic allusion, and with other intertexual traces to such British writers as Beckford and Alexander Pope. As McGann admits of all Byron's writings, it moves "referentially toward . . . [a] socio-historical framework" ("Hero" 296), which Byron

reflexively accommodates into his poem through sets of intertexual relations. Such is the beginning; such is the end of all Byron's reflections of sexuality in these tales. Like the other Orientalized writings, this tale will suffer mistranslations in its twisting and turnings. The tales are repetitive to a fault, in theme and even in the heroic couplets. For Byron, who would like to couple men as heroes in his poems, desire is repeatedly and tragically displaced; the fault is not Byron's. The poems reveal his fixation, the signature of Byron, a signature formulated as a desire to speak and to displace the pain of homosexual silences. They reveal a stylized self; the poetry of displacement allows Byron to secure the name of a British poet. For the poet, a philhellene, a Greek lover in England, whose self and voice are always contingent upon the regulation of the gods of Eros, Thanatos, the memory of death, is always at hand.

The tale itself has a significant name; originally it was to be called Zuleika, the word into which the syllables of men's names disappear. But the final title, The Bride of Abydos, points to other twists in the tale, its irony. The so-called bride, despite two suitors, never becomes a bride; she is killed before any wedding ever takes place. Such irony is similar to that found in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's naming of the wedding guest in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The guest never makes it to a wedding because he is caught in the spell of a seaman's tale. It is a tale about a sailor who "having passed the Line" assaults a bird of the southern hemisphere; he has passed beyond the English line of law and custom and committed an act against nature, and against "a Christian soul." The seaman's action results in his being forced to wear an "Albatross hung about [his] neck" like a noose. His crime also

results in the death of "many men so beautiful"(235). Curiously, at their death, "a thousand slimy things / Live on," along with the seaman himself. This mariner, who has traveled off course, loses the ability to pray but is inflicted with perpetual need to confess. In fact, he confesses in such a protracted way that the ironically named wedding guest is forced outside of marriage: "the wedding-guest / Turn'd from the bridegroom's door" (653-54). Here one might suggest that it is not only a coincidence that in 1797, the year before the publication of the "The Ancient Mariner" in Lyrical Ballads, the newspapers had reported the sensational investigations of a case of sodomy on board the HMS Indomitable, for the anxieties that surround the naming of sodomy and orders of marriage run parallel and speak themselves unspeakable. "Slimy things," like semen, slip out of control and into many gothicized and glossed over sites like Coleridge's poem. Sexuality, its desires, its customs, its meanings, are matters of repetitious citations, confessions and disavowals that hold "the glittering eye" of subjects "passive," in the "various strain[s]" (96) of obfuscation.[3] Perhaps the irony of the wedding guest's name too easily slips away from the lofty discourses of a primary imagination of the individual subject. An impenetrable, romanticized subject can escape from things conceived as "contra naturum" into imaginative, supernatural meaning. Sex and death can remain mysteriously eroticized and intertwined into the body of a ship made female, so long as nature serves the imaginative escapes.

III. The Silenced Bride

Byron described The Bride of Abydos as "something of 'The Giaour' cast--but not so somber though rather more villainous" (BLJ 3: 157). The Bride opens

with the figure of a despotic ruler, similar to the Ottoman ruler of the previous poem. Again the oriental world turns back to criticize western law and structures of empire. Zuleika is the daughter of a ruler, a Pacha, of the Ottoman Empire, the Giaffir. He has chosen a husband for her, Osman, a large landholder who will contribute to her father's wealth. Zuleika is the only child of a widowed father, "the last of Giaffir's race" (2:623). He anxiously guards her purity by keeping her locked in a "women's tower." Her virginity is her dowry, the currency of exchange between the Osman and the Giaffir, and as he suggests: " Woe to the head whose eye beheld / My child Zuleika's face unveil'd!" (1: 38-39). The Giaffir is referred to many times as a "haughty" despot (1:45, 1:439, 2: 268), "begirt with many a gallant slave" (1: 20). His only pastime is the "game of mimic slaughter" (1:247), but he is the lawful authority of the land. As Caroline Franklin suggests in a study of Byron's heroines, when the Giaffir speaks to his daughter to tell her of his marriage plans for her, his "language is reminiscent of punishment or even execution rather than marriage" (49):

> [']Hence, lead my daughter from her tower,
> Her fait is fix'd this very hour:
> Yet not to her repeat my thought;
> By me alone be duty taught!'
> 'Pacha! To hear is to obey.' (1: 40-44).

His word of law is final for his daughter and for his other subjects. In the figure of Giaffir, the laws of familial generation and the reproduction of the nation's power are wed. Marriage is conceived as a politics of exchange and property: "Affection

chain'd her to [her father's] heart; / Ambition tore the links apart" (1:191-92). The Giaffir describes his plans for his daughter as a means of maintaining Muslim territory; the ruler intends to "well. . .keep their lands," by marrying her "to the kinsman of the Bey Oglue" (1: 2004-206). Zuleika does not contradict her father; she has no voice in relation to his designs for her: "In silence bow'd the virgin's head" (1: 219). The sexual subject's silence is a gesture produced and necessitated by the orders of state and religious law embodied in the father's voice, what Lacan has identified as the symbolic order. I use the term symbolic order judiciously to suggest the law and Name-of-the-Father here not as an unalterable concept, for, on several levels, the poem will challenge the stability of the symbolic order in the characterization of both Selim and Zuleika. Here, Zuleika's sexual subjectivity is subordinated to a symbolic order, and as we will see partitioned off from herself:

> And now thou know'st thy father's will;
> All that thy sex hath need to know:
> 'Twas mine to teach obedience still--
> The way to love, thy lord may show. (1: 215-18)

Like a courtroom verdict, the boundaries of sex and love are delivered. The Giaffir's voice of authority marks the boundaries of female sexuality and procreation, and thereby, the state is to protect and preserve itself through familial structures and law. As the poem progresses, it becomes clear that not only is the entrapment of female sexuality required for the social order to maintain itself, but masculinity too is a command performance in relation to the laws which compel sexual subjectivity.

Both Zuleika and her cousin Selim, with whom she is in love, are constituted within and destroyed by these despotic laws that conjoin sexual subjectivity and nationality.

IV. The Effeminate Lover

After the Giaffir has laid down the law for his daughter, Selim, who has believed himself to be the son of the Pacha, is called to come before the ruler. He discovers that the Giaffir has killed his real father, which means he is not Zuleika's brother, but her cousin. When Selim goes before his father-uncle, his explanation of his having taken Zuleika off to the cypress groves reveals a character being pulled between two forces, the laws of masculine authority and the desire for all things associated with his sister, a feminine self:

> We to the cypress groves had flown,
> And made earth, main, and heaven our own!
> There linger'd we, beguiled too long
> With Mejnoun's tale, or Sadi's song;
> Till I, who heard the deep tambour
> Beat thy Divan's approaching hour,
> To thee, and to my duty true,
> Warn'd by the sound, to greet thee flew. (1: 69-76)

When Zuleika and Selim are together, wherever they are is their own; they are not in a battle for territory or power. Selim allows poetry and song to beguile him; language does not beat him into the submission of duty. Significantly, young Selim was able to wake his sister from her sleep to take her with him because he could still pass in and out of the harem with his key to the women's tower. He is still enough

like a woman that he is not a threat to women, nor they to him. But these lines also indicate that fear, rather than affection, binds him to his duty, his response to the commands of the law and his father. The deep tambour of the father's law and voice makes the approaching hour of his being called to perform his own masculine duty resound as though it is a sentence.

During their encounter, the Giaffir tells Selim that he is not his son. Because Selim is "Greek in soul" and the son of a foreign slave, he is less than a man. The Giaffir criticizes Selim's effeminate gestures: "when thine arm should bend the bow, / And hurl the dart, and curb the steed," Selim instead lies about, "listless," watching "unfolding roses blow" (1: 85-86, 91, 89). Selim's "less than woman's hand" (1: 99) is viewed with contempt by the Giaffir. The Giaffir's challenge to Selim continues. The beginning of the following passage echoes the fisherman's words to the Giaour; the Giaffir "marks" Selim with difference in order to describe his masculine inadequacies:

> 'Come hither, boy—what no reply?
> I mark thee—and I know thee too;
> But there be deeds thou dar'st not do:
> But if thy beard had manlier length,
> And if thy hand had skill and strength,
> I'd joy to see thee break a lance,
> Albeit against my own perchance.' (1: 119-25)

Selim's effeminacy is marked by his Greek soul, its foreigness, its delicate tendencies, its familiarity with women, and his inability to stand up to the law of the

father in a combative way. Like his sister's, Selim's physical gestures and preferences are qualities opposed to the essential attributes of a warrior. Like his sister, Selim is silenced in relation to the law. He has "no reply" to defend himself against the law of the father which denominates him. He is named and subject to the consequences of such naming.

The ability Selim has to move in and out of the harem (he can turn "the Haram's grating key") marks him as an impotent sign within this order of meaning (1: 67). Like Beckford's Gulchenrouz in Vathek, Selim is a sexually ambiguous, equivocal character. Selim's effeminacy of gesture and appearance is the metonymic sign that plagued the discourses of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, which sought to use effeminacy as a sword of discourse to cut out figures of men, for the real swords had been banished from the public. In her study of effeminacy in English satire, Susan Shapiro argues that the hysterical rages against effeminacy reveal the unvoiced suspicion that "gender is really socially constructed" (411). Selim, like the person described in doggerel verse printed in "The Times" of 1796, is a "male or Female" (qtd in Shapiro 410); his movement between the Giaffir and Zuleika, the Harem and the world of the Divan, and his gestures are movements and "shapes . . . equivocal" (qtd. in Shapiro 410). But Selim will not be allowed such equivocations. The sentencing and fixing law will compel him to action. The deep tambour warns that his sentence will be a punished and punishing masculinity.

The idealization of the relationship between Zuleika and her cousin Selim, before the denials of the despotic father compel a marriage of authority and power, is not unlike the romantic childhood pseudo-sibling relationship of Gulchenrouz and

the boys in Beckford's Vathek. The naturalness and friendship between the sexes found in childhood was a common theme in women's writing of the era and Byron will repeat such unions in the figures of Juan and Haidee in Don Juan. Jane Austen provides an example of love based on the companionship of cousins in Mansfield Park. She suggests that it is preferable to either a marriage of convenience or to the dangers of the physical attractions of strangers. Byron's working out of the relationship between Zuleika and Selim differs, however, by making their romantic love the source of armed revolt against the despotic law and by raising the temporary suggestion of incest. Until Selim's confrontation with the Giaffir, he and Zuleika have believed themselves to be brother and sister. Byron wants no illegitimacy left veiled.

V. Femininity and Empire: The Lady in the Tower

The similarities between the sexes must be displaced as the poem proceeds. No related sexual subject, no sexed similarities can be maintained within the social narratives which insist on wedding opposite sexes. The poem splits Zuleika and Selim apart. In the description of Zuleika, Byron's close approximation of Pope's Belinda at her dressing table in "The Rape of the Lock" begins mockingly to effect a separation of the sexes, and points to a female body engendered through excess. The result is narrative irony. Byron was fascinated with Pope as "the best of poets"; Pope's satire of human vanity remained central to Byron's irony and humor. In the women's tower, where Zuleika has been commanded to return by the Giaffir, the unruly fetishism of the exotic object affords a twist in the poem's perspective. The tower itself suggests that the sign of woman can be contained; but as with a wedding

ring, a vagina, the hole in a pillory, meanings slip through and out from delicate signs which have openings. In fact, within Zuleika's tower, there is too much to meet the eye, an excess which seems deceptive. The sign of woman and the signs of orientalism are anxiously interwoven into a tapestry:

> And o'er her silken Ottoman
> Are thrown the fragrant beads of amber,
> O'er which her fair fingers ran;
> Near these, with emerald rays beset,
> (How could she thus that gem forget?)
> Her mother's sainted amulet,
> Whereon engraved the Koorsee text,
> Could smooth this life, and win the next;
> And by her comboloio lies
> A Koran of illumined dyes;
> And many a bright emblazon'd rhyme . . .
> And round her lamp of fretted gold
> Bloom flowers in urns of China's mould;
> The richest world of Iran's loom,
> And Sheeraz' tribute of perfume;
> All that can eye or sense delight
> Are gather'd in that gorgeous room:
> But yet it hath an air of gloom.
> She, of this Peri cell the sprite,

What doth she hence, and on so rude a night? (2: 64-74, 78-86)

Zuleika, like Pope's Belinda, is the literary equivalent of an imported luxury of empire, a fetishized commodity, an exchange of signifiers and cultures. A bride, usually the sign of the generative nature of tradition, is a blend of cultures that have been feminized and eroticized, but that are still entwined with the laws of religion. Like Belinda, who sits amidst a Bible, billet-doux and imported combs, the feminine sign is a contact zone between cultures. An inescapable hybridity is ironically posited in relation to religious laws. The appeals to religious texts are attempts, citations of supernatural law, to enforce the naturalization of woman as the significant object of desire, and the proper mate for man within an empire. "The spoil of nations . . . shall bedeck [the] bride" (2: 413).

The empire itself is mocked in the first line of the passage. As in French pornographic writings of the eighteenth century, furniture takes on significance. The capital O for the Ottoman puns on the idea of empire as a piece of furniture; it interlocks the domestic world with the nation-state. It also reveals the impossibility of fully regulating meaning in an empire remaking its signs. Byron, a connoisseur of erotic literature, may well have been aware of the eighteenth century French *galante* tales, inspired by Antoine Galland's translation of Le Mille et un nuits (1704-1717), in which exotic oriental settings were frequently used to present some mildly erotic plots interwoven with satiric observations of the untrustworthy nature of sexuality. I am reminded of them because of Byron's punning on the ottoman. Lush furniture (or magic carpets) often had its way with characters in these tales. Patrick Kearney includes one of these tales in A History of Erotic Literature. In "Le Canape couleur

de few" (1714), an aging pimp marries a young bride. He is impotent, so the settee he has purchased turns into a virile young man, Chevalier Commode, to satisfy her. The adventures of the commode go on and on as the settee is sold and offers some satire of domestic or sexual arrangements (60). What interests me in particular is the idea that material objects (particularly foreign imports) take on the possibility of transforming sexuality and marriage. Such tales mark both the changing possibilities and anxieties surrounding new forms of desire produced within the discourses and exchanges of new economies. The attempt at containment within the system of signs embodies the anxieties of keeping pure a generative motherland (re)producing itself as an empire. The word Ottoman does not remain any more stable than the word Zuleika. Foreign imports, words or pieces of furniture, remake the meaning of national identities. Zuleika does not remain in her tower.

Zuleika does not become a bride. She moves toward destruction, toward her own demise. While Zuleika bespeaks the spoils of empire, she and the silk-draped Ottoman mock the idea of cultural purity. Fabrics from India and urns from China cover over the significance of the law. The Koran of "illumined dyes" is as lost amidst the bright array as was Belinda's Bible. The accoutrements of conquest displace woman and the laws of marriage and inheritance into a locus of excess. And the narrator's query, "What does she hence and on so rude a night?" (2: 86), becomes a particularly poignant question, but absurd and ironic. She waits for a man to decide her fate. She does nothing but bear the weight of inscription. And what significance does this figure, this woman, this series of metonymies have? The

inability of the narrator to explain Zuleika fully suggests the endless possibilities of significance, of fabrication in this mixture of signs.

Even Zuleika's possession of her mother's sainted amulet, which should elaborate the significance of woman as mother, as the generative source of empire, is not fully effective. The saintedness of the mother suggests something utterly fantastic. The narrator goes on; the mother's amulet, engraved with a Korsee text, points to the inscription of the body of woman as a mnemonic device. The inscription defines for Zuleika her own place as mother within her society. But nostalgia is also written upon her—she is signed with the orders of law and religion. Her body is written over like a linguistic topoi to remind men who acquire new objects of conquest to return them to the motherland. The roving men of empire will return home to the body of the nation. Desire is directed homeward to ensure that the spoils of empire will be secured for the state. Inscription of language creates the boundaries of desire. The rule of home will be female, heterosexual and naturalized as the body of a woman waiting for a man and a man returning to a woman. But Zuleika, in a "cell," has an air of gloom, of sexual bondage, about her. Within this narrative, Zuleika, like everything that surrounds her, proves to be narrative excess, which will be cut out and destroyed before she can be wed to any man. The ending of the tale will not fabricate a wedding, a narrative sign that promises the generation of empire and the reproduction of its desires and its law of sentences. Zuleika proves to be an impossibility for her father and for Selim to conquer, but she brings about her own end. She rejects the marriage contract her father has proposed for her: "His wrath would not revoke my word" (1: 416). She remains faithful to her bond to

Selim. Her escape from the father's rule challenges the authority of the father and the stability of the symbolic order, but she dies as a result.

VI. Excessive Masculinity

Selim becomes determined to rebel against his uncle and win Zuleika from him. But for the purposes of such a confrontation with the father figure and the law, he must transform his identity. The "less than woman's hand" becomes armed against the Giaffir. Selim's disturbing change of his gendered identity, represented through the effects of a change of costume, presents an excess of violent and dramatic contrasts. Masculinity is presented in a hyperbolic figure as Selim prepares himself to stand up against the Giaffir:

> His robe of pride was thrown aside,
> His brow no high-crown'd turban bore,
> But in its stead a shawl of red,
> Wreathed lightly round, his temples wore:
> That dagger, on whose hilt the gem
> Where worthy of a diadem,
> No longer glitter'd at his waist,
> Where pistols unadorn'd were braced;
> And from his belt a sabre swung . . . (2: 131-139)

As with Zuleika, the sexed body is a metonymic excess. The resignification of Selim strikes against and incorporates the seductive powers of masculinity as authority. His taking up the sign of masculinity enacts the masochism of creating sexual difference. The signs of the hardened phallic body are glittering, glaringly extreme,

the dagger, the sabre, the pistols, overstatements. But they are mobile: they swing, hang, and are braced; their locus shifts, yet in many ways they are repetitions of themselves. They are signs modern and ancient, a sex caught between histories, a sex ironized against invasion. The excess of phallic signs presents a crisis of masculinity. I am mindful as I read these signs that behind the hyperbolic insistence on the metonymies of the phallus lies a synecdochal logic. As Judith Butler suggests in her deconstruction of Lacan: "The phallus functions as a synecdoche, for insofar as it is a figure of the penis, it constitutes an idealization and isolation of a body part, and further, the investment in that part with the force of the symbolic law" (139). She argues that if bodies are sexed in relation to having or being the phallus, bodies are differentiated by being subject to the law of the Father, "which is to say they are compelled to approximate a 'position' which is itself the result of a synecdochal collapse of masculinity into a 'part' and a corollary idealization of the synecdoche as the governing symbol of the symbolic order" (139). Byron's hyperbolic use of this phallic logic insists that masculinity is inevitably a crisis of signs.

The ambiguous sign of the turban is not split in this tale, but removed altogether. Within the poem, the abandoned turban signals Selim's belief that he has freed himself from his subjection under the authority of the Giaffir. But the removal also invokes that fallen turban in "The Giaour" and the writer's struggle to separate his own sexual ambiguity from the authority of his inscription, an inscription of daggers and sabre. To the description above, the narrator adds to his excess more meddling; Selim wears a "golden plated vest / [that] Clung like a cuirass to his breast / The greaves below his knee that wound / With silvery scales were sheathed and

bound" (1:143-46). The signs bear down with their weight. Masculinity is marked as a defense. Wounds or ruptures in Selim's body and in the body of the narrative seem inevitable as the poem's meanings are doubled with a homonym of grieving, the "greaving" wounds. This grieving sheaths and binds the grief of a sexuality that is a weight, a burden, and an excessive possibility of meaning. These signs, draped with red, hardened and glaring with diadems, like the signs which demarcate Zuleika, are fetishistic, and more than meets the eye. The sexing of a man bears so much weight that it wounds and binds identity even as it creates it.

Selim believes that he actively chooses to perform as a man. He signals change in himself by selecting from a limited set of prospects. He throws aside, braces, and belts himself to become a threat to the laws of the nation-state and the father, but he simultaneously becomes subject to the laws of masculinity. This proves to be a double irony. Selim reproduces the order of masculinity prescribed by the Giaffir, whose authority over Selim, it should be remembered, was based on a lie about paternity. These incongruities suggest the instability of the symbolic order. By the time Selim goes to meet with Zuleika and tell of his plans, he has changed. He has made himself a pirate, and he tells Zuleika he has a band of men who will fight with him. It is Zuleika's intention to abandon her father to be with Selim. However, Zuleika's response to Selim's metalling with his sexuality, his hardening of his body into one that seems like an erect phallus, proves to be tragic.[4] This excessive covering of himself in hardness and Selim's dismissal of the soft fabric of the turban make him foreign to the one he had been most like. When Zuleika sees Selim, she stands as she did in relationship to the sentence of her father: "Zuleika,

mute and motionless / Stood like that statue of distress" (2: 491-2). All things feminine and effeminate are in that moment deadened and silenced. "Each man kills the thing he loves" wrote Oscar Wilde ("The Ballad of Reading Gaol" 37); it is the demand of manning oneself. Zuleika dies silently in her despair. And Selim is killed in battle.

VII. Misreading and Mistranslation

No bride is wed. The poem ends with the "Wul-wulleh" (2: 627), which defers the power of its own irony. The excesses of gender which leak out so much possibility for deconstructing the ties of nation-state, gender construction, and heterosexual contracts, fade into the elegiac tone at the end. The surrender to grief contains another point of irony. The song is described in a footnote as: "the death song of Turkish women. The 'silent slaves' are the men whose notions of decorum forbid complaint in public" (2: note on 627). Like the airy tongues which syllabized men's names in Zuleika, this note of the author turns again to his grief enslaved in silence. The poem enslaves homosexual meaning within a death song of the excesses of gendered meanings, within an erasure of heterosexual union, and within the death of the meaning of marriage. The punishing regulations of the laws of generation and gender are exaggerated into a twisted tongue, a despair, a violation of signs. The nightingale sings "Of absence, shame, pride, hate, revenge, remorse! / And, oh! That pang where more than Madness lies" (2: 644-45). The madness turns back to all that is unspeakable throughout Byron's poetry.

Two failings disrupt the potential of this poem to offer the kind of social criticism Pope's satire displayed. The possibilities of the turning to another culture

always creates in a work the possibility of mistranslation. Although Zuleika in particular marks the difficulty of controlling meaning within systems of cross-cultural exchange, she also suggests an impulse to turn the East into a Western commodity. The poem itself, its fetishization, effeminizing and despotizing of the Eastern world, disturbs the poem's significance as social criticism as much as does the weight of its tone. Too easily this hybridity might be read by a British audience that favors narratives of its own cultural unity as merely a sign of the excessive aspects of the orient. Displacements of the meaning of symbols within the hybridity of colonialist writing such as oriental tales results in a crisis of signs. Byron's fetishized collapse of the East and woman can both produce and escape this critique of the limits of British men's being able to authorize of their own sense of cultural purity through sexual representations. In The Location of Culture, Homi Bhabha argues that colonial hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation. "Denied knowleges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition." In an 1814 review of The Bride and The Corsair, Francis Jeffrey wrote:

> The savages and the barbarians that are in the world, [are] no doubt, very exact likenesses of those whom civilization has driven out of it; and they may be used accordingly [in ways] for which their ancient prototypes are found serviceable. ("Bride" 848).

The savage men of the Eastern world, who enforce extreme sexual oppression of women, can be perceived by the British citizen who reads this poem as a sign of his

own civilized progress. Western men don't oppress women, Jeffrey implies. Yet ironically, Jeffrey's next comments seek to put women in their proper place: "He has also made use of the gentleness and submission of the females . . . There is something so true to female nature in general, in his representations of this sort" ("Bride" 848). The converging norms of race and gender can resist subversion because of the poem's ambiguities.

Finally, like the rising lock of hair in Pope's poem, which seems to pull back the weight of his social criticism, the tone of The Bride moves toward a desire to lift itself above the decipherability of sexual meaning and rely upon the veiled knowledges of the Eastern world. The disavowal of law and marriage as ways to build the stable power of a nation-state turns into something almost untranslatable, to a grief that has made itself hideous and beautiful. Zuleika is memorialized as a "single rose" and "an early unrequited Love" that was "planted by despair" (2: 669-674). And Selim at the poem's end is also made mythic as:

> . . . a ghastly turban'd head:
> And hence extended by the billow,
> 'Tis named the 'Pirate-phantom's pillow!
> Where first it lay that mourning flower
> Hath flourished; flourisheth this hour,
> Alone and dewy, coldly pure and pale;
> As weeping Beauty's cheek at Sorrow's tale! (2: 725-732)

The poem moves toward a poetry of the self that denies and destroys the limitations of sexed subjects into mere objects, things not quite meaningful. It returns us to an

absence, to a death of purely English signs, to an obsession, to a death that is no longer merely the opposite of life, and to a place floating on the sea, a billow above the boundaries of nation-states. Such places and signs are almost unreadable within the discursive laws of sex and nation-states. Yet Byron turns to his own private grief in this ending. The signs have meaning only within a closed system and within the repetition of its own signs, and such romantic escapes do not change the laws of nation-states. Only the provocations of (re)reading have the compelling possibility of shifting the focus of discourse from the romance of unified subjects and nation-states to contingencies of subjectivity. Such readings might unravel "the ghastly turban'd head" of a poet, or pierce through the "mourning flower" to the "tales of sorrow" that cover over phantoms of despair, which, in turn, haunt the signs of regulated bodies.

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[1] While I have implied the signs of silenced homosexual discourse within McGann's writing, I am also aware that McGann himself argued in Romantic Ideology that: "When reading Romantic poems . . . we are to remember that their ideas—for example, ideas about the creativity of Imagination, about the centrality of the Self . . . and so forth—are all historically specific in a crucial and paradoxical sense" 134. And I am equally aware that sexual ideologies are part of what we must continue to examine in relationship to Romanticism because of the all too undisturbed nature of masculinity represented by the heightened sense of individuality authorized by the imaginative and creative mind of the Romantic artist. See Mellor, Cox 1-20, Copley and Whale. However, none of these arguments address the issues of masculinity I am raising with the discourse on sodomy as a historical context. There is repeatedly a dominant heterosexual perspective.

[2] See Meyers' collected essays on camp, which address the politics of queer camp as being distinct from Susan Sontag's interpretations of the sensibility of camp, Meyers 8. In particular, King discusses the mollies' dress and gestures as a protocamp homosexual enactment 23-50.

[3] Koestenbaum's reading of the homoerotic act of collaborative writing between Wordsworth and Coleridge offers a very provocative reading of "The Ancient Mariner" as Coleridge's erotic submission to Wordsworth and identifies the case of the HMS Indomitable, 71-111.

[4] In a fascinating study of the changing fashions of the late eighteenth century, Hollander argues that from 1650-1780 "men's shoulders ideally looked very narrow . . .the chests somewhat sunken, and on that slim figure the stomach swelled." However, men attempting to differentiate themselves more distinctly from women in the later part of the century donned "the materials of a new anatomical foundation. The one offering itself at the time, then present on the esthetic scene with fresh power,

was the heroic male nude of Classical antiquity" 83. Men's pear shaped bodies were reinvented so that shoulders were emphasized, the V of the male body pointed toward the head, the source of the rational power and the difference Wollstonecraft worked so hard to disrupt. Byron's emphasis on the changes of costume seems to mark the shifts in the sexed body in a particularly pertinent way. He was also often given to jibes at the dress of professional men and other costumes—the drabness and confinement. He was fond of his own Albanian costume as a means of escaping being threaded too tightly within the boundaries of English masculinity. His own fantasies of escape were perhaps as fantastic as Selim's.

Chapter Five

The Corsair: A Pirate and a Homicidal Woman, Disturbing Sexual Difference

The Corsair, which follows the publication of The Bride of Abydos, was offered as a gift to Thomas Moore.[1] In the introduction and dedication of the poem, Byron says: "I have deviated into the gloomy vanity of 'drawing from myself.'" Of the self he claims to draw from, he says he has already written so much that it should "demand a longer silence," but he cannot stop speaking (3: 149-50). Byron's writing admits within the poem a "subscription" of the self. The word intrigues; it suggests the authorizing and subjecting of the voice of the poet's self within the poem: the circumspect renderings of the poetic self take many deviant twists and turns. Sidonie Smith identifies several strategies for autobiography which resist censorship. One strategy for a contestatory autobiographical practice looks to the politics of fragmentation as a means to counter the centrifugal force of normative regimes of the self imposed in dominant discourses (155). Promoting possibilities of self-fragmentation and a politics of fragmentation reveals the cultural constructedness of the sexual subject. Within Byron's writing of the fragmented self, he does challenge the normalizing discourses of gender. To resist and to subscribe himself to the demands of homosexual silence, he disperses his sense of self among three characters, two women and a man. Within The Corsair, the indeterminacy of the question of voice and self is embodied in the contortions of gender and survival. The Corsair is a poem that traces and erases gendered figures several times in relation to a poetics of a subscribed, and even at times overt,

homographic meaning. As Byron's narrative moves through the shifting perspectives of gendered subjectivity within the poem, perhaps what he does offer us is what J. L. Swingle has called the Romantic self's potential for the "persistence of indetermination" (271), momentary flirtations of multiple perspectives of gendered subjectivity within the self which are inscribed and (de)scribed in poetic language. Cheryl Fallon Giuliano writes that within The Corsair, "the phallic Gulnare comments on the definitions of masculinity and femininity, and the inevitable power struggle engendered by considering these social codes binary opposites" (790). I would agree with Giuliano that gendered definitions are the focus of this poem, but factoring a third sex into the binary, the (silenced) effeminized subscribed voice of the poet, within the reading of the poem makes the problematics of gender codes an even more complex proposition. Byron is forced to speak of himself within the gendered terms of his historic period, which reinforces the prohibitions against speaking of homosexuality. At the same time, as he reiterates those prohibitions, he challenges the discursive stability of gendered subjectivity that the abject figure of the sodomite was meant to delimit.

To this I would add that reading this poem as a fragmented autobiography does not mean that such reading will produce a cohesive sense of Byron's homosexual subjectivity. As Paul DeMan suggests in "Autobiography as Defacement," because all understanding can only be produced in textual structures that employ tropological substitutions that underlie self-knowledge, autobiography cannot reveal "reliable self-knowledge—but . . . it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and totalization" (71). Byron's speaking of himself

within these variously gendered figures embodies a conflicted sense of self in relation to a (homo)sexual subjectivity not fully knowable.

By the time Byron wrote The Corsair, he had been back in England long enough to have his now infamous affair with Lady Caroline Lamb, the author of Glenavron, the novel that memorialized Byron as a villain after they broke up. Their courtship involved a number of episodes in which she cross-dressed as a page in order to please Byron. Byron had also been involved in a sexual relationship with his half-sister, Augusta. Byron's psycho-sexual identity has presented critics with a kind of theater of gendered conflicts. Giuliano's reading explores Byron's anxieties in relationship to women writers. She, following Marlon Ross and Sonia Hofkosh, argues that The Corsair and Lara represent Byron's fears of being sexually and professionally emasculated by women writers. Hofkosh has discussed Byron's anxiety about being the authorized property of a woman in relationship to Lamb (105). I am in fact very sympathetic in particular to Giuliano's reading because of the subtle nuances of gender she reads within this poem, and I rely on her reading. However, following the logic of my argument I want to make gender even more a disturbing factor in this reading of the poem by considering Byron's expression of grief for the lost male lover.

Byron's letters of this period often registered his own anxieties that writing effeminized him. The muting demands of an audience forced him to conceal what was a central aspect of himself. During Byron's writing of The Bride of Abydos, his friend, John Galt, said that after his return from the East, Byron was "so disturbed in mind, that he could not conceal his unhappiness, and frequently spoke

of leaving England forever" (HVSV: 51-58). Byron used his writing to cover over his unhappiness. He said that "[i]n rhyme, I can keep more away from the facts, but the thought always runs through, through . . . yes, yes through" (Nov. 17, 1813, BLJ 2: 3). In his journal entry of 24 November, 1813, Byron describes writing as a sign of "effeminacy, degeneracy and weakness." He asks, "Who would write who had anything better to do[?] . . . 'Actions,' I say, and not writing—least of all rhyme" are what make a man. Having to "deal with the audience in their own way" (BLJ 2: 88) results in feelings of shame. The adaptations to an audience and being unable to act directly against laws which delegitimize homosexual subjects take a toll on Byron's relationship to writing. The desire to resist being silenced and accommodating to the silences demanded by an audience result in a fractured sense of self, which in this poem he can only articulate within incohesive gendered subjectivities.

Having to deal with the audience in their own way, to subject his voice to denials, disavowals, displacements of both his social criticism of a heterosexual order and his own grief and homoerotic desire, resulted, over time, in his ascribing effeminacy to the act of writing and publication. He assumed the abjection society associated with sodomy, its shame. He continued to write, to subject himself to bourgeois readers. He continued to reinscribe his own gendered and sexual disorientation. He says the rhymes separate him from the facts, but the facts of sexual regulation and enforcement of sexual laws disturb the development of Byron's writing. In The Corsair, the despotic ruler, the Seyd, is a "tyrant" who teases and tempts subjects, sexual slaves, to rebel (3: 325-331). The characters' responses to an oppressive law become the focus, as they play out Byron's own

masochistic and abject relationship to writing and the deferrals of homosexual meaning to which he is subject. This poem and Lara allow textuality to recapitulate the complexity of Byron's relationship to sexuality. The narrative voice and the characters often ironically enact the twists and turns of Byron's own effeminization, his disavowal and acceptance of his being like a woman, like a sodomite, and like a murderer of homosexual subjectivity, subjects he cannot speak of directly. Ironically, the social prohibitions against speaking of sodomy, which were in part meant to maintain stable gender divisions, provide in this tale an opportunity for destabilizing gendered identity.

In writing The Corsair, Byron both appropriates and disavows what he understands to be the voice of woman, a domestic, long-suffering female figure, Medora, whom he uses to signify his own poetic and emotional expression of grief. He uses this figure in order to confront the laws of sexual regulation. He also develops the figure of a woman enslaved in silence in relationship to laws of sexual propriety to express his own resistance to the law in his character Gulnare, who becomes a manly woman. Byron's ambiguity about using women's voices is represented in his hero Conrad's ambiguous responses to both of the women in the poem. Sexual crossings-over of gender boundaries in order to subvert sexual norms within this poem free Byron to speak of his sexual subjectivity and also force upon him the displacement or loss of a homosexual inscription. Dead men and grief continue to signify within this poem, and Byron's awareness of the silenced aspects of his homosexual voice are consciously acknowledged in positioning himself as

two women and a man, the homosexual subject's figure registered in between gendered voices and subjectivity.

The Corsair, the longest and fastest-selling of Byron's oriental tales, repeats many of the motifs of the earlier poems, especially of The Bride. Conrad, the pirate hero, is the metamorphosis of Selim, defined and redefined in this tale primarily by his encounters with female characters. The poem is set outside the laws of nation-states, within the empire of a pirate. The poem begins with a pirate's song and a scene between the pirate, Conrad, and his lover, Medora. He is returning to her and leaving her simultaneously. He sails off to do battle with a despotic Turkish Pacha. He is, however, defeated in battle and rescued by one of the Seyd's slave girls, Gulnare. She, in the process of rescuing Conrad, kills her master, freeing herself of slavery and sexual submission. While Conrad is gone, his lover, Medora, commits suicide. There are no ideal couples in Byron's world. The alleged freedom even of pirates and sexual relationships outside the law prove spurious at best as sexual subjectivity results in conflict, grief and death. The Corsair's partner, Medora, is a female figure who embodies a domestic, ideal, suffering female waiting for her male partner's return from pillaging another empire. It is she who embodies Byron's voice of grief and melancholy. Her outlaw pirate lover, the Corsair, becomes an ineffectual and indecipherable wanderer. Byron is left with the character of a masculine woman who violates gender boundaries in order to remove herself from sexual bondage, but she then disappears into an unknown fate.

I. Two Songs: Freedom and Grief

The poem begins with the voice of the band of pirate men whom Conrad commands. They sing of a life of limitless wandering outside the boundaries of convention and nation-states:

> Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
> Survey our empire and behold our home!
> These are our realms, no limits in their sway—
> Our flag the scepter all who meet obey. (1: 3-6).

But as the Ancient Mariner's continuing confession attests, crossing the line of home rule exacts repercussions that enact incongruities.[2] The juxtaposition of "no limits" with a flag that "all who meet obey," suggests the ironies the poem will bring to bear on the problematics of assuming freedom of those who constitute themselves in the language of home or empire. In particular, the song of poetic language does not easily escape the native tongue. Immediately the red flag of subjection becomes an intricate piece of even a pirate's song, or perhaps most especially a pirate's song. For Byron, commandeering the contemporary discourses of gender and sexuality both sets the limits and expands the possibilities of the poet as a speaking subject. In particular, gendered sexual identity is one of the boundaries for sexual meaning in this poem. Because of the silences which force homosexual meaning into a subverted form, the conventions of gender boundaries are drawn and distorted to produce the portrait of an artist as a sexual subject. The deviant self is always a subject of and subject to the boundaries of signs.

Conrad is just returning to his lover, Medora, at the beginning of the poem, but immediately prepares to leave her again. Her song is telling and crucial to the

poet's inscribing himself within the poem. Waiting for Conrad's return, Medora sings the "notes of the bird of beauty." The unnamed nightingale repeats the elegiac tone of the previous poem. The lyrics are concerned with secrets and sepulchers, and are far removed from the freedom song of the pirates. The beginning tone of the poem vacillates between the tone of the pirates' celebrated song of freedom and Medora's song of grief. Freedom and grief are inseparable tones in Byron's lyrics and narrative. Curiously, the song is meant to be one that anticipates the return of Medora's lover, Conrad, but she sings of him as if he were already dead. Love and longing can only be spoken in terms of death:

> Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
>
> Lonely and lost to light forevermore,
>
> Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
>
> Then trembles into silence as before.
>
> There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
>
> Burns the slow flame, eternal--but unseen . . .
>
> My fondest--faintest—latest accents hear—
>
> Grief for the dead not Virtue can reprove;
>
> Then give me all I ever ask'd—a tear,
>
> The first—last—sole reward of so much love! (1: 347-54, 359-62)

The continued reinscription of grief is no longer a memorial to Edleston, but a reflection of a self, a self effeminized in its grief. It is a self locked within its own

voice; and the song, a narcissistic enactment. At some level, it is a voice afraid of its own entrapment in a female muteness. But more, the fear that dominates the poem is that a grieving man is like a woman. The poem performs strenuous exertions to avoid this awareness being made conscious.

Medora's grief song is ended or perhaps interrupted by Conrad's entrance, and this is where the gendered voice becomes intriguing. Describing Conrad's entrance, the narrator says: "He pass'd the portal—cross'd the corridor, / And reach'd the chamber as the strain gave o'er" (1: 363-64). In the narrator's description of the passing into the portal, crossing the corridor, the narrator engages several vaginal images to reach the chamber of the voice; the poet has entered into a woman's body, a woman's voice, or the effeminized voice of a nightingale. The song itself is one of secrets, an unnamed loss, but the strains of meaning cannot be reproved because of the crossing over of the voice; the subverted voice is obscured and as natural as a woman longing for a man to return. The cross-dressing of the male poet's voice anticipates the final acts of the poem, when Gulnare, the striking impulsive murderer, the phallic woman, will cut through codes of the gendered body with homicide; she will kill a man to free her own sexuality. Conrad, the pirate, who is trying to build up his own empire, exists between these two figures. First he claims ownership of Medora, the singer, as he declares: "My own Medora! sure thy song is sad" (1:365). Male and female sexes are bound in a voice of grief.

The sole reward of so much love, says the poem of grief, is the tear, like the tear of the Cornelian lover, the tears in the elegiac Thyrza poems, the tears of the young boy in Childe Harold: the tears repeat and are the mark of previous poems

and their elegiac tones. The reward of tears may suggest that Byron has to settle for the emotive responses of audiences that have come to count on and discount the elusive tears at the sepulchral center of the poetic voice. Byron's world is necessarily one of substitutions. Sir Walter Scott described audiences' responses to Byron's poems: "the novelty and pride which the public felt, upon being called as it were into a familiarity so powerful, and invited to witness and partake of its deep emotions" (qtd in Elfenbein Byron 51). Byron's inscriptions of his melancholic grief and suggestion of secrets or emotions suppressed within his poems seemed to work as an enticement to audiences who, as Scott suggests, believed they could read into the secret emotional life of an aristocrat. This worked so long as the real secrets behind Byronic melancholy were never fully revealed to be homosexual secrets. But Byron's eroticizing of inner emotions attracted unprecedented numbers of readers' emotional responses. In Jane Austen's Persuasion, Ann Elliot cautions Captain Benwick not to become too carried away with all the descriptions of "tremulous feelings" he found in Byron's poetry (1271).

Conrad must leave Medora. Before he leaves her, he says, "My very love to thee is hate to them" (1: 403). There is no referent, at least within the poem, for the pronoun them; it seems a sign of paranoia; it dangles uncommented upon like a noose in a crowd. This phrase might also be explicable as a sign of the displaced characterization of homosexual love in relationship to the "them" of a dominant culture. Such love is displaced into the context of a heterosexual relationship as a result of Byron's homographesis. There is no clear reason for Conrad's departure. Some mysterious letter from a Greek spy summons him (1: 139-151). Medora says

only that "[l]est Time, should raise that doubt to more than dread, / Thus Conrad, too will quit me for the main: / And he deceived me—for—he came again!" (1: 447-49). Her doubt and dread and fear of deception seem unwarranted. There are many gaps and fissures in the narrative of the poetic self of Byron. Motivations for speaking , staying, explaining are often ruptured and unclear.

When Conrad tries to leave the ideal Medora, he fears being lost in her: "On her he must not gaze, he must not think, / There he might rest—but on Destruction's brink: / . . . it must not be—a worthy chief / May melt, but not betray to woman's grief" (1:513-15, 517-18). The pun on betray bears the weight of the irony of the poem: Conrad must not betray his masculine identity by melting into a woman's grief, just as the poet Byron cannot betray—reveal or abandon—his own voice's having melted into Medora's voice, the voice of grieving for the loss of an ideal lover. What the narrator says of Conrad is also true of Byron: "For well had Conrad learned to curb the crowd, / By arts that veil, and oft preserve the proud" (1: 539-40), but too much grief would destroy command over the crowd. These characters become the split aspects of Byron's fractured voice. Conrad, the public man, the pirate who steals from other cultures to manage the crowds of public opinion, is always threatened by the effeminized, secret voice of loss, the voice of Medora.

II. Fear of Femininity

Conrad never escapes feeling he might be lost in Medora's grief, lost or silenced like a female; he associates the feminine with destruction. Conrad leaves Medora. When he returns, she has killed herself because she believed he was captured and died. The narrator says of his viewing the body, "his mother's

softness crept / To those wild eyes, which like an infant's wept: / . . .None saw his trickling tears—perchance, if seen, / That useless flood of grief had never been" (3: 648-53). The Latin root of the word infant means "he who does not speak."[3] To be made feminine, effeminate, is the same as being infantilized, it is to be disallowed a voice whose grief is valuable; grief is a "worthless flood," for it does not change the ideal lover's death. Ironically, he suggests that if anyone had seen the bodily, trickling tears, the excessive, flooding grief would never have had such power over him. It is the silencing, the forced displacement of self, that doubles the force of death and grief.

The fear of being associated too closely with Medora haunts the poem. As Franklin has argued, Medora is a kind of pre-Victorian angel in the house. Her eyes are cast down, her "long fair hair" "dishevell'd" (1: 470-71). Her form is "meek," "fainting," and her face is "pale"(1: 95, 120, 490). But this ideal angel is also a ghostly figure. Medora's lips are "mute" (1: 370), except as a song of grief. She, the one grieving and grieved for in the poem, is the sign of a self on whom "sorrow fix'd what time can ne'er erase" (1: 492). She reflects Conrad's own image of himself. In his gaze on her is "caught a glimpse of him," which "phrensied seem'd to swim" through "glistening lashes dew'd / With drops of sadness oft to be renew'd" (1: 495-99). In the swimming, renewed loss, the tears merge with a repeated loss of self. It is a loss that unmans Conrad's image. "Unman" is a word frequently used in Byron's writings, both personal and poetic. The movement between the ideal images of lovers not quite imaginable and yet renewed in language becomes, like the relationship of Echo to Narcissus, a relationship that

ends with Narcissus gazing at a reflecting pool of the self. Such movements of the self are dangerous to the point of destruction; as Conrad says, "It is no dream—and I am desolate!" (1: 504). Narcissus reached the pool of self-reflecting destruction because he was disoriented by Echo. His was a story of mistaking his own voice for another. Conrad's despairing idealization of Medora as a reflecting mirror finally leads him to the isolation of a voice lost in itself. The swimming frenzy and the glistening tears of sadness are awash with allusions to Matthews' suicidal drowning in shame, and Byron's own losses. The losses are linked to fears of self-destruction. Reflected in a ghostly figure, the self can be only a distortion, a betrayal, a figure "on Destruction's brink" (1: 514). Like the grieving voice of a poet that no one but himself hears, the self is precarious.

III. Slavery and Self-Knowledge

Conrad, the sailor, escapes such self-reflections by moving toward the sea and toward action. He sails from Medora to produce another adventure in the Eastern world. British gender codes, stabilized within the female figures of Medora and Zuleika, suffering, ideal female subjects, are destabilized as the poem develops. The meanings of sexual subjectivity ride the waves of realized insights and disavowals. Conrad becomes involved with yet another despotic ruler, the Seyd, who has enslaved another slave girl, Gulnare. As with the other tales, the hero attempts to rescue the woman he perceives to be another "defenceless beauty" (2: 218). Of the harem women, she in particular is "the trembling fair" (2: 226). However, he is imprisoned because of his attempts to rescue Gulnare from her enslavement; his heroic status, disrupted. The all-enfolding female or effeminate

grief is not the only threat to Conrad's subjectivity. Conrad's inability to act directly on his own behalf, to free himself, threatens his sense of masculinity, and his heroics are displaced into the actions of the masculine woman, Gulnare. Subversions of gendered identity become the only means of challenging the law.

It is in Gulnare's self realizations that some of the most conflicted yet intriguing aspects of the poem emerge. Gulnare describes her bondage with a line that suggests a woman's and a writer's sexual bondage: the Seyd, she says, "takes the hand I give not" (2: 511). She has not been able to use her hand as she desires. Like Byron, who must deal with a crowd in its way, she has been disabled. A female voice identifies the terms of sexual bondage. Without the freedom to choose how one will give one's hand, desire and passion are false. For Byron, Gulnare becomes the point of his identification with and disavowal of woman's voice. Through her contact with the pirate, Conrad, who has pillaged other cultures to gain "the lofty port, the distant mien" (1: 541), Gulnare learns to separate herself and her feelings from her master, Seyd, and the laws which have kept her enslaved:

> My love—stern Seyd's! Oh –No—No—not my love—
>
> Yet much this heart, that strives no more, once strove
>
> To meet his passion—but it would not be.
>
> I felt—I feel—love dwells with—with the free." (2:499-502)

The doubled "I" and "No" and prepositions suggest a connection, a doubled voice. Gulnare disengages herself from the mastery of social structures. For Byron, Gulnare becomes the voice of identification with the liberationist voice of women of the early nineteenth century, but the poem will also disavow its connection to that

voice. Byron's development of the figure Gulnare marks his anxious alliance with feminist polemic and female subjectivity. In Byron's efforts to liberate sexual passion from despotic laws, the slave girl Gulnare must become aware of her enslavement and free herself. The use of the figure of a woman enslaved in a harem was a significant trope in Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women. It is not the use of this trope of despotism which is new in this poem, but the conscious acknowledgement of the similarities between the bondage of male and female gendered subjectivity, which Byron anxiously writes into The Corsair. This will become a more complicated connection as the poem progresses.

IV. The Female Man

Out of gratitude for Conrad's attempt at rescue and because of pity for Conrad's impending execution, Gulnare is compelled to act. She becomes willing to defy the laws of gender and to kill her master. The events of Gulnare's actions and escape from her master are at the heart of the poem. Her metamorphosis from a compliant, beautiful slave to a "wild" political assassin is a more disturbing figure of gender than those found in any of Byron's male heroes. Her disturbance of gendered norms is striking.

First, Gulnare tries to outwit the Pacha by using rational discourse to convince him to free Conrad. She suggests that he collect the ransom offered for the pirate. He sees through her, and suspects that her motivations are her personal sexual desire and a desire for escape; he accuses her of having a "wanton wing" (3: 191). Motivations of liberating sexuality from the regulations of the law are

suspect and hard to determine, especially when they must be articulated through indirection.

The narrator describes Gulnare's growing awareness of herself in relation to Conrad by pointing to the similarities Gulnare realizes that she and the pirate captive share: "She was a slave—from such may captives claim / A fellow-feeling, differing but in name" (3: 202-03). She, like Conrad, is imprisoned. Sexuality subjected to laws that compel gender difference by enslaving desire is rewritten as a "fellow-feeling." The narrator reveals that the deep roots of compassion grew, "still half unconscious" on the "dangerous path" of a (re)cognition as the poet realizes that "strife of thought [is] the source of woman's woes" (3: 201-07). Men's and women's desires are enslaved by the same laws. Furthermore, Gulnare, a masculine woman who seeks to liberate herself, is a threatening figure. Like the figure of an effeminate man, she disturbs sexual boundaries. Mary Wollstonecraft, with apology, introduced such a figure into public discourse saying that women should adopt manly virtues and thereby become manly persons. Speaking of these new women, she wrote, "All those who view [masculine women] with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine" (80). The forced filtering of sexuality through engendered figures makes, as an old cliché suggests, strange bed-fellows within the development of the figure of Gulnare. It should be noted that if Byron's only concern were to liberate sexual passion, rather than protest against the confinements of the law, he might more easily have used the representations of female sexuality he found in Lady Wortley Montagu's representations of the harem. He was extremely fond of

Montagu's representations of sensuality and luxury in the harem, and he was intrigued by her because she was the first British subject to enter a harem. Rather than her acknowledgement of sexual liberty and "oriental sapphism," Byron chose alliance with Wollstonecraft's more political construction of sexual subjugation.[4] Yet his hero, Conrad, resists recognizing the value of subversive behavior; the "misdoubting Corsair" fears Gulnare's course of action (3:312). The Corsair's reservations acknowledge Byron's making a conscious connection between the oppression of men and that of women as sexed subjects. It is a painful awareness to come to as the poet uses the voice of women to empower and cover his own sense of self. No hero enters here, no man to lay a breast upon, but disturbing signs of a self dispersed through gendered meaning continues to mark the poem.

Shifts in sexual subjectivity are performed perilously and circuitously. In a world of sexual divisions, to speak against the orders of a legitimate sexuality is for a man to become like a woman. As a failed hero, Conrad does not want to be rescued by a woman. The destructiveness of gendered absolutes is foreshadowed in his rejection of Gulnare's help. Gulnare refuses to be inscribed into a cultural system that denies her the right to be a speaking subject. She tells Conrad of her intent to kill the Seyd. Conrad is afraid of her actions and of the consequences of her going against the law: "Well have I earn'd—not here alone—the meed / Of Seyd's revenge, by many a lawless deed" (3: 286-7). He tells her that he had hoped to do overt battle with the Seyd: "To smite the smiter with the scimitar" (3: 363), like a man, to conquer the injustices of the law. Conrad does not want to be associated with Gulnare's "secret knife," a knife, perhaps too much like the pen of

women writers that takes action behind the closed doors of bedroom chambers (3: 400-418). In his letters and journals, Byron frequently wrote of masculinized women writers, referring for instance to Felicia Hemans, one of his biggest competitors, as Mrs. Hewoman (BLJ 7: 158). And men, including himself, were often feminized as "soft" fellow poets. But Byron's relationship to women writers, often an anxious one, was not simple or constant. In his poem "I Read the Christabel" (1817), he writes a series of lines about various writers; for instance "I READ the *Christabel*;/ Very well" etc. Of Lamb's attack on him, his response is ambiguously complimentary: "I read *Glenaron*, too, by Caro. Lamb--/God damn!" Everyone who has read his early poem, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" or the later Don Juan knows well that his rapier wit toward other writers, male or female, was decidedly a part of the Byronic voice. Here Conrad's discomfort with Gulnare's secret attack in the bedroom chamber seems an anxious line of defense and suggests that the direct action of men would be more honorable. But Conrad's gender politics prove ineffectual as well as inauthentic.

Gulnare's heroics are anything but the heroic action of striking openly against the enemy's camp. Conrad "had seen battle," but his "every creeping vein" "shudder'd" at Gulnare's covert action (3: 424). However, the clear-cut lines Conrad imagines between himself and Gulnare are false ones. Conrad has too conveniently forgotten that he first got into the Seyd's palace by disguising himself in a dervish's costume. Like Byron's orientalized self, Conrad has cross-culturally dressed to attack prohibiting rules. He too has performed covert actions in his attack on the law. The narration suggests that the sexes falsely separate in Conrad's

voice. Gulnare's recognition of the similarity between the imprisoned sexual outlaw and herself enslaved by the constraints of gender proves to be accurate. In order to destabilize forces which regulate sexuality, cross-dressing and cross-sexed writing are weapons that subversively destabilize the laws of sexuality and gender. Gulnare, the cross-gendered figure, violates and disrupts the laws of gender by cutting into the law. The conflicts between Gulnare and the Corsair reveal that becoming conscious of the instabilities of gendered relations is a slow, perilous and even murderous process.

The quivering hand of the Giaour and "the less than woman's hand" of Selim in The Bride are transformed into the murderous hand of Gulnare. No laws govern her; she is a lawless figure. Nor is she a generic killer; rather, she commits "homicide"(3: 463); she, a woman, kills a man. As she goes to kill the Seyd, she comments upon her stepping in, her substituting, for Conrad: "since the dagger suits thee less than brand, / I'll try the firmness of a female hand" (3: 380-81). Gulnare takes over the battle, and Conrad is branded by her firm hand. She castrates his significance within the tale. She becomes the Corsair's rescuer, and she wins over the Seyd's followers to revolt. She has a Greek ship waiting for her, and when she claps her hands, her own band of vassals appears to remove the Corsair's chains. As they sail away, she is like a man, a pirate chief, even though the pirate band proclaims her, "their queen" (3: 510). Conrad is no longer in command of the crowd. The murderous impulse of Gulnare and the fear of such an impulse dominate the poem.

The spot of blood on her forehead disturbs the pirate hero: "That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak, / Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!" (3: 426-7). The blood on Gulnare exposes a doubled fear. The blood spot erases Gulnare's feminine beauty; the Corsair's response to her perhaps registers Byron's own anxious identification with the defiant female liberator. According to Andrew Elfenbein, by the end of the eighteenth century, the socially acceptable models of gender made it unlikely that a "woman would be praised for having masculine characteristics." He points out that even in the theater "cross-dressing was increasingly frowned upon as a violation of femininity" (Romantic 25). Making Gulnare a hero challenges the ideal figure of the domestic woman and heterosexualized norms that require men to save women. Byron must have realized the radical challenge he makes with his heroine. The blood may signify his anxious recognition that a manly woman and a male outlaw seeking freedom from the discursive and juridical laws that determine sexual norms may push him beyond the acceptable limits of his audience. However, the Corsair's focus on the blood spot may be Byron's unconscious acknowledgement that foregrounding such a heroine displaces his male hero and admits the necessity of changing gendered norms in order to attack the regulatory norms that surround homosexuality. The Corsair's fear of Gulnare's bloodspot may register another of Byron's ambiguities. His own ideal world of Greek male heroes and lovers is challenged by such a dominant female figure. When Conrad compares Gulnare with his ideal Medora, he feels a repugnance toward her: "He thought on her afar his lonely bride: / He turn'd and saw—Gulnare the homicide!" (3: 462-63). Figuring a female murderer not only

attacks the conventions of gender that have made sodomites abject, it challenges the laws that empower masculine authority. The ambiguities of gender that such a figure raises disturb even a pirate, for in the similarities between Gulnare and Conrad, the poem realizes, a woman might be like a man, and a man might be like a woman. Conrad tries to comfort himself with thoughts of his ideal Medora. Perhaps Byron, like Conrad, fears that his own covert tactics of writing displace all possibilities of ever being able to inscribe his own ideal. Devising strategies of resistance to the discursive imperatives of heterosexual norms only leads him farther away from writing of his own homosexual desires.

Finally, the signs of masculinity assimilate Gulnare into a system of regulated desire. Her radical departure from femininity, from silence, is reinscribed in relation to a masculine viewer, Conrad. She is caught in the masculine gaze as a threat, a murderer of men. Gulnare is subject to revision; she is dropped back into silence: "She drops her veil, and stands in silence by; / Her arms are meekly folded . . ." (3: 517-18); she is like the other females of the tales. Only when she accepts the subordination of a female subject can Conrad accept her kiss of gratitude. Byron's inability to inscribe himself within a legitimate sign of masculinity to perform a direct attack on the law is anxiously inscribed in Gulnare's gratitude and Conrad's disavowal. He forces her into submission. Conrad cannot accept the killing secrets of a woman taking away his power. She must be a demure woman ready to be kissed to maintain the heterosexual fiction of gendered bodies. The masochism of gender marks bodies and psyches within repetitive returns to the law. Perhaps the moment of too much recognition of the phantasmal nature of sexual

difference was more than the identity of the poet could bear. Or it may be that Byron's hyperconscious concern of dealing "with the audience in their own way" forces Gulnare and the power of Byron's critique of gender into submission.

What lingers in reviews of the poem is a disturbance corrected. Conrad's corrective kiss marks the spot of public opinion. A contemporary reviewer of the poem expressed relief at the return of the repressed. In the Monthly Review, John Hodgson acknowledged the unprecedented figure of a female committing murder in poetry, and approved "the return of that natural softness which must ever form a prevailing feature in the female character" (4: 1748).

Byron's writing both submits to the laws of gendered heterosexuality and subverts them. Conrad's embrace of Gulnare's hand at least momentarily escapes the fractured sense of a gendered self that Byron subjects himself to throughout the poem. As Conrad looks down on Gulnare's dark eye, the narrator says,

> But varying oft the colour of her cheek
> To deeper shades of paleness—all its red
> That fearful spot which stain'd it from the dead!
> He took that hand—it trembled—now too late—
> So soft in love—so wildly nerved in hate;
> He clasp'd that hand—it trembled—and his own
> Had lost its firmness, and his voice its tone. . . .
>
> Even Medora might forgive the kiss . . .
> To lips where love had lavish'd all his breath[.] (3:534-40, 549, 552)

While the subjection of Gulnare recasts her into the properly gendered pose, this embrace of the trembling murderous hand that has lost its firmness and its tone seems an acceptance of the sexual ambiguity the effeminate writer's hand brings to bear upon gendered and sexual meanings. The lips and hands, synechdoches of the poetic voice and written verse, return this poem to a fantasy of bodily dispossession, to the kiss without pronouns in Hours of Idleness. It is an Eros that almost escapes the law. This is a kiss caught among a grieving woman and a manly woman made womanly and a pirate man's poetic breath. For a moment, it is a kiss that confounds simple gendered binarism and the boundaries of monogamy, as Conrad "fann'd" the lips freshly" (3: 554). Lavish breath and lips like a fetish cover over Byron's former narcissistic wounds.[5]

Yet kisses do not last. Conrad returns to Medora. He finds her dead:

> He gazed—how long we gaze despite of pain,
> And know, but dare not own, we gaze in vain!
> In life itself she was so still and fair,
> That death with gentler aspect wither'd there[.] (3: 601-04)

Medora was the singer of grief at the beginning of the poem. Now, the grief of the woman's voice will pass to Conrad, as if grief itself might precipitate sex changes in a Byronic world. While in the previous poem sexual ideals and the laws of nation-states have overturned sexual subjectivity to the point of the death of characters, in this poem we are left with ambiguity. Within a social structure that validates only a male and female gendered subjectivity as the proper fit for sexual desire, the possibility of homosexual meaning can only be filtered through deformations of

gender. The homosexual subject can only be conceived as a deviance of gendered meaning, but once the secure boundaries are executed, "phallic women" and "effeminized men" are exposed as the heterosexual props they are. This is but a tale of the self that mirrors what it has lost, a self "shrunk and wither'd where it fell" and its voice "but shiver'd fragments on the barren ground" (3: 675, 677). Yet to express loss in language is to refuse the loss. Speaking of loss encodes and repeats it and therefore denies the loss of homosexual meaning (Butler 70). The poet "left a Corsair's name to other times" (3: 695), times less ungentle to the divided names of sexual subjectivity, times perhaps less murderous of the sexual selves a poetic self might inhabit.

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[1] Significantly, Moore was the first of Byron's biographers, one who attempted to erase any traces of Byron's sodomitic interests. Louis Crompton has pointed to the places where John Cam Hobhouse made marginal notations in his personal copy of Moore's biography which challenge Moore's naivety or question his covering over information about sodomy, 342-43; 375-76.

[2] Although I do not argue here for a direct connection between Byron's Corsair and the discourses on the significant role sodomy played in the life of pirates, I can surmise that Byron's fantasizing a world beyond the law in the pirate culture of an exotic place must have been influenced by cultural narratives that reflected such an idea. See Burg Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition.

[3] Byron repeats the figure of being made an infant at a woman's breast in Don Juan, where passion annihilates Juan. See Manning's chapter "Don Juan and Byron's Imperceptiveness to the English Word," which is a psychoanalytic reading of the scene of Haidee and Juan, 119-123.

[4] See Nussbaum for an interesting discussion of Montagu's sapphism, 140.

[5] The popularity of The Corsair led to its translation and reinterpretation in French theater and European ballet. Marius Pepita's 1868 Russian production suggests the intrigue the sexual ambiguity of the work created. In Pepita's ballet, the Corsair temporarily falls asleep because of a floral potion. During his sleep, Medora and Gulnare are joined in an erotic dance amidst fountains of a garden. Conrad, accompanied by another man, rejoins the women, disguised as a pilgrim. The four of them sail away together, seeking new adventures.

Chapter Six

Coming to Terms: Lara, the Effeminate Page, and Queer Reading

The eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sense of dis-ease with homosexuality included a number of changed definitions of sodomy. The historian Randolph Trumbach, who locates the beginnings of the modern homosexual in the early eighteenth century, suggests that along with new denominations of the sodomite came changes in sexual practices. He argues that prior to 1700, men married women and had sexual relations with adolescent boys. After the development of the molly houses, the name sodomite was ascribed to men, married or not, who formed intimate relationships or engaged in sexual relations not only with boys but also with other adult men. Significantly, sodomites began to be described as men exclusively interested "in [their] own gender and inveterately effeminate and passive" ("Sodomitical"119). Men also became increasingly subject to public scandal and the fear of being charged with being sodomites. Flamboyant clothing, gestures ascribed to female behavior, or excessive gesturing and cross-dressing were a few of the behaviors ascribed to the effeminacy of the subject.[1] Connections between sodomy and effeminacy underwent a translation into a metaphoric essential of equivalence; that is, sodomy equals effeminacy. This occurred, Lee Edelman argues, as sexuality went through a transition into a "metaphoric category of essence, into a fixed and exclusive identity" (Homographesis 11). Accompanying this shift, Trumbach suggests, was the denomination of the effeminate sodomite as of "another" gender, a "third sex,"

neither exclusively male nor exclusively female ("Sodomy Transformed" 106). This third sex was frequently made the object of derision and satire, and the term effeminate came increasingly to be a derogatory term; even now it remains as such, derogatory to both women and the men the term attempts to categorize. This cultural phenomenon suggests a certain readability of the body; its use or appearance signifies desire. It also implies a fluid boundary between the inside and outside of the individual subject.

This term, "effeminacy," held sway over the lives of men. Sexuality, closely bound up with the ideology of gendered binarism that produced effeminacy as a means of disciplining sexuality, produced many possibilities for (mis)reading hetero/homosexual identity. Identification of effeminate sexual difference made it imperative to recognize and expose the signs of homosexual difference. Unlike gender difference, homosexual difference threatened to remain undetected if not demarcated by the terms of effeminacy. Such markings, however, became more than just an excess of dress or gesture as effeminacy was linked to sexual practice. It also became associated with an excess of emotional expression of one man for another. In the early nineteenth-century, the Reverend John Church was one of the first Englishmen to perform marriages of sodomites in chapels and molly houses. He himself, several times accused but not convicted of sodomy, was moved from one church position to another. Finally he was positioned as a conventicle preacher at Obelisk Chapel, St. George Fields. While serving as chaplain to the Vere Street molly house, he fell in love with one of the men. A surviving letter of 3 March,

1809, to Ned B. (the last name was expunged from court records) points to the anxiety that surrounds the term effiminacy and homosexual affection and desire:

> I can only say I wish you was as much captivated with sincere friendship as I am. . . . Friendship those best of names, affection those sweetest powers like some powerful charm that overcomes the mind—I could write much on this subject but I dare not trust you—You would consider it unmanly and quite effeminate, having proved already what human nature is I must conceal those emotions of love which I feel. (qtd. in Norton Mother Claps 203)

He goes on to talk about his love for Ned, but his fears proved to be warranted. People who had been trying to find evidence to stop Church from marrying sodomites persuaded Ned to turn informer and use the letter as evidence against Church. The group tried to oust him through blackmail. However, some unknown person paid the blackmail fee, so Church was not convicted. What most interests me here is that the fear of being unmanly and effeminate is associated with a desire to express his affection and with the hope of altering the terms of his relationship to another man. The over-determined significance of effeminacy suggests that the repetitious, discursive denigration of the term served not only to make abject figures of sodomites and thereby to delimit sexual practice, but effeminacy served also to develop psychological determinants for masculinity. Excesses of dress and gesture, associated with sexual practices of Sodom, are translated to fears about excesses of feeling and emotive expression between men. What has been a matter of social

custom is internalized as psychological discipline. Stallybrass and White's outlining of the development of a refined, public body serves analogically to illuminate the effects of the development of the effeminate sodomite on male sexuality:

> The formation of a refined, cosmopolitan public, internally disciplined, was something which took place gradually over decades and even centuries; it was an almost geological shift in the cultural threshold of shame and embarrassment which regulates the body in public. (85)

They demonstrate the ways discursive denigration of bodily practices served to develop psychological structures that kept individuals from performing "unacceptable" public practices. Church's letter suggests that sexual practices and acceptable speech about sexuality and desire were affected by the derision of effeminacy. The fact that effeminacy was associated with dress, gesture, and forms of speech marked and disciplined not only the practices of the body, but men's very sense of themselves as sexual subjects. The repeated production of the degenerate, effeminate sodomite in public discourse served to regulate and discipline masculinity and sexuality. The anonymous author of the now frequently reprinted Satan's Harvest Home (1794), which offers its "Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy," suggests: "Master *Molly* [has] nothing to do but slip on his *head clothes* and he is an errant woman . . . as much in vogue as the ladies in France" (139). Such transformations produce "the height of aversion" in the author. But the most "hateful . . . pernicious" form of effeminacy is that of "men's kissing each other. The fashion was brought over from Italy (the Mother Nurse of Sodomy; where the

master is oftener intriguing with his *page*, than a *fair lady*" (138-39). Such aversions and citations of aversions in response to the effeminate, "another sex," or a"third sex," and the paranoia that surrounds effeminacy mark the final inscriptions of Byron's own homographesis in the last poem of his series.

In the poem Lara (1814), Byron conjoins his own homoerotic desires for Greek heroic love between men with the figure of the effeminate third sex of his own era. Byron gives particular attention to visual elements of the poem, for within British society, the figure of the effeminate man suggests that how men look at one another has become extremely important. Byron destabilizes the verbally unrepresentable homosexual subject by the attention he gives to the visual. Further, he uses the effeminate, foreign page as a double entendre to bring into focus the connections between his own homosexual desire and his written page. The boundaries between the viewing subject and object are inverted several times within the poem as Byron analogically represents the unstable barriers between homosocial and homosexual identifications within the text. Male homosexuality, the poem suggests, shifts perspectives and as well affects how voices are heard in the poem, as he plays with the use of words and the use of auditory tropes to suggest the process of inside-outside identifications of the homosexual subject. Byron's use of visual tropes anticipates Oscar Wilde's writing in Dorian Gray, where, as Dennis W Allen suggests, Basil's portrait of Dorian and all the attention on scopic interactions in the novel allow for the expression of the "homoerotic desire traditionally excluded from verbal representation" (118). Byron examines the effects of homophobia on the relations between men and on their relation to a sense of self; he points to the

confusion between identifying with another man and desire for another man in a climate of prohibitions. Finally, the poem submits to the discursive laws that insist on homosexual silence, but not without suggesting possibilities for subversive reading of sexuality. His attempt at inscribing the significance of the homoerotic to his own sense of self and to his writing within the frame of discursive prohibitions that denigrate effeminacy and homoeroticism reveals the brutal erotics of social regulation. Through a comparison of homoerotic with homosocial relations, the poem also exposes homosexuality as the constitutive necessity for a disciplined, heterosexual masculinity. Within inscriptions of silences and paranoia, social forms of men's relationships are contrasted with the homoerotic relationship of the protagonist, Lara, to his foreign page, Kaled.

Byron's poem is displaced in time to a medieval world rather than another culture. He keeps the doubled heroes of The Corsair, but this time he makes them collaborative equals. Lara returns from his journey to the East disaffected with his own country. He embodies Byron's sense of alienation, and Lara is perhaps a figure who exposes the British society's fear that men traveling to foreign places will find themselves changed. Byron himself came home and married Annabella Milbanke, who he hoped would reform him. One year after their marriage, they divorced and he, like Beckford before him, was forced to flee England amidst rumors and accusations of incest and sodomy.[2]

Despite the necessary displacements of the poem, it seems to resolve Byron's grief, but it is also a testament to his recognition of the significance of his personal and public experience of homosexuality to the formation of his writing. He

was quoted by his wife as saying, "There's more in that [poem] than in any of them" and that it was the most "metaphysical of his works" (HVSV: 112). I suggest that the "metaphysical" is Byron's sense of his own moving beyond grief and at least provisionally beyond the prohibition of speech about homosexuality. Partly he finds a resolution to the grief that has not been allowed the significant acknowledgement of ritual and social support the death of lovers affords to legitimate relationships. In addition, he comes to terms with his own sense of his effeminate silences in the embrace of the page, Kaled. Lara is a complex work moving between and accepting and overwriting the negotiations of silence that Byron of necessity performed in regard to aspects of his own homosexual identity. As I have argued throughout, this is not an exclusive sense of identity, but an identity constituted in relationship to a self posited within a sense of being a British male subject, a public figure, and a poet. Yet this poem suggests that Byron's homosexuality was a consistent aspect of his emergence and creation of himself as an author. He uses tropological signs of foreignness, effeminacy, and a page, combined with an emphasis on visual and verbal interactions between men, to bring his homosexuality into the realm of representation. But the poem also stresses the difficulty of making his homographesis recognizable in an oppressive climate.

The stripping away of the oriental material, with the exception of a foreign page, to invoke the world of the Gothic has its precedent in Matthew Lewis's The Monk, where cross-dressed Rosario allows Lewis the expression of homoerotic desire between Rosario and Ambrosio in the cloister. Cross-dressing serves as a means of concealing and revealing the homoerotic. And this use of illusion adds to

Byron's representation of homosexual-homosocial paranoia, which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued is a significant aspect of many gothic novels. [3]

Lara, the protagonist, returns from the East to some secret past in a European setting, and to an all male world of no particular country. He resumes residence in his ancestral estate. He has brought with him a page from another country. Lara is a writer trying to cover over his past:

> Not much he loved long questions of the past,
> Nor told of wondrous wilds, and deserts vast,
> In those far lands where he had wander'd lone,
> And—as himself would have it seem—unknown[.] (1: 85-88)

He is also doubtful about his connections to the world to which he has returned. In his estate, he spends "night's long hours" walking through the "dark gallery, where his fathers frown'd" from the "antique portraiture" (1:136-38). He is separated from his personal past as well as from the tradition of frowning patriarchs. As Lara looks at other paintings in his hall,

> He turned within his solitary hall,
> And his high shadow shot along the wall:
> There were painted forms of other times,
> 'Twas all they left of virtues or of crimes,
> Save vague tradition; and the gloomy vaults
> That hid their dust, their foibles, and their faults[.] (1: 181-186)

The portraits' painted forms, crimes and vague tradition of dust and foibles, impose on the poem an idea that looking, identifications, and misidentifications will be a

central concern for Lara. The solitary hall, suggestive of his own unconscious, also gives hints of a repressed history of crimes and faults, but it is a repressed social and personal history. Such a history, coming just after the frowning tradition of the fathers, reveals a character who is as distant and disassociated from his own past as he is from the tradition of the fathers and their patrimony. The narrator says that this sense of history, this seemingly disconnected and vague tradition, is recorded in "specious tales from age to age; / Where history's pen its praise or blame supplies / And lies like truth, and still most truly lies" (1:188-190). The specious tales of different ages suggest Byron's own use of the previous tales; personal history in these narrative tales reflects the buried crimes and lies that serve to constitute public and private history. Lara's face is reflected into windows, and the reflection gives "[h]is aspect all that terror gives the grave" (1: 200). The writer's image is marked by refracted images of a self and, as always, related to fear and a grave. The history, the secret of crime, has left its impression on the hand of the writer, a "shaken plume" substitutes for the severed, shaking hands of the previous poems, tales that have "lied like truth," continue, because of patrimonial structures, to be made of lies and indirections. The dim shadowy self finds its way to its own terrors in the act of writing of things it is forced to conceal.

In contrast to his isolation in the halls of his fathers, Lara's relationship to his foreign page affords solace and articulation of things not quite speakable, or perhaps not quite imaginable within the halls of the fathers. With Lara, Kaled presents possibilities of intimacy in men's relationships:

If aught he loved, 'twas Lara; but was shown

His faith in reverence and in deeds alone;

In mute attention; and his care, which guess'd

Each wish, fulfill'd it ere the tongue expressed. (1: 554-57)

Lara evokes feeling in Kaled, even if it is indirectly expressed. Kaled is the ideal lover, a second self who anticipates and allows for Lara's language. Kaled's ability to read Lara in "mute attention" creates his care and his wish to fulfill Lara's desires. And yet, Kaled's posture expresses a certain "haughtiness. . .his air commands; / As if 'twas Lara's less than *his* desire / That thus he served, but surely not for hire" (1: 558-63). The poet's emphasis on his suggests that the sex of Kaled is of a primary concern here. The boundaries between these two are not absolute but fluid and, as the poem goes on, transitive. The boy page is submissive, but he is a "haughty male," capable of entering into combat as the tale progresses.

Kaled achieves a kind of intimacy with Lara that no other characters share in the tales. When Lara wakes, startled by a dream in the night, he faints, and Kaled goes to his side, bending over him and comforting him in a language no one else understands: "And Lara heeds those tones that gently seem / To soothe away the horrors of his dream" (1: 243-44). Their shared language allows Kaled to understand him without speaking. The erotic boy bending by his master and the page intersect in a homoerotic dream that relieves the nightmare, the secret terror of the darks halls in which Lara often finds himself. The emphasis on Kaled's tones that soothe horrors suggest that the figure of the page allows Byron homoerotically to enact a relationship in writing that soothes the tones of grief and horror that have been repeatedly reinscribed in the earlier poems. The page Kaled's relationship to

language and tone reveals Kaled as a doubled figure, one that embodies Byron's ideal homosexual relationship and simultaneously links his language to the homoerotic. The page both expresses and veils the homoerotic desire that animates Byron's written page here and in the previous poems.

Within a land of "many a malcontent," a "soil full" of "many a wringing despot . . . / Who work'd his wantonness in form of law" (2: 157-160), Lara and Kaled's relationship stands in contrast to the relationships Lara has with other men. The wanton law inverts the focus of wantonness from the homoerotic to the law which would judge it. In Kaled's mind, the shared secrets and silent communications between him and Lara resemble a kind of marriage, one which defies the wanton, despotic laws of gendered and heterosexual imperatives that dominated the previous tales. Kaled vows to Lara, "We will not part! / Thy band may perish, or thy friends may flee, / Farewell to life but not adieu to thee!" (2: 357-59). Like Byron's repeated reinscriptions of the loss of homosexual love, Kaled's vows promise fidelity more permanent than the vows "until death do us part" (Giuliano 798).

When Lara looks on Kaled, what he describes is a figure not unlike an effeminate sodomite, the figure of another sex, whose color is not dissimilar to a printed page. The narrator says of Lara that he first looks at Lara's hand and then he continues the admiring gaze on Kaled:

> So femininely white it might bespeak
> Another sex, when match'd with that smooth cheek,
> But for his garb, and something in his gaze,
> More wild and high than woman's eye betrays;

A latent fierceness that far more became

His fiery climate than his tender frame:

True, in his words it broke not from his breast,

But from his aspect might be more than guess'd

Kaled his name, though rumour said he bore

Another ere he left his mountain-shore[.] (1: 576-585)

That third sex, that name not quite speakable, that glance between two male lovers misinterpreted by Jeffreys' comments about the Thryza lyrics, and the latent fierceness of a desire more wild than a desire for a woman is connected to the hand that writes the page. A number of scholars have commented on the homoerotic quality of the gaze between Kaled and Lara. The comments seem quite brief but most agree that this is Byron's means of providing a homosexual moment in a repressive society. Nigel Leask argues that this discomforting homosexual gaze may be a sign of Byron's anxieties about transgressively "orientalizing classical forms" (56).[4] The connection between these male lovers does not last; finally Kaled will be returned to the wanton laws of the land and revealed to be a female. However, before that happens, Byron has made the reader complicit in the secret glances of homoerotic subject and his object of desire, the effeminate male page.

Even the final revelation cannot arrest the unsettling experience of being in a world of guessing and suspicions, of gazes not quite certain.[5] Byron plays further on the fluid boundaries of homoerotic pages. Kaled and Lara's relationship is placed in relief against the social sphere of lords and manor houses, a festival and another kind of gaze. As the poem develops, the wanton laws of the land corrupt men's gazes

into spectacles of surveillance. Looking, seeing, revealing, and reading men's signs dominate the twists and turns of the poem as Byron foregrounds and betrays his view of the relations of men. Lara attends a festival at the neighboring manor house of Sir Otho. In a pose we might now identify as cruising, Lara looks across a crowded room: "his glance follow'd fast each fluttering fair, / Whose steps of lightness woke no echo there" (1:399-400). The fluttering and lightness of fair steps are unattached to pronouns, but suggestive of feminine or effeminate excess. Yet there is no echo there; the not-quite-rightness of the gaze only makes him continue looking for something. Soon the looking for an echoing gaze will, like the letter of John Church, turn to a scene of betrayal:

> He lean'd against the lofty pillar nigh
> With his folded arms and long attentive eye, . . .
> At length he caught it, 'tis a face unknown,
> But seems as searching his, and his alone;
> Prying and dark, a stranger's by his mien,
> Who still till now had gazed on him unseen:
> At length encountering meets the mutual gaze
> Of keen enquiry, and of mute amaze;
> On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,
> As if distrusting that the stranger threw;
> Along the stranger's aspect, fixed and stern
> Flash'd more than thence the vulgar eye could learn.
>
> (1: 401-02; 405-15)

The frisson of the gaze promises the lure of the erotic. But the lines after "emotion grows" begin to disturb what seemed to build toward a sexual encounter. The allure of the stranger turns to a stern look. Byron's tales are repetitive to a fault; age after age, they "lie like truth and still most truly lie" (1: 190). More than "the vulgar eye could learn" turns the focus of the poem all the way back to Childe Harold and the vulgar eyes of the crowd that watched the killing of the bull, and to the vulgar eye that misperceived the secret glances between Byron and Edleston in the Thryza poems, as Byron begins to tie his vision of the earlier poems to the fears that kept the homoerotic unseen. The gaze between Lara and Sir Ezzelin leads to accusations, to violence between men, and to disturbing memories. The possibilities of reading gazes between men in this social structure appear to be perilously limited. The choices are identification with the "vulgar eye" of an ""alien stranger's aspect" or the enticement of a gaze that too easily turns to surveillance and accusation. In this narrative of men's relations, surveillance leads to death. Sir Ezzelin ruptures Lara's desire for a mutual gaze:

> 'Tis he!' the stranger cried, and those that heard
> Re-echoed fast and far the whisper'd word.
> 'Tis he! –Tis who?' they question far and near,
> Till louder accents rung on Lara's ear;
> . . . though still the stranger gazed;
> And drawing nigh, exclaim'd with haughty sneer,
> 'Tis he!—how came he thence?—What doth he here?'
>
> (1: 415-18, 424-26)

The echoes of alienation repeat the sense of displacement Lara felt earlier in the poem and that the tales have repeated throughout. Recrimination and reproach and fear of being identified for an unnameable crime committed in the past resound in Sir Ezzelin's words as he accuses: "Art thou not he? whose deeds—" (1: 455). The unnameable crime might be anything; the more unnameable, the more powerful the anxieties it produces. Byron has learned how to manipulate the horror that surrounds the silence of unnameable crimes. To the insidious but unspecified accusations Lara responds: "What'er I be, / Words wild as these, accusers like to thee / I list no further; those with whom they weigh / may hear the rest" (1: 455-58). Within the "wordy war" (1: 466), attack, scandal, social displacement can all ruin a man's reputation; it is the way of public life.

Lara's desires to be seen in public, and his desires to find the sympathetic, mutual and erotic gaze of another man leave him open to questions about his identity, his past memories, his secrets. The ideal relationship of companionship and bonding Lara shares with his page is contrasted with his public engagement with Sir Ezzelin. What is erotic, homosexual, and narcissistically healing of the wounds of Lara's past in relation to Kaled is contrasted with the accusation and social climate of fear in the doubled gaze and voice of Sir Ezzelin echoed in the crowd: " Tis he— Tis who?" The confusion about who Lara is, what he is guilty of, creates an environment ripe for misunderstood and misdirected recriminations between men. It creates a mood of repression through echoing tones of accusation.

This dramatization develops into a rupture of Lara's identity. The voices outside of Lara move inside. Accusations are directed toward memory. To the Lara

barely recognized, Sir Ezzelin triggers memory: "Gaze again" says Ezzelin. (The syllables of Ezzelin and Edleston do not sound altogether dissimilar; it could almost be a slip of the tongue, floating in the air like Zuleika's name and ringing on the ear). Whatever this unmentionable crime is, "'Eternity forbids thee to forget.'" (1: 442). The public voice rings "louder" upon Lara's ear, the private ear of the self. And despite his disavowal of the claims Ezzelin makes he must accept the duel to which Ezzelin challenges him. No court need preside; the challenges of social structures are relocated within the self and within relations between men. To Ezzelin's challenge, Lara stands silent and "heedless of all around," his thoughts, drifting far away, "[b]espoke remembrance only too profound" (1: 489). In the face of threat, this memory cannot be spoken directly; silences allow men to be controlled in memory and body.

Only one stanza later, Kaled, with Lara, is able to recall: "Friends', kindreds', parents', wonted voice recall, / Now lost, abjured, for one—his friend, his all" (1: 525-26). Significantly, in what I would mark as the climax of the poem, the subject-object position of Kaled and Lara is reversed. Lara, who is usually mirrored by the page Kaled, "awakes" something in Kaled's ear with his voice. Lara's "lips breathed into life" the page's memory. The writer's voice gives a gift to the page, a gift that honors the one abjured, the ones lost, the ones who would otherwise be unremembered or only remembered in disgrace. The "clear tones" of the voice echo like a choir boy's. In the violent world of dueling men, such intimacy is possible only in coded memories and in death. Such is the heart of Byronic irony.[6]

Sir Ezzelin mysteriously disappears in the night. Some critics have suggested he was killed by the page Kaled, but the poem is unclear.[7] Within the social structure of secrets and accusations that the poem represents, the circumstances of men's deaths might well remain secret.[8] However, Lara is suspected by Sir Otho and, as the narrator says, Lara "must answer for the absent head / Of one that haunts him still, alive or dead" (2: 155-156). The poem builds on the tension of things unknown, things like death and the disappearance of men. Although it is not yet clear at this point in the plot whether Ezzelin has died or merely disappeared, Sir Otho, the owner of the manor house where the festival was held, decides he must defend Sir Ezzelin's honor against Lara. "Otho's frenzy would not be opposed" (2: 64). The climate of fear and accusation produces frenzied ideas of honor in irrational men whose insults turn to weapons (1:165). Few actions prove heroic in a climate such as this, and no man can have the "confidence" to "trust mortal look or speech" of another man (1: 506-7). Within such an environment, individual men like Lara live in "guilt grown old in desperate hardihood" (1: 505). The effects of accusation, guilt, fear, and the frenzy of honor, move almost palpably inside and outside the voices of these men. Determining who is guilty for the death of another man weighs on the eternity of the times. This is the homeland to which Lara returned. The encounters with Ezzelin and Otho leave Lara only with his foreign page.

There are two battles between Sir Otho and Lara. In the first Otho is wounded, but he later returns to do battle again. And though it is Otho who wants a repeat battle, it is Lara, the writer, once publicly humiliated by accusations, who waits for "[t]he deep reversion of delay'd revenge" (2: 206). The tone of revenge is

only part of what motivates the desire of the narrative. Within this historical frame, Byron is able to alter the terms of death from punishment for some past crime to scenes of battle. Lara, while waiting for the ensuing fight, has been engaged in freeing serfs for whom his "soul knew" compassion. The serfs to whom Byron refers I would believe to be his subjected readers. The extreme popularity of Byron's writings with men and women perhaps suggests the paradox that a powerful sexual myth is evoked within his writings. Fears for sexual, domestic, and national security and restrictions and failures of ideals both created and provoked identifications. The erotic charges of enslavement and the struggle for individual freedom of the hero and heroines of the tales and sexual role-reversals must have allowed for identifications and disavowals the emerging bourgeois reader sought.[9] Now, because of Lara's "well-won charms of success," "[a]ll now was ripe, he waits but proclaim / That slavery nothing which was still a name" (2: 210-211). The deep reversion points back to the slavery of things unable to be named, things like "another sex" and social displacement. Lara's success provides him with at least a modicum of the freedom of revenge.

Lara is killed in his duel with Sir Otho, which might suggest that revenge was not achieved. However, in the death scene, the revenge sought becomes clearer and the series of poems turns the reversion all the way back to Byron's Hours of Idleness. Lara dies in manly combat with his young page fighting at his side. Kaled and Lara are united in a way that others watching the death "understood not, if they distinctly heard." Lara turns to Kaled, for "[h]is dying tones are in that other tongue." The words bear the tone of elegy that has marked these works throughout:

His dying tones are in that other tongue

To which some strange remembrance wildly clung.

They spake of other scenes, but what--is known

To Kaled, whom their meaning reach'd alone;

And he replied, though faintly, to their sound,

While gazed the rest in dumb amazement round:

They seem'd even then--that twain--unto the last

To half forget the present in the past;

To share between themselves some separate fate,

Whose darkness none beside should penetrate. (2: 444-453)

The splitting in twain of the turban is rejoined here in an act of revenge against "dumb amazement" that gathers round this language without understanding what has been repeated again and again in the previous tales. The dark which none should penetrate seems the other side of silence, the "should" seems a warning and a challenge, a desire to be read and to remain silent. Byron invites a reading, a penetrating, of this homosexuality and yet commands that it remain a secret.

Lara's life does not end with this tone of revenge. As Lara dies, Nisus once again lays his breast upon Euryalis in a scene of overdetermined meanings.. The effeminate page becomes the heroic lover as Lara, the writer, who has fought for his life with the eternity of another's memory in mind, lays his head upon Kaled's breast:

His limbs stretch'd fluttering, and his head droop'd o'er

The weak yet still untiring knee that bore;

He press'd the hand he held upon his heart . . . (2: 492-94)

When Lara is finally dead, the narrator says that Kaled

. . .saw the head his breast would still sustain,

Roll down like earth to earth upon the plain. (2: 506-507)

Many silences are overwritten with this scene. The lost bodies of the homosexuals, the names not quite speakable, are written and visualized as heroes joined. The borders of the manly and unmanly are blurred as Byron joins the two men. The hand of the writer is placed against the body of the lover, the homoerotic page. For Byron, at last a plain and a public burial takes place as the lover's body is laid to rest upon the earth. But Byron's Greek homosexual ideal proves to be a dream deferred. Like the song of Keats' nightingale, homosexuality is that which cannot last, that which is trodden down by death and a history of disparaged bodies, but to speak what is not quite speakable or knowable is the impulse of Byron's voice. The homosexual is never completely realizable or graspable within the public world in which Byron's poetry was written.

Gender and heterosexual imperatives reinhabit the poem. After Lara dies, Kaled reveals her sex to be female. The sign of the not-quite-right, effeminate sex is effaced by a woman. As Byron resolves his own inner divisions, ironically he evokes the annihilation of his male page.[10] This annihilation may signal Byron's death into an effeminized self. At the same time, Kaled as a cross-dressed woman has deceived Lara, even as Byron deceived the reader. Kaled's revelation of her transvestitism reminds readers that the discourse of heterosexuality depends upon the violent

enforcement of the fictions of gender difference.[11] Sex must be confessed in its proper forms:

> In baring to revive that lifeless breast,
>
> Its grief seem'd ended, but the sex confess'd;
>
> And life return'd, and Kaled felt no shame—
>
> What now to her was Womanhood or Fame? (2: 516-19)

The capitalizing of Womanhood seems an excess of emphasis, like an excess associated with cross-dressers. Separation from grief is short-lived: "Her tears were few, her wailing never loud; / But furious would you tear her from the spot / Where yet she scarce believed that he was not" (2: 603-5). She is still wild and fierce in grief. Kaled suggests that Byron remembers homosexual loss by reinscribing it, trans-sexing and cross-culturing it. Kaled takes over the grieving voice of previous poems in her foreign tongue. But the forced notion of sexual difference in her voice becomes a kind of insanity. She shaves off her raven hair and "She talk'd all idly unto shapes of air" (2: 609). Like the tongued air of Zuleika, she is whispering idly of a man's name.

Kaled "trace[s] strange characters along the sand" (2: 625), and her mad articulations in a strange tongue suggest that hers is a voice that crosses over sexes and the rigid structures of signs. Kaled is a figure who can only be read on the edges, the margins of a man's writings, like the scribblings in Bentham's margins or Hobhouse's notes in Byron's biography. She madly insists that there are signs of sex here to be interpreted, even for those who stand in "dumb amazement" wondering whether Kaled's and Lara's relationship was sexual or not. Byron's narrator says,

"This could not last—she lies by him she lov'd; / Her tale untold—her truth too dearly prov'd" (2: 626-27). The ambiguous dangling clause in the last line of the poem refers to Kaled's imperceptible scrawling and her very tentative hold on life. Yet the narrator's intrigue of the line seems to insist on interpretation: to read Kaled's page is to read the mutability of (homo)sexuality into our fictions of history. Kaled's dangling grief and untold tale invite us to read past the shrouds of misrecognition that silence empowers. The cryptic figures in sand imply that the solid ground of the sexual subject is a fiction that can be loosed from the stranglehold of silence, reinscribed, effaced, but not finalized. The movement of language bears "imagined spectre[s] in pursuit" (2: 622). Our ability to read these lines might also mean that the racialized and gendered discourses that the oriental tales often invoked and covered-over in silence might inevitably lead to their own death. Kaled too dies; she will not be productive; she claims no country. The gravity of the body escapes in her fatality as a human subject. The cultural ideologies that have commanded sex to have social meaning, definition and the certainty of regulation fade in her strange characters of sand.

The transitive nature of Kaled's sexuality, "the untold tale" "too dearly proved," asks for rereadings of what sexuality might mean. The page's ending, like the poems themselves, prohibits a final knowing, a final understanding of the sexual subject.

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[1] See King on the semiotics of the effeminate body in the eighteenth century. King distinguishes specific dress and gestures that were used to identify sodomites and to separate the bourgeois values from the slothful effeminate gestures and dress of the aristocracy, 23-50. Davenport-Hines also identifies the features of the effeminate sodomite that had become standardized by the time of Tobias Smollett's inscription of him in Roderick Random, 88-90. See Cady's discussion of distinctions made

between a homoerotic "masculine love," such as Francis Bacon's homoerotic attractions to other men, which envisioned peer relationships, and the homoerotic love that involved the love of boys, 14-33. I note all of this to suggest that, as Trumbach, King and Davenport-Hines suggest, effeminacy in male-male relations was viewed differently in the Renaissance than in the eighteenth century. Eighteenth century inscriptions of effeminacy were repeatedly associated with an abject subject, a debased social position. Woods says that the effeminate boy in Marlowe's poetry is a figure invested with signs of power. Effeminate ornamentation augmented and assisted a boy's entry into manhood. Effeminate boys were also perceived as a threat to the state because desirous men might be distracted from public affairs, 69-84.

[2] Crompton offers an important discussion of Byron's marriage, divorce, and ensuing scandals as well as Byron's exile in Italy in his chapter "Fame and Exile" 196-235

[3] Sedgewick's Between Men is a study of the ways gothic novels are marked by the savage "patriarchal oppressions of homosexuals," 3. I am sympathetic to and rely upon her readings of homosexual oppression and the ways the construction of homosexuality haunts heterosexual romantic triangles to reveal homosexual panic and homosocial paranoia. The gothic, with its attention to psychological and social structures, does afford the possibilities of revealing the social paranoia and psychological conflicts homosexual writers faced.

I also believe that the tradition of patriarchy has a dominant role in these social structures, and Byron's own inscription of the force of patriarchy in providing portraits for what a man should be marks the beginning of this poem. However, the development of the domestic life, which women were both subjected to and participants in is a factor Sedgewick ignores.

[4] See also Crompton 206-209; Hammond 119.

[5] See Hammond's discussion of the unsettling homoerotic gaze 120.

[6] Of the representation of violence between men, see Cottom's study of Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels and his discussion of distinguishing civilization from decadence in relation to the law. "Codes of behavior required by society make it so difficult for men to have sure understanding of each other that a pressure develops for violence that would penetrate social forms," 175. Similarly, within this poem, violence is the only possible outcome. See also Franklin's brief notes on Scott's romance poetry. Although it is a different genre, she says that his heroines exhibit puritanical preoccupations." In addition, restrictions on sexual passion are mixed in Scott with an idealization of a "pre-sexual childhood innocence," 28, and in his letters, a dread of the onset of puberty, 28. Consideration of forms of male violence and sexuality might yield much if studied in relation to the social regulation of sodomy in readings of Scott's works.

[7] On the metaphysical and metaphorical level I would like to believe the page killed Sir Ezzelin's accusation. But within the structures of theory and interpretation, such wishful thinking is subjectively romantic.

[8] Within the discursive world that the poem never fully represents, in addition to hangings, blackmail and secret deaths of sodomites or people who were threats to powerful sodomites were not uncommon. Norton records a number of murders and blackmail intrigues which followed the discovery of aristocrats' homosexual relationships, Mother Clap's 212-231, and Crompton's biography of Byron points to several such incidents. William Beckford kept a scrapbook of persecutions of sodomites and suspicious incidents, a scrapbook of what he called "shocking human sacrifices," qtd in Norton Mother Clap's 230. Beckford's collections of materials are now held in the British Library.

[9] See Franklin's discussion of women and working class readers of Byron, 1-71.

[10] Rapf has written that "Byron's poetry represents a struggle to annihilate self by becoming one with another and to assert that self against that other," "Byronic Heroine" 642. I would suggest that annihilation is the force within and the force outside of Byron to which he submits and against which he struggles.

[11] Wolfson's study of cross-dressings in Don Juan reveals Byron's continued "experiments with codes of Gender," and suggests their radical implications for potential chaos in social and psychological consequences,"Their She Condition" 594. She also reads Byron's destabilizing of gender in Sardanapulus, "A Problem".

Conclusion

Byron himself suggested that this series of poems be read together. By doing so, I have attempted to contextualize what I read as his homosexual subjectivity in relationship to the emergence of his public poetic voice. I have argued through these essays that Byron's inscriptions of homosexuality can be read and understood only in the context of the discursive constructions of sexuality available to him within an historical framework. The imperatives of homosexual silence mean that homosexual desire is frequently displaced, deferred, or incoherent. Yet these imperatives of silence also animate Byron's writing. It seems that it is impossible either to express or to avoid the sexual aspects of identity within an age determined, as Foucault has suggested, to have sexualities confess themselves. Byron's homosexuality gave him a reason to speak and to produce a hero created out of the tropes that produced the sodomite, an effeminate outlaw, a foreigner, a criminal, and a figure with unspeakable secrets.

Sexuality imbricated in the discourses of racial, national, gendered subjectivity serve both to prohibit and to produce the terms of Byron's homosexuality. The Byronic hero developed in these tales allows Byron to mask and reveal his homoerotic expression, which is never separated from his resistance and accommodation to the heterosexual imperatives that prohibit the direct expression of homosexual desire within the dominant demands of British society. The Byronic hero tells the tale of a homosexual subject displaced. However, the imposed silences produced a poetry preoccupied with the sexual subject's relationship to despotic laws

and customs. Typically, such poems as The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, and The Corsair are narratives of desire which are transfigured into tales of sacrifice, destruction or immolation. In the tales of Byron, the state produces sexuality as a deadly weapon to be wielded in marital and social battles. The narratives challenge the imperatives of an increasingly heterosexual society, but the forced displacements of homosexuality often blunt the force of Byron's challenge. What we do find throughout these tales are men isolated, displaced, and left without a country and without meaningful relationships. They reflect a poetics of estrangement.

In addition to a thematics related to sexual subjectivity and social regulation, these poems produce aspects of Byron's style. His use of parody and irony in The Bride of Abydos becomes a continued central part of his future work, especially when he writes about sexuality. The use of indirection and digression, developed in Childe Harold and The Giaour, also remains a very significant aspect of such poems as "Beppo" and Don Juan. And finally, presenting himself as a figure included and occluded within his writing, which he does in all of these poems, became one of the major fascinations of Byron's writing, which perhaps helps to account for the continued critical interest in the idea of the Byronic self.

Byron's writing provides a kind of prehistory to the homosexual subject. His interest in characters who defy sexual conventions to the point of breaking laws and formalized codes and characters who prove to be unsuitable for domestic arrangements move toward signs of an emergent homosexual. His repeated preference for couples that blur the boundaries of masculine and feminine and are happier the more alike they are, point toward a homosexual desire. The homosexual

subject constituted in relationship to an inseparable heterosexuality, a national identity, and an indeterminate identity also anticipates the homosexual who will be named in the nineteenth century. Byron's desires to inscribe and (de)scribe his particular sense of homosexuality appears a significant aspect of his desire to write and of the impetus to the thematic contents and poetics of his work. The themes of these poems, centered on the sexual subjects' relationship to despotic laws of normalization, are directly influenced by Byron's own reflections on the injustices of sodomitic oppression. Further, the development of the indirections of early narratives, the repetitions of elegiac tone, the sense of an often fractured or dispersed voice with in the poems, as well as the development of irony and parody within Byron's writing, owe their debt to his grappling with questions related to the inscription of his sense of the significance of his homosexual experiences and perspective.

Yet to say all of this is not to say that Byron's homosexuality fully realizes a homosexual subject, or that sexual subjectivity can be a totalizing or unified identity. The prohibitions of silence, the crossing-overs of gendered identities, and identity as a writing, speaking British subject suggest that the sexual self is constituted in language not as an essence, but as an aspect of the self negotiated within the terms of language which necessarily names, renames, and disperses the self through a vast network that, as Byron suggests, coils around and about the subject which speaks itself unspeakable. To this I add only that I hope this study suggests other possibilities for readings of Byron's works, not to find an isolated homosexual subject located only in the poems he wrote to and for his male objects of desire, but

readings that will extend the possibilities of our understanding sexual subjectivity as a complex aspect of the self, always under revision.

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