



Byron as a Satirist

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Byron as a Satirist.

1.

In defining and dealing with satire there is, perhaps, more difficulty than with the other genres of literature. The narrative and lyric are easily recognisable as epic, novel, ode, and so on. We are soon made aware of the presence of the ogre of didactic intent in any literary vehicle. But so often there is another passenger, like the romantic spirit, intangible, who boards and alights here and there. It is the satiric spirit, which is more or less apparent wherever the mirror is held up to Nature. It has its place in Shakespearean drama, in the lyrics of Shelley, and the novels of Thackeray. It may be assumed, then, to be an element in normality. With cause this spirit may become highly developed in the individual or group, and what was in a normal state tolerable and even amusing, may become when carried further, obtrusively annoying both to those who suffer from its ministrations and to those who must witness the wholesale execution and inconoclasm which follow in the wake of the satiric spirit ranging for revenge.

In such cases of unusual development of satiric habits of thought, a writer may bring forth a work which is classified as a "satire." Thus arises the necessity of giving a definition to the form which is so called in the works of writers ancient and modern. As for the satirist himself, it is almost a norm that he should evidence some highly distinctive abnormality.

A satire may be defined or described as a literary form in which the writer expresses his amusement or disgust at what appears to him as ridiculous or unseemly. When this is done wittily or humourously,¹ the product becomes more than mere invective. So, too, the maintenance of literary form prevents reversion to the level of the coarse satiric exchanges flung at random by the degraded characters in ancient Greek and Latin comedy. Especially must the satirist, therefore, who desires any lasting remembrance for his performance ensure its technique and finish.

1. "Humour is the making others act or talk absurdly and unconsciously: wit is the pointing out and ridiculing the absurdity consciously, and with more or less ill-nature."

Wm. Hazlitt: "Lectures on the English Poets: on Dryden and Pope."

3.

The satire in poetic form, i.e. the verse-satire, may be argued very reasonably to be a species of the lyrical genre. In the ode the writer expresses enthusiasm, in the elegy, sorrow or sadness. "Et quand enfin il épanche sa colère ou sa bile, c'est alors de la satire. En d'autres termes, satire morale ou politique, satire littéraire, la satire est toujours une expression du moi du satirique; et, quelque forme qu'elle revête, prose ou vers, la poète ne s'en sert que comme d'un moyen d'opposer sa façon de sentir ou de penser à celles qui ne sont point les siennes, et qui excitent pour ce motif sa colère ou son indignation, son horreur ou sa crainte, son mépris ou son ironie."¹ The satiric notes in the lyric utterance of Byron as the romantic Childe Harold become the predominating strain of the cynical Don Juan.

The aim of satire is primarily destructive. Any professed moral purpose accompanying the chastening is, if it exists, likely to be wholly secondary and is not allowed to interfere with the main purpose. In his egotism the satirist focuses attention upon the discrepancies in the world external to his ego, a world

1. La Grande Encyclopédie: Satire.

4.

upon which his assumption of superiority allows him to look down. From his exalted place he passes judgment, always condemnatory, for, where he has been displeased, it is his pleasure to notice only incongruities, and he finds joy in destroying, or attempting to destroy, what he considers other people's illusions. Satire of the highest type is written from this, so to speak, position of eminence which admits—almost impells—the employment of the superior weapons, mockery and raillery. Some pedestrian satirists never reach this position, never become adepts with the finer weapons; and some who have gained it after the effort of years, still retain the tendency to forsake, in an impassioned moment, this tactical advantage to rush directly at the objective.¹

1. e.g. Byron in "The Age of Bronze."

2. Byron's Heritage from Preceding Satirists.

The human—or inhuman—propensity for satire appears in the literature of Ancient Greece,¹ yet it does not exist in that concentrated form which later ages employ. "Elle ne s'y rencontre qu'à l'état diffus."² It requires a hypercritical age, no less than a hypocritical one. Fools and villains are its quarry, and it postulates a fine eye for faults and a sharp tongue. Given these materials, the rest depends on the satirist's imagination and audacity.

Metrical satire did, indeed, receive an impetus from Archilochus and other writers of the dim past whose work received the approval of Horace and Quintilian. It is an interesting fact that the latter asserts that satire is an Italian growth.³ It is a far cry from the rude recriminations of the early Italian folk to the

1. Notably in the comedies of Aristophanes.

2. La Grande Encyclopédie: Satire.

3. Inst. Orat. X. 1. "Satura quidem tota nostra est."

The whole question of Greek and Alexandrian influence is still being debated.

refinement of Horatian rally and Juvenalian censure but the evolutionary process is logically traceable; and while the classical form commanded the attention of scholars in other lands, the satire in the vernacular continued to develop, awaiting export in a later age.

The coarse jests and repartee of the Saturnian versifiers were consolidated to form the "satura" which implies "medley." From this source and from Old Greek comedy, Andronicus received inspiration for his satiric drama, and likewise Ennius for his "satura" in dialogue form. But it was Lucilius who determined the form and tone of classical Roman satire. A bachelor of doubtful character, his mind stocked with the obscene abuse of Athenian comedy, and with political animus besides, he set the fashion of attacking and neglected the milder delineation in caricature that is so often the manner of such a gentler spirit as Horace. He was followed by Persius and imitated by a pupil after his own heart—Juvenal. These three, Horace, Persius and Juvenal, are the models for the English Augustans who regarded Lucilius as too primitive and lacking in "justesse." They gave the Romans credit for more "moral purpose" than is consistent with the known characters of the ancient writers, although in fairness

to Dryden it must be said that he suspected that Persius' repeated frankness on the subject of sex did not spring from the purest of motives.

Satire as developed and polished by Dryden and Pope is probably the most obvious example of classical Latin influence on English Literature. In their translations and imitations the English writers, to effect a correspondence with the Latin hexameters and elegaic couplets, employed the decasyllabic line and the heroic couplet. Their familiarity with the content and tone of their models is reflected also in their original work. Byron's reaction to his Italian masters produced similar effects.

Before this intensive cultivation of English satire there were centuries of slower development that leave a specific national flavour. There is the satiric verse in Mediaeval Latin of which the chief theme is the scandalous conduct of the ecclesiastical and monastic orders. This pseudo-Juvenalian stuff is usually traceable to some no less scandalous "clerkes" who "lack advancement." Chaucer incorporates these ideas in his delineation of "Frere", "Monke", and "Somner", with, possibly, the addition of moral earnestness, which, though

not, as already observed, an essential element in satire, is met with occasionally even in formal satire. "Piers Plowman" is, perhaps, the best example in Early English Poetry of satire which aims at moral reform. Skelton, Marprelate, and the early polemical writers are not strictly satirists even though they afford a comprehensive lesson in invective. Nash, in his "Four Letters Confuted", expresses dislike for poems purely satiric, while, on the other hand Lodge and Donne sustain the vogue of satire. Their method is to employ a Horatian introduction to a medley of invective in restricted compass against "the town." Hall's scope is wider; and his urbanity, even his couplets, looks forward to Pope.

Among the Italian importations of Wyatt and Surrey was the ottava rima, destined to be the stanza form of "Don Juan." It was, however, employed in expressing sentiments¹ far removed from its native association with the burlesque, and its popularity was brief. It suffered a sea-change into the Spenserian stanza which Byron himself employed before adopting the more exotic form.

1. e.g. Drayton: The Barrons' Warres.

The "Imitations" and "Hints" of Pope and Byron are faintly adumbrated in the method and treatment of Thomas Drant's "Medicinable Morall",¹ in which the moral purpose of the English writer directs the attack most strongly against hypocrisy. But the humour and sympathy of his satire fades in the enthusiasm for Persius which Casaubon and Montpelier aroused in the eighteenth century writers who set more store by vehemence than by moral purpose. When the Elizabethans "under fained private names noted generall vices", they were, in fact, giving expression to personal enmity and partisan strife. Aside from Addison and Steele, the sincerity of any professed moral purpose in English satire after Oldham is doubtful.

During the civil wars formal satire was neglected for the vituperative pamphlet. "Inter arma satura silet." Even the sublime Milton descends to Billingsgate.²

The Restoration permitted the bigoted Butler to hurl the coarsest abuse at everything Puritanical.

1. The Medicinable Morall of Thos. Drant, that is, the two Books of Horace his Satyres, Englyshed according to the prescription of Saint Hierome (1566).
2. v. "Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnus."

The licence, audacity, and bizarre rhymes, which are the features of Butler's octosyllabics, appear in the wider scope of Swift's satire which Byron greatly admired.

The genius of Dryden was concentrated upon satire only after years of attention to other literary forms. His literary training, self-control, and good taste in using pseudonyms give his satire a universality and permanence which are denied the efforts of those who, while still apprentices to the craft, attempt particularised invective. But the tradition of the island and the disposition of the age was to limit the application of satire to the individual or, at the widest, the well-defined group. The spirit of English satire was malicious. Embodied in Pope it became supremely so. His genius, though inspired by, could scarcely comprehend to the full the universal wit of Dryden, or the ingenuity involved in producing "Absalom." But ease, urbanity, cold-blooded capacity for dissection of character, together with a fine sense for correctness in detail and lack of hampering scruples, were added to malice and wit and subtle irony to make Pope the prime influence upon later satirists in verse. His effect upon Byron is tempered by two important intermediaries, the fiery Churchill of "Rosciad" fame, and the irascible and scurrilous author

of the "Baviad" and "Maeviad", William Gifford (1756-1826). Nor is the plastic satiric genius of Byron free of debt to the manner of the imposing Dean Swift who, with inimitable irony, holds up to the world a mirror which reflects only to distort.

On the continent such famous names as Dante, Cervantes, Quevedo, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Pulci, Casti, Voltaire, stand for many different manifestations of the satiric spirit, variations in style, and adaptation of literary forms to the service of satire. But whether the vehicle is prophecy, mock-romance, vision, travesty, or cynical tale, it is to be noted that the writers in the Romance languages display a high degree of complexity in the indirect method of satire, whereas vehement directness and the savage assault of Old Roman satire are to be associated with satirists of northern nativity and tradition, such as Swift, Churchill, Gifford, and the Byron of the years before his removal to the continent. This divergence in type had existed in the city which listened to the forthright Juvenal and chuckled at the obscene parodies of the Roman classics, concocted by professional Graeco-Roman entertainers whose subtle and oblique methods have been the outstanding inheritance of the Mediterranean satiric manner.

Of the indirect method in satire one of the less worthy types is the parody which essays to excite amusement by employing a humorous imitation of the style of another work while dealing with material of a trifling nature instead of the original subject matter. This is a device common wherever the critical spirit appears. The Romans had been entertained with the use of Vergil's epic style to depict orgies of sensuality. Milton's blank verse was degraded to the purposes of "The Splendid Shilling" (1701) by John Philips. In the "Rejected Addresses" (1812) of James and Horace Smith, among the parodies of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others, the gloomy style of parts of "Childe Harold" was parodied in "Cui Bono?" much to the amusement of Byron himself, who, the same year, composed what he calls "a parody of a peculiar kind", the "Parenthetical Address, by Dr. Plagiary," (October 23, 1812). The dedicatory address submitted by Dr. Busby for the opening of Drury Lane Theatre earlier in the month had been rejected, but on October 14th his son attempted to recite it from one of the boxes, thereby provoking the displeasure of the audience and the satiric wit of Byron who, by combining lines from the genuine address with comments of his own, gives Dr. Busby's production the appearance of absurdity.

Another form of the burlesque is the travesty, in which the debased treatment accorded to subject matter of an elevated sort endangers, if it does not destroy, all dignity. Mythology and history ordinarily provide the topic, as in Shakespeare's presentation of Pyramus and Thisbe in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", or Voltaire's degraded portrayal of Joan of Arc in "La Pucelle." To this class belongs Byron's masterly "Vision of Judgment".

Other allied forms are the mock-romance¹ of Cervantes, and the mock-heroic of Pope, direct or indirect, as in "The Dunciad" or "The Rape of the Lock". Besides the political songs such as Marvell wrote, and the fables in the tradition of Aesop, there is that least worthy and most common dependence on epigram and lampoon, too often obscene. Drama, or what purports to be such, may be highly coloured with satire as in Moliere's comedies or in Byron's "Blues".

To be distinguished from the fore-going is the direct type of satire of the classical model which announces its theme and its choice of the satiric manner. In this tradition are "The Dunciad", Churchill's "Rosciad", and Gifford's "Baviad". It is the type which Byron follows in his earlier satire, notably, "English Bards", "Hints from Horace", "The Curse of Minerva", and "TheWaltz";

1. see Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas".

and it is the type to which he returns in "The Age of Bronze" (1823). And, though in emulating his English predecessors, he has achieved distinction and has since been unequalled, it is by the aid of another set of masters that his satire is saved from being imitative and becomes unique. The effect of Italy on his genius produced, by the blending of inherited and acquired characteristics of spirit and method, his original work in satire contained in "Beppo", "Don Juan", and "The Vision of Judgment".

This essential difference in spirit and method involves a corresponding division in chronology and metre. The earlier satires are in avowed conformation to the metrical rules of Pope, the later group are written in the ottava rima of Casti's "Poema Tartaro" and Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore". To this there is the notable exception of "The Age of Bronze", and some epigrams. The dramas and romances, not being primarily satires, admit of only occasional mention. Rarely can certain pronouncement be made where the satire is not sustained.

3. Inherent Predisposition to Satire.

Psycho-physical examination and analysis of the satirist where the means exist usually reveals some aberration from that strange blend of characteristics which common consent calls normality. Upon the satirist himself, self-consciousness that his state is not wholly blessed produces an effect of added vehemence and throws oil on the devouring flame. Juvenal's wrath was aroused as much by his own disappointed hopes as by the observation of his townsmen's shortcomings. Even according to Roman standards of judgment, Horace was scarcely a saintly person. Of the satirists on sex-relationships, Boccaccio and Rabelais who exhibit Persius' tendency to the indelicate and unhealthy, were consciously unhappy men. The satiric Thersites of Homer had exaggerated defects of mind and body, and the fury of Swift ended in acknowledged madness. Pope's lack of physical strength was (attended by an absence) of moral scruples. Churchill, like Byron, showed a constitutional disregard for marriage rites or creditor's rights. The strain of misanthropy occurs in unison with the satiric note, even in the Apostle of Culture, whether as the "elegant Jeremiah", crying in the wilderness, or

when as a lyrist, he laments:

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain."¹

It is significant for the comprehension of the aim and effect of satire that so constructive a critic of life should even for a moment feel impelled to confess with Isaiah: "We have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth." The satirist's fire reduces his own joy to ashes.

Nature and Fortune, in Byron's case, effected a compromise that, as it were, marks him as a satirist of destiny. His good luck in falling heir to a title was compensated with the taint of the bar-sinister attached to that very honour; and the boasted descent from that extraordinary person, Admiral John Byron, whose storm-test career is made by the poet a sort of prototype of his own, carried with it the hazards of abnormality. About a nearer relative, the satirist is less informative. Byronic temperament in the immediately preceding holder of the title, Lord William Byron, verged toward madness far enough to involve him in one suspicious homicide,

1. Matthew Arnold: Dover Beach.

to induce him to abuse his wife, and to obtain for him and for his Newstead residence, notwithstanding full discount for the malevolent gossip of a community which he hated, a well-founded reputation for dissoluteness and iniquity.

The poet's father—"Mad Jack Byron"—handsome, a Guards officer, and quite the melodramatic villain, fled from his creditors along with another man's wife, the Marchioness of Carmarthen. In the interval before dying of a broken heart she presented her second husband—she had been given a divorce—with the plain-looking Augusta, that storm-centre of so much scandal, and all else that she had to give. When this relief was exhausted, the gallant soldier of fortune next married the poet's mother, Catherine Gordon, a stout, unprepossessing woman whose attraction lay in a fortune of £24,000, only half what gossip had led her husband to expect. For herself she claimed some sort of descent from King James I., which, added to the Byrons' not unblemished inheritance from Ralph de Burun, vassal of the Norman Conqueror, gave her satirical son further reason for patrician pride. After her husband had again fled the country to escape his creditors she entertained the Scottish envoys and enraptured George

Gordon's childhood and school vacations with outbursts of violent temper which kept her "lame brat" busy dodging her and her missiles.¹

Thus he inherited the burden of rank without habituation to the wealth and the domestic atmosphere of the established aristocrat. What wonder that his views of love, marriage, and patrician manners are unusual? His heritage and early environment gave him scant opportunity to observe the ideal. Even his beauty of face and figure was offset by the deformity of his feet, and by a tendency to obesity—a maternal legacy. His physical appearance afforded him cause for vanity and bitterness. On the one hand his charms made him much in demand socially especially among women; on the other hand his deformity barred him from certain pursuits like dancing, and led him to labour for proficiency at those sports, such as swimming and pistol-shooting, where his well-developed arms could compete with advantage against normal men. His passionate nature, insufficiently exposed in youth to the socialising force of systematised education, promoted the growth of this unusual blend of characteristics into an abounding

1. The degrading scenes are depicted with fictitious names in Disraeli's "Venetia".

egotism. The habit of posing, adopted at first to conceal his deformity, grew upon him and he became the poseur, inconsistent, capricious, insincere. Throughout his intense life he continued to develop new complexities, to discover the penetralia of his genius, so that even the Countess of Blessington in her "Conversations" says of him that "he is never two days the same", and seems impressed with his assertion that he had "no character at all." Into his poetry, passion and inconstancy infused the spirit of satirical antagonism to whatever wounded his vanity or excited his resentment; whatever failed to satisfy the whims of his egotism suffered, no respect being paid to the just merits of the agent of provocation. The genius which made possible Byron's success in diverse forms of poetry was, from an early age, inclined primarily to destructive criticism of life. Consequently, the force which permits him to wander at will through the realms of poetry, in the narrative, the lyrical, and the dramatic, is predisposed to echo in all the attack which is carried into the field of literature in "English Bards", of society in "The Waltz", of politics in "The Age of Bronze", and of morals in "Don Juan".

4. The Satires in the English Tradition.

Byron's biographers recount episodes of his childhood that indicate satiric temperament. At an early age he was the author of a lampoon ridiculing an old lady who voiced her trust of spending a life hereafter on the moon. Upon another occasion he gained opportunity for mockery by beguiling the quack Lavender into pronouncing a meaningless scrawl to be Italian.

In his sojourn at Harrow the sensitive boy encountered further treatment conducive to the development of satirical powers. Unpopular and unhappy, except for the latter year and a half of his stay his circle of friends was small. He had all the time necessary to acquire the habit of wide, if random, reading, and ample freedom for contemplation of his state and the causes thereof, real or imagined. This period produced his first printed satire, "On a Change of Masters at a Great Public School"¹. An outburst of resentment against the appointment of a headmaster other than Byron's preference, this satire displays his characteristic hasty judgment, vehemence in the assault, and ultimate contrition. Because it did not suit the

1. Dated from Harrow, July, 1805.

satirist's pleasure that Dr. Butler instead of Dr. Drury's son should receive the honour, the school's disaster is prophesied and the new incumbent in office is subjected to an attack which embraces a vehemence indicative of Byron's perusal of Pope, together with the acerbity and unfairness which were to be carried so far in "English Bards". Something of the condensed acrimony of the sketch of Atticus appears in the satire levelled at Dr. Butler:

"Of narrow brain, yet of a narrower soul,
Pomposus holds you in his harsh control;
Pomposus, by no social virtue sway'd,
With florid jargon, and with vain parade."

Eventually, in his Diary Byron wrote his confession and repentance of this ill-considered insurgency.

Cambridge University afforded the inspiration for "Thoughts Suggested by a College Examination" (1806). Disappointed in his hope of going to Oxford, he vents his spleen upon the pedants and hangers-on of his unloved Alma Mater, and ridicules their dulness and intriguing in a style that carries more distinct echoes of Pope:

"Vain as their honours, heavy as their ale,
Sad as their wit, and tedious as their tale."¹

His contempt was further displayed in his conduct. He brought up a bear to sit for a fellowship, and, choosing

1. Cf: Essay on Man: I. 271-2.

"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees."

disreputable associates, he rode about in a carriage and pair attended by servants and pet dogs.

In the "Inscription on the Monument of a Newfoundland Dog"¹ set up at Newstead, Byron affects a savage misanthropy, reminiscent of Swift's hate and detestation for "that animal called man".

The faculty of working up a great rage for little cause, characteristic of Gifford, appears in Byron's satire as early as 1806 in connection with the politics of the day. In answer to an anonymous "Impromptu", derogatory to Fox, which came out in the Morning Post for September 26, the liberal-minded peer opens with:

"Oh, factious viper! whose envenomed tooth,
Would mangle still the dead, perverting truth."

Among this early verse there are satires in other than the classic couplet. "Granta, A Medley" satirising Cambridge, fore-shadows greater skill in unusual rhymes. "To Eliza" heads a life-long succession of cynical comments on Marriage. The "Lines to a Lady Who Presented to the Author a Lock of Her Hair Braided with His Own, and Appointed a Night in December to Meet Him in the Garden" contain comic and ironic elements.

1. Dated from Newstead Abbey, October 30, 1808.

It is this early satire which is his amateur work. Though it is chiefly vituperative, it employs wit and humour of a sort, and from the metrical forms upon which he tries his prentice hand, Byron is enabled to select with fair assurance the classic couplet for his longer satires.

The tendency to vary the metre and tone of his satire became less apparent as his critics increased, and as he felt the growing urge to take the offensive in his own behalf. He had received adverse criticism for some of the early work which he had published privately; and, his vanity touched, he proceeded with the preparation of a satire of which, by October 26, 1807, according to a letter to Elizabeth ("Eliza") Pigot, he had written three hundred and eighty lines.

The final stimulus to evoke the full power of his satire was a long unsigned article in the Edinburgh Review for January, 1808, wherein the contributor, probably Brougham, comments scathingly not only upon the verses of Byron's "Hours of Idleness" but upon the pretentious preface and the author himself. Infuriated, Byron sought about for a weapon with which to return the attack. The satire of which he writes to Miss Pigot proved to be the nucleus of one of his most famous works.

It was increased with an introduction and conclusion, and with an attack on Jeffrey whom Byron imagined to have written the offending article. Privately published in the autumn of 1808 under the title of "British Bards", this satire was again revised and published anonymously in the following March with the full title of "English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers", a poem of six hundred and ninety-six lines. Its quick sale was followed by a second edition in October, 1809, comprising ten hundred and fifty lines. This edition, and the two succeeding printings admitted the authorship of Byron on the title-page. But the pride of accomplishment gave way to regret for some of the satiric outbursts, and the author suppressed the projected fifth edition which included the ten hundred and seventy lines as printed now.

In his "Apology Addressed to the Critical Reviewers" (1761), Churchill had confined himself to castigating hostile critics. Gifford, in his "Baviad" (1794), aimed at ridiculing contemporary poets. The double title of Byron's satire indicates the combination of these two motives. Actuated by personal spite, he essays to revenge himself upon Jeffrey and the "Scotch Marauders". At the same time, the narrow spirit which he condemned in them, led him, with characteristic inconsistency to in-

veigh against the "Southern Dunces", Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, by, as it were, inverting Pope's "Dunciad" so as to attack not only poetasters but poets of genius. Gifford and Byron, when they lost self-control, lost the sense of values as well.

Similar to Pope's work in motive, "English Bards" follows closely the Augustan's metrical style. Aside from a few peculiarities,¹ the rhymes are pure. There are only five double rhymes². Byron's percentage of run-on lines is smaller than Pope's. Twice the triplet occurs,³ and twice the alexandrine.⁴ So, too, in the manner of Pope, occurs regularly the medial caesura after the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable.

Despite his avowed intention to

"venture o'er
The path which Pope and Gifford trod before",

Byron only once employs the indirect method so much used in "The Dunciad". Except for the duel-scene satirising in the mock-heroic manner Jeffrey and Moore, Byron bludgeons his victims singly. Pope assails, in nearly all cases, personal enemies who suffered also the

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1. Lines 608-9; 624-5; 656-7.
 2. Lines 210; 232; 240; 254; 910.
 3. Lines 415-416-417; 684-685-686.
 4. Lines 417; 1022.

public disfavour. Byron was personally unacquainted with many of the objects of his satire, who are often, like Scott and Coleridge, writers enjoying considerable prestige among their contemporaries; but some phase of their work or behaviour is purposely exaggerated into cause for intemperate abuse. A great cry is raised over Scott's writing for hire by the satirist who later discovered that the recipient of his offensiveness had interceded with Jeffrey not to publish the article in question. The younger poet so far altered his views later as to haggle with his publisher over the price of "Don Juan".

The circumstances attending the composition of "English Bards" made difficult the keeping to any well-ordered plan. Byron had intended to model it after Juvenal's first satire, in a fashion similar to Pope's imitations and to the "Baviad", which follows Persius and is annotated with the text of the Roman satire. Byron probably became impatient of the restraint imposed by such a plan. His satire begins, indeed, with a paraphrase of Juvenal's opening lines:

"Semper ego auditor tantum? numquamne reponam
vexatus tatiens rauci Theseide Cordi."¹

1. In Dryden's translation

"Still shall I hear, and never quit the score,
Stunn'd with hoarse Codrus' Theseid, o'er and
o'er?"

There are two other imitations¹ indicated in the first hundred lines, after which Byron proceeds independent of Roman models. A semblance of coherence is achieved by means of an informing personality, which Byron uses as a licence to turn from bards to reviewers and back again, and to digress from the theme to rail against the depravity of Argyle Institute or to mock at the antiquarian activities of Elgin and Aberdeen. This method, incidental to the loose structure of classical satire, gives the impression of panorama. The use of stock expressions to hail each character produces the effect of a parade of victims against whom the satiric tirade is directed.

Byron permits tradition to impose three rather worn conventions upon his "English Bards". So long a line of satirists have proclaimed the Golden Age gone forever that little scope for novel expression of that sentiment is left. Dryden, Pope, and Byron in turn "sighed for the golden years", each lamenting the loss of the previous era and reserving the adjective "degenerate" for his own. The "Saturnia regna" which Byron associated with the presence on earth of Pope was

1. Lines 87-88 (Juv.I., 17-18)
Lines 93-94 (Juv.I., 19-21).

by the earlier satirist termed a "Saturnian age of lead."¹ Looking backward after his change of masters, Byron satirised this convention in "The Age of Bronze":

"The 'good old times'--all times when old are
good--
Are gone; the present might be if they would."

It had become a formality with satirists to invoke some predecessor to return with his presumably superior talents to the fray. Young² had called upon Pope; Canning, in "New Morality" addressed his appeal to Gifford. Along with the admission of authorship to the second edition of "English Bards", Byron included the preface in which he professes to be a sort of locum tenens for the absent Gifford. In his verses he echoes Canning's appeal:

" 'Why slumbers Gifford?' once was asked in vain;
Why slumbers Gifford? let us ask again."

Acknowledgment elsewhere of his indebtedness, and the evidence which is adduced by comparing this satire with Gifford's may be regarded as proving the sincerity of the sentiments professed.

The third of these conventions is the assumption of the pose of acting pro bono publico. This had

1. The Dunciad i. 28.

2. Satires i., 35: "Why slumbers Pope?"

become a settled mannerism, following Pope's pretence of possessing a moral purpose in his satiric proscription. Still less serious than Pope's are his claims to be considered when he asserts:

"For me, who, thus unask'd, have dared to tell
My Country, what her sons should know too well,
Zeal for her honour bade me here engage
The host of idiots that infest her age."¹

His own generation might well smile at his denial of selfish motives. The features common to Churchill and Byron in the satiric attack would show more clearly in that day. Each neglects to answer the criticism of his verse, but makes his vehicle carry the attack against the reviewers personally, and includes in the onslaught a class of persons to whose contributions to art he accords a treatment as savage as that which arouses his own wrath against the reviewers. But, while the extravagantly titanic force which Churchill and Gifford employ against comparative pigmies is exerted in a real public service by exposing the decadent stage and literary affectation, Byron's abuse of the rising Romantic school is an ill-considered move, and the inclusion of Scott, Moore, the Hollands, and others, caused him later to repent of his hasty folly.

1. English Bards: ll. 991-994.

Strangely enough, where the attack might well have been strongest, its effect is indifferent. The satire on Jeffrey which goes to some length to associate the critic with the Jeffries so notorious in legal history, and to ridicule both the censor and Moore in the only passage where the indirect satiric method is employed, fails, nevertheless, to brand Byron's chosen enemy with any epithet sufficiently well-chosen to linger in the memory.

Far more virulent is the vicious attack upon Lord Carlisle. Originally, the reference to Byron's relative and guardian had been complimentary:

"On one alone Apollo deigns to smile,
And crowns a new Roscommon in Carlisle."

But the older lord's neglect to introduce Byron to the House provoked the resentment which substituted the long satiric passage which includes one expression,

"The paralytic puling of Carlisle", that seemed so regretfully distasteful even to the satirist when he afterwards learned how unconsciously close to the truth he had come, for the elderly Carlisle was, unknown to Byron at the time of writing, the victim of a nervous malady.

Byron's classical satire, which has been shown to be associated with the work of Pope and Churchill,

and Gifford inclines more to the last-named in many respects. Like Gifford, Byron employs no type names, nor did he succeed in creating a type. His charges are, as in the satire on Wordsworth, so specific that they are non-transferable, and thus universality is made impossible. The furious invective of Byron and Gifford tends, by transferring attention to the satirists' prejudices, to make their satire less effective. A maturer Byron learned to give his delineations the plausibility that comes from allowing the victim to possess some little merit. In the less copious use of notes, in style, and in elegance of diction the "Bards" is superior to the "Maeviad".

Byron's work, then, in general, inclines on the side of versification to Pope; in manner and structure, to Gifford. Whatever reflection of the views and phraseology of his predecessors occurs in Byron's satire is not to be deemed plagiarism, but rather the inevitable result of a sensitive nature and a memory that retained the impressions received from readings in the satire of admired masters. In contrast with "Don Juan", which employs a widely different manner and style, "English Bards" may still suggest immaturity, but in its own genre of classical satire it ranks well with the work of

predecessors and above all later attempts.

The "Hints from Horace", notwithstanding the fact that Byron intended it as a sequel to "English Bards", was never published in his lifetime. Composed at Capuchin Convent in Athens¹, remote from the environment that had evoked the earlier satiric outburst, the second work has less vigour and brilliancy. Byron's publishers failed to share the poet's mistakenly high opinion of this satire. With the excuse that the popularity of "Childe Harold" would be endangered, Murray put off publication for years.

As far as the Englishman's claim of fidelity to the original "Ars Poetica" is concerned, the "Hints" preserves the general continuity of the Roman work in structure and argument. Byron frequently translates literally. At the other extreme there are interpolated passages on the Italian Opera, Methodism, and "Hudibras"; there are allusions to "Granta" and to Grub-Street, substitutions of Milton for Homer, and of Shakespeare for Aeschylus. Thus the work has a flavour that is modern and Byronic rather than Horatian, a change which is accompanied with even greater incoherence than that charged to the Roman.

1. The generally accepted date of completion is March 14, 1811.

Of the personal satire, which is unequal to that in "English Bards", the longest passage is directed against Jeffrey. It indicates that Byron's wrath still burned, although less fiercely; Fitz-Gerald is alluded to as "Fitz-Scribble"; and the indictment, less forcible, includes, as formerly, Southey, Scott, Bowles, and the "cobbler-laureates, Bloomfield and Blackett, but omits Wordsworth almost, and Coleridge entirely. Inconsistency crops up again in the treatment of the drama, Byron campaigning for the freedom of the theatre from Methodistic censure, the while he levels a charge of immorality against the Opera. There is a savour of autobiography in the outstandingly bitter résumé of the course of the Georgian nobleman from cradle to grave. It recalls a corresponding passage in Horace; its tone is reminiscent of the misanthropy voiced in the epitaph for his Newfoundland dog. The "Hints" contains, too, an admission of the primal stimulus of the satirist:

"Satiric rhyme first sprang from selfish spleen,
You doubt—see Dryden, Pope, St. Patrick's Dean."

"The Curse of Minerva" is also dated from Capuchin Convent, as close to the "Hints" as March 17, 1811. Byron had ridiculed the collector of the "Elgin Marbles" along with Aberdeen in "English Bards".

When he beheld the despoiled city he was inspired to include in "Childe Harold"¹ a fierce invective against the man and the country which could countenance such apparently wanton plundering. Possessed of an undivided aim, Byron gave "The Curse" a concentration unique in his early satires.

There are distinct resemblances to Churchill's "Prophecy of Famine" (1763), in the use of dialogue and in the abuse hurled at anything Scotch in nature or association. Each poem ends with the dire prophecy of a goddess. Not content with limiting the satire to Elgin, going even so far as to drag in an allusion to Elgin's divorce, Byron extends the scope of his attack against the injustice and inefficiency associated with Britannia's conduct of affairs abroad and at home.

Byron himself so far disowned "The Curse" as to prevent its public circulation. No doubt he felt that his views had already been given to the world sufficiently, and that "The Curse" could add little to his standing as an artist. Aside from the one notable feature of superior structure, as poetry it is inferior except for the fifty-four lines of the introduction which appeared in Canto III. of "The Corsair" (1814).

1. Ibid. Canto II., 10-15.

As a classical satirist Byron had reached his height in "English Bards". Although "The Curse of Minerva" employs the device of annotation, and the direct invective (in the mouth of the goddess) characterised by vehemence and bitterness, the decline or, rather, the departure appears in the strengthening of a narrative basis and the falling-off from the former skill exhibited in the management of the Popean metre. Practice in the handling of the new elements in "Childe Harold" and numerous shorter poems was already exerting an influence to cause a pronounced change of manner.

The years that intervened between Byron's return from the continent to a London that received him adoringly, and the publication of "Beppo" after his forced withdrawal, brought with them the contacts that stimulated the growth of the satirist's liberalism, which is translated into his writings as licence. He associated himself with the Whig opposition and at the same time established friendly relationships with many of the former victims of his satire, notably Moore and the Hollands; and that personality and temperament of which analysis has been made mingled with and contemplated a society for which the Regent established a precedent of immorality. So, too, he had the unusual experience

of married life with a woman who came to regard him as insane.

The friendship of Byron and Moore was followed by the action of each in attacking the Regent and his coterie. Moore's greatest success was achieved in his "Intercepted Letters" written in octosyllabics. Byron's significant satiric pieces are: "Lines to A Lady Weeping" (1812), "Condolatory address to Sarah, Countess of Jersey", (1814) "Windsor Poetics" and "On a Royal Visit to the Vaults", the last two circulating in manuscript only. The pieces evidence the settled vindictiveness of Byron's satire even as they point to his ultimate conversion to follow new metres in satire. Most important is a poem styled a sequel to "The Devil's Walk" (1799)¹ which Byron attributed to the Cambridge scholar, Porson. Byron's "Devil's Drive" (1813) fore-shadows the manner and method of "Don Juan". The satirist follows the course of a nocturnal visit of the devil to the bloody field of Leipsig, and then to various English resorts of his disciples such as a Methodist chapel, Parliament, and a royal ball. Social, political, and various other

1. Actually composed by Southey and Coleridge.

activities are dealt with in a style of which the wit, realism, and cool scorn appreciably lower the tone of ferocious invective hitherto dominant in Byronic satire.

This lighter vein becomes an important manifestation in the only long satire of this period, "The Waltz", printed in the spring of 1813. This poem, though declared by Byron to be in the tradition of "English Bards", since it has the same metre and supplement of notes, has three significant features: the partial mock-heroic method, the lighter spirit of mockery already noticed¹, and a tendency to burlesque coarseness. Public reception of this effort was so cold that the satirist, who does not seem to have valued this composition very highly, took counsel with his publishers to deny authorship. In the ten years that followed this unsuccess, Byron, while still championing the precepts of Classicism, rarely employed its metrical forms in the practice of satire.

The entrance of his wife's former governess, Mrs. Clermont, into the crisis in the Byrons' domestic affairs produced the one notable exception. "A Sketch" comprising one hundred and four lines in the Popean

1. See also the "Parenthetical Address, By Dr. Plagiary", mentioned on page 12.

couplet, exceeds in savagery and venom any of Pope's satiric attacks on Lady Montagu.

The reversion to his earlier fashion in satire which takes place in "The Age of Bronze" (begun in December, 1822) is accompanied, in Byron's own admission, with a great many allusions, classical and historical, which have become unfamiliar to the average reader. It shows that the maturer Byron can employ the direct invective of "English Bards", although with something less of vehemence and more of rhetoric. It has the digressive quality of the later satires, but without enough of their burlesque spirit, so that, compared with either "English Bards" or "Don Juan", it appears dull. With the Moore whom the earlier satires in this same tradition had attacked, Byron continues his later alliance, not only in his political views, but likewise in the manner and language used in the sketches of the Czar and Louis XVIII. In "The Age of Bronze" Byron commands attention with:

"Resplendent sight! Behold the coxcomb Czar,
The autocrat of Waltzes and of war!"

Speaking of the same monarch in the first of his "Fables for the Holy Alliance", Moore had said:

"On he capered, fearless quite,
Thinking himself extremely clever,
And waltzed away with all his might
As if the Frost would last forever."

The secondary title, "Annus haud Mirabilis", refers, of course, to the year 1822, the date of the Congress of Verona which was headed in its despotic aims by Metternich whom the impassioned Byron assails as "Power's foremost parasite". References to the revolt of the Spanish colonies, and the struggle of Greece against the Turks, to the recently-departed Napoleon, and to the lingering reluctance of the English landlords to abandon profitable wars, combine to make the satire essentially timely in nature; while the review of instances of similar attempts which the dust of ages has obliterated, darkened with a Cyrenaic confession of universal vanity, lends to the satire a shadow of permanence.

At this point "The Blues" may as well be dealt with since it seems to invite comparison with Gifford's employment of the steam-roller upon the pebbles beside the highway of literature. Forwarded to Murray from Ravenna in August, 1821, with a request for concealment of authorship, it was so little esteemed by the publisher that publication was withheld until it was handed over to John Hunt, who was less chary of incurring risks. When the satire appeared in *The Liberal* for April 26, 1823, contemporary critical opinion attributed it to Leigh Hunt.

The material for satire in this closet drama is gathered from Byron's experiences in London. The characters in some cases resemble persons in real life. Thus Inkel and Tracy's discussion of Miss Lilac appears intended for a conversation between Byron and Moore about the former's wife. The Bluebottles apparently stand for Lord and Lady Holland. A production wholly unworthy apart from the unique features of dramatic structure and anapaestic metre, "The Blues" may be dismissed as merely reiterative, and cannot, in the light of the Italian satires which ante-date it, be claimed significant of Byron's genius. That genius had, since "English Bards", been seeking a vehicle in which the satirist should again equal and excel his first masterpiece.

5. Italian Influence and the Later Satires.

Evidence of liberalism, openly avowed in the field of politics, has already been noted in the form and manner of certain of Byron's satiric pieces,¹ ephemeral in nature, which were written before the separation from his wife and from England. But although Byron had composed romances in the metre of Scott, he was still a disciple of Pope by profession, and as a satirist, even as late as "A Sketch", in performance. Subsequent, however, to the climax of 1816, the drama of his life was enacted in a setting destined to accelerate the growth, while extending the scope, of Byron's antagonism to the views of social propriety and morals, of religion, of politics, and of literature, obtaining among a people whose tongues, once unanimous in his praise, were now allied with those of his household to exaggerate his infamy.² The formal separation from his wife, to which he acceded without insisting upon the open use of the processes of law, by its very secrecy served to imperil his reputation and subsequent happiness. Ignorant of the specific charges against the

1. esp. "The Devil's Drive".

2. "Letters", iv., 479: "I felt that, if what was whispered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me."

poet, the public associated him in vice with the previous holder of the title. And so, with

"Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away",¹

Byron made his fateful exodus on April 25, 1816.

In Switzerland, during the summer of 1816, he was subjected to the influence of Shelley, Mary Godwin, and the Jane Clermont ("Claire")² who had been a factor in his domestic tangle. Concerning the relations of this group, Byron suspected that Southey, after visiting Geneva, took home and spread disparaging gossip.³

For this, the satirist, inconsistently enough, retaliated with:

"For pantisocracy he once had cried
Aloud, a scheme less moral than 't was clever."⁴

During these months, the wrath which at first was centred upon "the genial confidante and general spy,"⁵

1. "Childe Harold", iv., 135.
2. The daughter of William Godwin's second wife and the mother of Byron's child, Allegra.
3. Shelley in his notes to "Queen Mab" (1813) had asserted: "Love is free". Gossip credited the group with putting this theory into practice.
4. "The Vision of Judgment", 97.
5. "A Sketch".

Mrs. Clermont, begins to shift to include, with increasing bitterness, his wife whom he calls:

"The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord."¹

To this period also, belongs the "Epistle to Augusta" in which Byron attempts the ottava rima, but in a manner serious and romantic, and devoid of any suggestion of the burlesque style which he was later to acquire.

From Switzerland he proceeded in the autumn of 1816 to Italy. Of that country whose church and society have been for centuries the objects of burlesque satire, Byron breathed the atmosphere for seven years. In him, "tolerably master of the Italian and modern Greek languages",² and already imbued with the cosmopolitan spirit from his earlier travels, an Italian environment developed to the full any symptoms of liberalism, not to

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1. "Lines on Hearing That Lady Byron Was Ill".
For the supposed cause of the separation see "The True Story of Byron's Life". Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Atlantic, 24: 295; Macmillan's 20; 377. For an indication of the contrary argument, see the criticism of Lovelace's "Astarte" in "Lord Byron and a Forgotten Scandal", Blackwood's Edinburgh Mag. 179; 419.
 2. "Letters", I. 308, (to his mother from Athens, January 14, 1811.)

say licence—a manifestation in repatriated Englishmen concerning which the pharisaical element in their own country as long ago as Roger Ascham had disapprovingly observed: "Inglese Italianato e un diavolo incarnato".¹

Adopting, and adopted by the people of Venice, Pisa, and Genoa, Byron became, as he writes to Moore, "a portion of their hopes, and fears, and passions".² His title and personal charm made easy his entrance into social circles and into several 'liaisons' culminating in his becoming openly the 'cavaliere servente' of the Countess Guiccioli.³ To association with the Carbonari, his own fiery spirit impelled him. Men of letters and dilettanti welcomed the already-famous author of the romantic "Childe Harold" over the later cantos of which was creeping a sombre realism⁴ that better acquaintance with southern writers was to colour with the burlesque Italian spirit.

Indication of the radical change in Byron's satiric manner to which the influences already mentioned

1. "The Schoolmaster," Bk. I.
2. "Letters", V. 70.
3. His earlier affairs at Venice were decidedly "low-class".
4. Ibid. IV. 7. ".....Waking Reason deems
Such overweening phantasies unsound,
And other voices speak, and other sights
surround."

were contributing, is first given by him in a letter to Murray, October 12, 1817: "I have written a poem (of eighty-four octave stanzas), humourous, in or after the excellent manner of Mr. Whistlecraft (whom I take to be Frere), on a Venetian anecdote which amused me."¹

The anonymous work of John Hookham Frere (1769-1846) to which Byron refers was a poem in ottava rima entitled "Prospectus and Specimen of an Intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, Harness and Collar Makers, Intended to Comprise the Most Interesting Particulars Relating to King Arthur and his Round Table." As published by Murray in 1817, it consisted of an introduction in eleven stanzas followed by two cantos, the poem comprising altogether ninety-nine stanzas, exactly the length to which "Beppo" had grown when it was offered to the public by Murray on February 28, 1818.

"Beppo", then, since it employs the framework of anecdote and the burlesque manner, constitutes a prelude to "Don Juan", and "The Vision of Judgment", which, with extended theme, display the same two features,

1. "Letters" iv., 172. (It was forwarded on January 19, 1818, "Letters" iv., 193.)

thereby drawing apart from and excelling the satires in the English tradition.

Byron's allusion to Frere's work¹ is probably only for the purpose of making a comparison which would be clearly intelligible to Murray. Between the two works there is no similarity of plot. Frere combines several themes, Byron keeps to one "Venetian anecdote". Women, in Frere's chaste work, are very minor characters, whereas the naughty story of "Beppo" revolves around a married woman of Venice. The resemblances in the poetry of two men so unlike in character are superficial only. The even-tempered Frere was "strongly for the present state of things",² and amused himself with a leisurely survey of the distant past. Byron was intensely concerned with the world of his experience, a world which aroused in him fury and bitterness.

The scholarly Frere, adopting the colloquial diction of a garrulous harness-maker, opens in a

1. In "John Hookham Frere, Sein Leben und seine Werke, Sein Einfluss auf Lord Byron," (Wien und Leipzig, 1905), the author, Dr. Albert Eichler, overlooks the significance to be attached to the respective dates of publication of "Beppo" and "The Monks, and the Giants", — the title of the enlarged edition of Frere's work published some month's after "Beppo".
2. "The Monks, and the Giants". iii., 59.

conversational way with:

"I've often wished that I might write a book
Such as all English people might peruse",¹

and throughout the loosely-knit narrative reflects his acquaintance² with the discursive style characteristic of the Italians with whom, however, his spirit, unlike Byron's, has little in common. Thus, his influence upon the author of "Beppo" is restricted to the affording of an example of the use of those mechanical features above-mentioned in the employment in English of a stanza-form made popular by satirists with whom Byron was in closer contact.

The "Letters and Journals" (iv., 217) indicate that Byron was familiar with the works of Giambattista Casti (1721-1804) before writing "Beppo". In 1816, to Major Gordon who had given him a copy of Casti's "Novelle Amorse", he says: "I had read his 'Animali Parlanti', but I think these 'Novelle' much better." The "Novelle" here referred to, employ the ottava rima³

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1. "The Monks, and the Giants", Introduction, 1.
 2. Frere's giants at times suggest those in Pulci's "Morgante Maggiore". He would also have seen Rose's "Court of Beasts" (1816), paraphrasing "Gli Animali Parlanti".
 3. "Gli Animali Parlanti" is in sesta rima, rhyming ababcc.

to relate tales similar to Boccaccio's prose works.

"Don Juan" is full of reminiscences of the 'Novelle',¹ of which the manner and spirit so strongly influence Byron's first work in the southern style.

Although "Beppo" corresponds somewhat to Novella ix, "Lo Spirito", which opens with an introduction in the first person and goes on with the story of a woman and two lovers, Byron is not to be indicted for plagiarism. In his earlier work Byron shows the same susceptibility to the influence of works still fresh in his memory and admiration; nor are his own experiences, which before "Beppo" had included several liaisons,² ever far divorced from his poetry. It is in the mood, rather, of light satire in the style of the "Novelle" and the "Animali Parlanti"—something of which he caught from Frere and Moore—that Byron clearly reflects the burlesque manner of the licentious Italian through the use of colloquial diction, the witty turn of phrase, and the flexibility of stanzaic form; and in assuming the confidential and self-assertive pose, he does not pretend

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1. J. C. Collins: Studies in Poetry and Criticism, p.97.
 2. The prototype of "Laura" may be the Venetian linen-draper's wife, Marianna Segati.

to be the advocate of public morality, as in "The Waltz", but is rather inclined to wink at human frailty and to leaven his invective with the mockery of the liberal-minded Casti with whom he felt such affinity of temperament. Consciousness of his development is thus expressed:

"I fear I have a little turn for satire,
 And yet methinks the older that one grows
 Inclines us more to laugh than scold, though laughter
 Leaves us so doubly serious shortly after."¹

At Venice, on September 6, 1818, Byron began a longer and more elaborate "Beppo". The earlier poem is a satiric novella; "Don Juan", in Byron's own words, is an "epic satire".² In the preface to "Childe Harold" the poet had written: "I propose to give full scope to my inclination, and be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humour strikes me." To Murray he says that "Don Juan" is "meant to be a little quietly facetious upon everything".³ As narrative, "Don Juan" is in the style, not of the epic, but of the picaresque romance of Smollett; while, as satire, the ubiquitous "I" gives "some connexion

1. "Beppo", 79.
 2. "Don Juan", xiv., 99.
 3. "Letters", iv., 260.

to the piece."¹ Contradicting the assertions in "Don Juan",² Byron confesses to Murray³ that he "had no plan...but materials" for his poem, which thus became more and more a verse-diary to be ended only by death. As the number of cantos increases, so, too, do the number and length of the digressions. These the satirist employs sometimes in the manner of Pulci, "sire of the half-serious rhyme"⁴, for a confidential chat about the story or himself; frequently, unlike Pulci who was not a deliberate satirist, Byron digresses to indulge in direct invective.

The predominating satiric mood of "Don Juan" is still more the jocular and less savage manner of "Beppo". Although the attacks on Lady Byron, on Southey, and Brougham, and Castlereagh, afford examples of denunciation that recall the young lion who rushed upon his first enemies, the enlarged perspective of maturity modifies the personal attack to include the

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1. Preface to the first two cantos of "Childe Harold".
 2. Ibid. i., 200; xii., 55.
 3. "Letters", iv., 342.
 4. "Don Juan", iv., 6. Written in November, 1819, this is Byron's first definite reference to the Italian poet.

institution or theory for which the individual stands—
Lady Byron and marriage, Southey and Romanticism.

Whatever slight acquaintance Byron may have had with the style of Pulci before beginning "Don Juan", grew into familiarity through translating the "Morgante Maggiore" in the winter of 1819-20 while cantos iii. and iv. of Byron's "epic satire" were being written. In consequence, besides the increased tendency to confidential digression already noted, Byron gained practice in the expression in English of Pulci's realism—at times, Rabelaisian—and, in using the colloquial diction and flexible stanzaic form of Casti's predecessor to turn, in a moment, from the serious to the absurd, or from imaginative heights to descend to sordid commonplaces. From the sceptical Italian, Byron learned in part to take the nobler emotions, as well as the rest of life, less seriously. The effect was to increase the pessimistic Englishman's employment of irony and mockery.

Far from England and association with writers of English classical satire, Byron in "Beppo" confesses that, to the neglect of conventional restrictions imposed upon English poetry, it is his disposition to

"...take for rhyme, to hang my rambling verse on,
The first that Walker's Lexicon unravels,
And when I can't find that, I put a worse on,
Not caring as I ought for critics' cavils;

I've half a mind to tumble down to prose,
But verse is more in fashion--so here goes."¹

The use of uncommon rhymes in "Don Juan" shows Byron to be a master of the art greater even than Swift whose technique he admired. Besides the well-known combination of "intellectual" with "hen-pecked-you-all"², and "oddest, he" with "modesty"³, there is a wealth of others drawn from various languages, such as the Greek "poetikes" rhyming with "critic is",⁴ and the Latin "in medias res" with "please" and "ease"⁵.

The earlier tendency to extensive employment of the end-stopped line gives place to a fluidity of expression that sometimes carries the thought even from stanza to stanza⁶ and occasions the bizarre division of the word "hence-forward" between two lines.⁷

Verbal artistry contributes much to the humour of "Don Juan", particularly in the later cantos, puns and plays upon words being frequent, e.g.,

"But Tom's no more--and so no more of Tom."⁸

1. "Beppo", 52.
3. Ibid. II., 1.
5. Ibid., I., 6.
7. Ibid., I., 120

2. "Don Juan", I., 22.
4. Ibid. III., 111.
6. Ibid. I., 123-124.
8. "Don Juan", xi., 20.

When Byron resumed his poem, after leaving off with Canto V. at the request of Teresa Guiccoli, he made it a "criticism of life" broader in scope than "Gli Animali Parlanti", or than anything in English poetry since the "Canterbury Tales". The cosmopolitan satirist leaves the restricted field of his classical satires—the knot of reviewers and the ball-room circle—to attack the abuses of the world as he so considers the manifestations of conservatism in human society.

The death of George III. on January 29, 1820 impelled Southey as poet-laureate to compose what Nichol has called "the most quaintly preposterous panegyric ever penned". Written in tedious unrhymed dactylic hexameters, the poem's twelve sections, following the flattering dedication to George IV., bestow the most lavish praise on the old king and the government. Offensive to Byron's political views, Southey's "Vision of Judgment" annoyed the satirist through the omission of his masters, Dryden and Pope, from the company of writers whom Southey sees fit to associate with the king in Heaven.

On October 4th¹ of the following year Byron

1. "Letters"., v., 387.

sent his travesty to Murray, but no arrangement for publication was made until Southey, ignorant of the fate already in store for his poem, further provoked the wrath of Byron by attacking the absent lord in his "Letter to the Courier" of January 5, 1822. With unconsciousness of irony he wrote: "One word of advice to Lord Byron before I conclude. When he attacks me again, let it be in rhyme. For one who has so little command of himself, it will be a great advantage that his temper be obliged to keep tune."

Enraged, Byron decided upon the publication of his travesty. The cautiously dilatory Murray was finally ordered on July 3, 1822¹ to give the work to John Hunt, proprietor of the newly-projected "Liberal", by whom it was published in the first number of the magazine, but without the preface which had to be obtained from Murray for a second edition. For his recklessness Hunt was successfully prosecuted by the Constitutional Association.

As indicated in part in the preface, Byron's satire had several objects. "Quevedo Redivivus" desired to draw a realistic portrait of the departed king whom the laureate had idealised, and at the same time to

1.. "Letters" vi., 10.

confute the eulogy of Tory politics with a recital of governmental misdeeds. Besides, the master of the "Satanic School" had nourished a grudge against Southey since the episode in Switzerland, and he hoped to gain a crushing revenge by cataloguing the weak points in the career of the "rancorous renegade". So, too, Southey's refusal to exalt the Augustans moved Byron to burlesque the ludicrous elements in his enemy's work, and by the deliberate use of a debased style to draw the laugh upon the laureate's pretentious manner.

Of the twelve sections of Southey's work, Byron fastens his attention upon two only, the fourth and the fifth. Then, having dealt with the judgment of the king, and neglecting the meeting with famous Britons, the satirist transports his own enemy into the ridiculous tableau.

After the eighty-fourth stanza, Southey, who is previously mentioned only twice, becomes for the remaining twenty-two stanzas the chief object of attack. Here Byron is at his best in personal satire. Instead of limiting himself to the directly abusive style of his furious attack on Jeffrey, Byron employs the indirect method. The blind, vociferous rage in which so often

he attacks impetuously and unwisely had, when this satire was written, cooled to a scornful contempt. In this mood he is able to see how best to place his enemy in a ridiculous light where the attack is launched obliquely, making defense well-nigh impossible; for, while hate upholds an opponent at one's own level or higher, laughter reduces him to absurdity and impotence. ¹

But besides being a vehicle for carrying a masterly attack against a personal enemy, the travesty, which succeeds in making George III. seem unfitted for his kingly office, is also an outcry not only against the local government which withheld the rights of Catholics and American colonists, but likewise against the reactionary policy of those in office throughout Europe. As such, the "Vision" rendered valuable service by interrupting the somnolent acquiescence of the British public to the conservative politics of the day.

In manner the "Vision" constitutes a return to the ottava rima of "Don Juan" which at the Countess Guiccioli's request was discontinued with Canto V. ²

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1. Southey's reply in a "Letter to the Courier" December 8, 1824, is ineffective. For a lengthy treatment of the Byron-Southey controversy see "Letters", vi., 377-399.
 2. Completed, December 27, 1820. He began Canto Vi. in June 1822. In the interval he published "Cain", "The Two Foscari", and "Sardanapalus".

Byron admits that it is written "in the Pulci style, which the fools in England think was invented by Whistlecraft—it is as old as the hills in Italy."¹

From Pulci, Byron would obtain a lesson in making the ethereal beings Michael and Lucifer exhibit the superciliousness of mortals, and in subjecting them to earthly limitations so far as to have Asmodeus sprain a wing. For the perspiring Saint Peter he would find a parallel in the "Morgante Maggiore".² With such touches of the grotesque, Southey's sublime New Jerusalem and its revered beings are made ludicrous.

In its character of pure satire, the "Vision" deserves to be called Byron's greatest success. He himself regarded it as "one of my best things."³ Characterised by a rare unity of plot, joining wit with humour, and action with description and invective, Byron's travesty, in modern critical opinion, is, among satires in the burlesque Italian manner, accorded the first place.

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1. "Letters", v., 385.
 2. Ibid. xxvi., 91.
 3. "Letters", vi., 77.

6. The Scope of His Satire.

The philosophical conceptions which form the basis for Byron's satire, especially in "Don Juan", are founded in scepticism. Like Voltaire, he took no positive attitude toward the problems of existence which he found

"Too subtle for the airiest human head".¹

Borne by experience to uncertainty and indecision he was satisfied to be an iconoclast.

In religion he was a dilettante as a natural consequence of his characteristic inconsistency. Moreover, he lacked the foundation of scientific theory pre-pounded later in the century.² In his childhood he took revenge for enforced attendance at church by sticking pins in his mother whenever the Calvinistic preacher became unduly tiresome. At home his nurse May Gray, to whom he was fondly attached, would seek to enlighten him upon her narrow and gloomy Calvinism and its vengeful Omnipotence, while his mother preached the evils of tyrrany and the injustice meted out to "the people".³

1. "Don Juan", xi., 1.

2. e.g. Charles Darwin: "Origin of Species", 1859.

3. Jeaffreson: "The Real Lord Byron", p. 34.

At college he revolted against the dogmatism of the Thirty-nine Articles, with the enthusiastic exaggeration of the potentialities of Reason common to the immature. Just as in Scotland he had occasion to note the strict observance of the Sabbath by those who once a week put on their "Sunday face", so also in the University he laughed satirically at those who attended with all gravity and decorum to ecclesiastical affairs with full heart or feigned lips.¹ And so clergymen are treated with scant ceremony. Many of the names listed in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" appear elsewhere with the prefix "Rev." To Byron the title is odious, since to him it means little more than "sanctimonious". Thus he is moved often to downright impudence, and to impudence coupled with blasphemy, or at least irreverence.

"Beware - for God's sake, don't begin like Bowles!"²

"...the very Reverend Rowley Powley"³.

and as late as July 1821, he is guilty of this:

"Why, how now, Billy Bowles?
Sure the priest is maudlin!
How can you, d--- your souls!
Listen to his twaddling?"⁴

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1. v. "Granta".
 2. "Hints from Horace."
 3. "Don Juan"; c. XI., 57.
 4. "Bowles and Campbell".

His chief complaint in his conversations with Trelawney, Moore, and others was that the clergy did not patronise genius; wherefore, those of the clergy who ventured to woo the Muses were in grave danger of having their heads bitten off by this young lion of satire who has his fling at the Rev. Charles Hoyle and the Rev. Charles Hoare along with the punsters of his Alma Mater with this rhetoric:

"Shall hoary Granta call her sable sons,
Expert in science, more expert at puns?
Shall these approach the muse? ah, no! she flies,
Even from the tempting ore of Seaton's prize;
Though printers condescend the press to soil
With rhyme by Hoare, and epic blank by Hoyle."¹

For those in holy orders whose conduct was no more priestly than it ought to have been, Byron has a kind word.

Churchill, the bigamist (a merciful epithet), gets an effusion,² and the eccentric Dean of St. Patrick's is accorded honourable mention. For Sterne, too, he has a soft place in his heart, and with Herrick he shares a grotesque notion of what strains are suitable for adolescent ears.³ "Virginibus puerisque canto" which appears on the title page of "Hours of Idleness", is as

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1. "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers".
 2. "Churchill's Grave."
 3. The Rev. J. T. Becher had prevailed upon Byron to suppress "Fugitive Pieces", printed in 1806.

deliciously ironical as the Cavalier poet-priest's pose of monitor "To the Virgins". And yet the Rev. George Crabbe is acclaimed as

"...nature's sternest painter, yet the best".¹

because Byron loves him for his realism. But, in general, so hateful is the name "parson" to Byron that, like the Roman mob in its intemperate treatment of any Cinna, he is predisposed to "tear him for his bad verses"—there is a preconception that they will be bad anyway. In Byron's view, the clergy's literary talent appears rather in "pulpit-eloquence" in defence of the disparity existing between their profession and their walk and conversation:

"Oh for a forty-parson power to chant
 Thy praise, Hypocrisy! Oh for a hymn
 Loud as the virtues thou dost loudly vaunt,
 Not practise!"²

Besides satirising the behaviour of the churchmen, he accords to the saints, angels, and demons associated in the popular belief with Christianity, a grotesque treatment indicative of his reading of Pulci.³

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1. "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers".
 2. "Don Juan", X., 34.
 cf. "O for a thousand tongues to sing
 Our great Redeemer's praise."
 -from the hymn by Charles Wesley, one of the
 "methodistic crew" (v. "Granta".)
 3. Best seen in "The Vision of Judgment".

For the "overweening fantasies" of ancient mythology he had none of Keat's romantic feeling. The "filthy loves of gods and goddesses"¹ appeal only to Byron's voluptuousness, which is itself at the mercy of his cynical humour. His realism was too strong to allow these heathen deities the spirituality which is an attribute of divine dignity. Apollo, who is supposed to inspire the soul, must stoop to pluck Byron by the ear.²

As far as beliefs, philosophical or religious are concerned, "What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known";³ Byron himself could not be sure, for his receptive and inconsistent mind vacillated between scepticism and superstition. His travels brought him into contact with Jews⁴, Turks, infidels, and heretics, all of whom might well be material for satire. But concerning his own opinions, as Goethe says, "when he reflects, he becomes a child".

In the preface to Cantos VI., VII., and VIII. of "Don Juan" he quotes Voltaire as a defence, and blames

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1. "Don Juan", i., 41.
 2. "Don Juan", iv., 7.
 3. Shelley: Preface to "Julian and Maddalo".
 4. "The Age of Bronze", XV.

the church authorities for his own leanings to Deism, a tendency visible in his writings since the beginning of "Childe Harold", and one of the factors contributing to his unpopularity and fall in England. He cries out for freedom of thought, insisting that creeds "rest between man and his Maker".¹ "Rum and true religion" do, he admit, make for spiritual tranquility, but the dogmatism which any creed implies is more than Byron can bear:

"t'is a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought--".²

especially base when it entails submission to a church which

"while all religion writhes,
Like Niobe, weeps o'er her offspring, Tithes."³

And yet, his behaviour at times suggests that he was attracted to Catholicism. In one of his few speeches in the House he had declared for religious freedom by emancipation of Roman Catholics. His natural daughter Allegra was educated in that faith. Don Juan's last love, Aurora Raby⁴, was, like Teresa Guiccioli, a Roman Catholic. Surely this is not done

1. "Childe Harold", iv., 85.
2. Ibid. iv., 127.
3. "The Age of Bronze", xiv.
4. "Don Juan" XV., 46.

for the sake of the greater freedom which the Roman Church allows, or it would be too ironical. Rather, it must be an exhibition of the same force which drew Cardinal Newman back to Rome.

But even Byron's own inclinations to belief are satirised as a weakness of nerves in a debilitated state:

"The first attack at once proved the Divinity
 (But that I never doubted, nor the Devil);
 The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
 The third, the usual Origin of Evil;
 The fourth at once established the whole Trinity
 On so uncontrovertible a level,
 That I devoutly wish'd the three were four
 On purpose to believe so much the more."¹

Thus he portrays Religion as being for the mass of humanity merely a hollow profession of acceptance of creeds, the sublimest precepts of which are in abeyance before the presence of human passions.

About all this there is nothing very original— Byron is merely the mouthpiece of an age of religious unrest. But by his method of expressing such controversial sentiments, shallow though the thought may be, he won applause from Goethe, who considered Byron's "Keckheit", or "nimble impudence", as rendering less obtrusive the satirist's lapses from good taste in making a mockery of

1. "Don Juan", XI., 6.

religion. The Church authorities, however, have not for a century shown any tendency to relax their rigorous condemnation of one whom they have, with some justice, considered an agent of destruction.

In literary satire Byron appears in the unusual role of a radical struggling to uphold a conservative cause which the liberal spirit of his own age made hopeless. From "English Bards" to the end of "Don Juan" he consistently defended and praised the rules and doctrines of his classical masters, Pope and Gifford, although in practice he so far neglected his first manner as to be acclaimed a leader of the Romantic school. All through his career he inveighed against the "pond-poets".

"Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge,
Southey"¹.

This deification results in many inconsistencies and mistakes in judgment. Imitators of the Augustans are likely to receive more than due praise. Those who break away from the classical tradition are almost certain to be accorded abuse. And so Gifford is exalted over Burns; Rogers is to restore Apollo; Wright is blessed with

1. "Don Juan", I., 205.

a poet's eye, and Richards with poetic fire; while Crabbe is hailed as the best painter of nature. From his list of victims, Shelley, his companion in Switzerland, is omitted; but Byron is pleased to mix praise and blame for Keats because it gives him a chance for a fling at reviewers:

"'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article".¹

To Byron, when infected with the traditions of French classical drama, even Shakespeare becomes a barbarian; and so, in his earlier dramatic writing Byron denies himself the freedom of Romantic drama, yet without observing more than an "approach to the unities";² and then, finishing "The Two Foscari", he began "Cain" on the same day.

For the scribblers of his day who might have peopled another "Dunciad", he maintains usually a silent contempt. But against the leaders of the new movement he fulminated continually. Even the excellent prose of Southey, who accused the possessor of a "club foot" of being the founder of a "Satanic School", is included in the not undeserved criticism of his inferior poetry and

1. "Don Juan", xi., 60. (cf. "Who killed John Keats?")
2. Preface to "Sardanapalus".

political apostasy. It is futile to expect from Byron in such a case any suggestion of that forgiveness promised to the renegade described in Browning's "Lost Leader".

Wordsworth is treated with a hostility that seems extravagant, considering Byron's debt to the former for the feeling for nature expressed in "Childe Harold", iii. and iv. "Peter Bell" and "The Waggoner" are subjected

to merciless ridicule. By accepting a "place in the Excise" from a reactionary government, "Wordsworth"

became odious to Byron for his politics as well as his poetry. In a few minor respects only did Byron's

position change from that assumed in "English Bards": he grew to acknowledge the worth of Moore and Scott and to become less vindictive toward Jeffrey. In the

field of literary criticism his otherwise progressive and liberal spirit made no advance.

Byron's indictment of society springs out of pique and resentment. As a social critic he approaches his object with characteristic prejudice. Passion dulls his sense of values as the iconoclast proceeds with the condemnation of the world of his experiences. The means adopted in "Don Juan" to show the world at its worst has for a century borne adverse criticism from moralists. But, waiving the charge of immorality,

there is no denying the brutality of many of his satirical allusions. For the defence, one must plead again the undisciplined passionate nature which he inherited and— it must be allowed—made little effort to curb. Thus, with all the pent-up bitterness of years, the "lame brat" writes:

"Out hunchback!" "I was born so, mother."¹

The vigilant mother and officious wife who is drawn as the mathematical Donna Inez, is a composite portrait of his mother and his only legal wife, and having violated the most sacred domestic ties, he carries the element of farce through the whole field of sex relationships:

"Accipe nunc Danauminsidias, et crimine ab uno disce omnes."

Where may one look for purity or fidelity until at long last he makes the amende honorable in Aurora Raby—his tribute to Teresa Guiccioli? There is, indeed, one notable exception. Notwithstanding the arguments of the righteously indignant, "Manfred" and "Cain" and "The Bride of Abydos" do not present a debasing picture of the love of brother and sister. "Manfred" is much too indefinite in any case; Adah does not comprehend the fact

1. "The Deformed Transformed." I., i.

that some day her conduct will be considered culpable;¹ and Selim is fully conscious throughout that his marriage to Zuleika is not forbidden by consanguinity. And so the hideous charges against Byron collapse before this:

"And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure."²

With this exception, he does not fail to allow his own unlicensed sensuality to inspire in "The Waltz", "Beppo", or "Parisina", a coarse Juvenalian or Persian libel on love, which he cynically compels to stoop to passion, or grovel as lust. The beautiful idyll of Juan and Haidee is cut short as something unfit for "these thick solitudes call'd social."³

For the fragmentary education which his mother and his Alma Mater (alike unloved) gave him, he has only jeers. In education he is certainly not a constructive or deep thinker. The "drill'd dull lesson"⁴ of formal education he condemns for both its method and matter.⁵

1. "Cain", I., l. Adah: "Is that a sin too?"
Lucifer: "No, not yet,
It one day will be in your
children".
2. "Childe Harold", III., 55. (of. "Stanzas to Augusta".)
3. "Don Juan", IV., 28.
4. "Childe Harold", iv., 75.
5. "Don Juan", I., 40 et seq.

From the society which once exalted him only to scorn him he chooses both friends and enemies to people the scenes of the "Excursion" which he takes as "Don Juan". While admitting the wit and clever irony with which he handles the situation, there is no denying the lack of taste in his portrayal of Juan's first amour. The young wife and her ancient spouse are too closely comparable to Teresa Guiccioli and her elderly husband; and the same is true of "Beppo". In the case of his own marriage there could be no charge of infidelity against his wife, but in his gross exposé of domestic life, he does not scruple to declaim everywhere upon his assumed idea of the frailty of woman.

The objections of Countess Guiccioli and of other women of his acquaintance to "Don Juan" were attributed to the "wish of all women to exalt the sentiment of the passions, and to keep up the illusion which is their empire".¹ This "illusion" is laughed at, but the misconduct which attends obedience to the impulses of passion is not censured in the Juvenalian style. His experience and observation of marriage had led him to

1. "Letters", v., 321.

believe that "Love and Marriage rarely can combine",¹ and had developed in him an Italian tolerance. And so, in dealing with the stories of illicit lovers, "their crimes are taken out of the moral region of deliberate choice by a kind of emotional sophistry, and somehow are charged to their circumstances, so that the unwary and innocent reader commiserates their villainies instead of being revolted by them".²

To Russia, Byron was antipathetic because of its czar and through disgust at the universal idolisation of Russians which took hold of Europe in those times. The consequent escapades of Juan in that country and the depiction of life and manners to their great disadvantage are inspired by Byron's experiences elsewhere for, aside from books, he knew nothing of the country. Resemblances in the portrayal of the Empress Catherine who

"Behaved no better than a common sempstress"³

indicate that Byron was acquainted with Casti's "Il Poema Tartaro", the hero of which, a wandering Irishman,

1. "Don Juan", iii., 5.

2. G. E. Woodberry: *Makers of Literature*, p. 381.

3. "Don Juan", ix., 77.

enjoys for a while the favour of the Empress.

When he transports Juan to England, he is in an element where the full force of his mature powers can be brought to bear upon the society which could not tolerate his audacity and frankness and whose conventionalised hypocrisy he found intolerable. In his fierce exposition of the foibles of his own class his style reflects the manner of Fielding and Smollett whose licence he claimed was the "soul of such writing". On the other hand, there is a foreshadowing of the satiric social writing of Peacock and Disraeli. Having been charged with immorality himself, he turns upon his accusers to show that their professed morals are only a sham. The women of his class who had long ago indiscreetly made much of him if married are divorced or "divorcable". The unmarried ones are shameless in their quest for emotional experience, and in such "good society" the unmarried man is beset by many temptations and perils. Marriage is thus only a cloak for tactful misconduct, the only difference in actuality being that the continentals admit openly the existence of the cavaliere servente. It is a society wherein everything is marketable, and the lawyers are foremost in

promoting damage suits. Byron has occasion to remember their offices on behalf of his wife.

In "that Microcosm on stilts yclept the Great World"¹, the select circle of London in which Byron had once moved, Juan is advised to

"Be hypocritical, be cautious, be
Not what you seem, but always what you see."²

What Byron sees and attacks humourously and ironically, sometimes vehemently, is the assumption of decorum to cover sensuality, jealousy, and deceit. Remembering that

"Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away,"³

Byron proceeds to ridicule those who had attacked the conduct of the lord of Newstead Abbey. At "Norman Abbey", the country-seat of "Lady Adeline"⁴ the satirist collects thirty-three "Brahmins of the ton"⁵, typical of the defects and vices over which hypocrisy throws a veil. Upon these office-seekers, "social climbers", and parasites, Byron pours contempt and scorn. Their

1. "Don Juan", xii., 56.
2. Ibid. xi., 86.
3. Ibid. xiii., 11.
4. cf. Lady Caroline Lamb.
5. Ibid. xiii., 82. (Byron may have been influenced by Peacock's "Nightmare Abbey" (1818).

life, when it has exhausted all sensual pleasure, is dull and profitless. Their prudery covers a host of evils. Everywhere one meets hypocrisy and "cant political, cant religious, cant moral".¹ From Canto XI. to the end, the satiric attacks in "Don Juan" are directed against pretence and sham wherever the satirist suspects their presence. Byron becomes the champion of the free and natural man. Indeed, "The Island" (Genoa, 1823) dallies with Rousseau's ideal of a "return to nature", a state which the iconoclast considers preferable to a society

"Where nought is ripen'd rapidly save crime".²

It is in his defence of freedom and resistance to oppression that Byron's satire finds its greatest mission and justification. "The Devil's Drive" indicates that, by 1814, Byron was fixed in most of his political opinions. He had aligned himself against Castlereagh and the Regent, against all war except in a righteous cause, and against all measures that might check the progress of political freedom. To some extent his impatience of personal restraint was the reason for

1. "Letters", v., 542.

2. "The Island", ii., 7.

associating himself with the liberating of the people. A rebel against the tyranny of social convention, he grew to be an advocate of any movement against despotism.

"I will teach, if possible, the stones
To rise against earth's tyrants. Never let it
Be said that we still truckle unto thrones."¹

In English politics after Waterloo Byron found a fitting object for his satire. Against the repressive policy of the Tory government at home, and its acquiescence to the policy of Metternich on the continent he directed the full force of his satire. From the

"Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know",² he selected Castlereagh, whom he had never met, to bear the brunt of venomous hatred and caustic epigram; but his vehement tirades are, perhaps, less effective than Moore's satire in the lighter vein which ridicules the statesman's attempts at oratory.

Upon Wellington Byron vented his scorn and irony as a leader who had forfeited his claim to the people's gratitude by associating himself with a government which could countenance without alleviating the domestic ills of the day.

1. "Don Juan", viii., 135.

2. Shelley: Sonnet on England in 1819.

In "Don Juan"¹ he portrays the typical English politician in Lord Henry Amundeville, "always a patriot, and sometimes a placeman," who is the just, yet selfish and heartless sort of minister to whom the woes and shame of England are attributable. The delineation is an excellent example of Byron's mature satire. Like Dryden's portraits, it has a universal application.

Especially is Byron to be commended for his opposition to war unless in "defence of freedom, country, or of laws." The ghastly realism with which he depicts the Siege of Ismail provided an antidote for a generation poisoned with a lust for military conquest and glory. Though others had held these opinions, it was Byron who gave them the strongest and most advanced utterance.

Although destructive in his political criticism, his revolutionary activity in Italy and his martyrdom to the cause of liberty in Greece made him an inspiration to Mazzini and Cavour. By the Greeks he was deified; to Lamartine he seemed an apostle of liberty. In spite of the fact that he evolved no definite system to replace that which he attacked, it was, no doubt, as the champion of democratic principles that he gained his greatest popularity.

1. "Don Juan", xiii., 14 et seq.

7. Conclusion.

Some satirists, in assuming to express public opinion, have succeeded in effacing themselves entirely from their work. In the poetry of the "Anti-Jacobin" it is a difficult matter to assign the contributions of the various Tory satirists to their respective authors. In "Absalom and Achitophel" Dryden rarely obtrudes his own partialities; the satire is more an impersonal commentary; Dryden was an artist first, then a satirist. The satirist at heart cannot prevent his character from colouring his work. Indeed, it is vital to his satire that it should reflect the satirist's personality.

Byron's satire is conspicuous for this feature. His personality is recognisable throughout his work. Just as the "Childe" and the romances display some phase of Byron's complex personality, so do the satires record his personal reaction to the objects of criticism.

Of the characteristics which make up this satirical personality much has already been said. Probably the most distinctive of these is his impulsiveness. Dryden, and even Pope, maintained due self-control. In Byron's case the response followed the

stimulus immediately, satire being, with him, a sort of reflex action. This gives his work vigour, although it frequently occasions a lack of subtlety. His satire appeals through the power of passion more than it calls attention to its technique. His finest work, "The Vision of Judgment", is done in a period of comparative subsidence of passion.

His combative nature led him to satirise personalities. He was not a gifted theorist nor did he possess the equipment fairly to evaluate the institutions which he assailed. Selecting Castlereagh as the concrete embodiment of English Toryism, he pursued him to and beyond the grave.

In carrying his attack into so many fields, religion, literature, society, politics, he sometimes ventured farther than wisdom or delicacy approved. But though he often, like all satirists, exaggerates and makes claims unwarranted by evidence, and though the attacks on his wife are in poor taste, he performed a valuable service by insisting upon and affording an example of freedom of speech and action in a period when repressive measures were in favour.

In the languages into which his popularity as a liberator has caused him to be translated his satire loses nothing, it even gains, in effect. Much of his later style which is more complex and subtle than his Juvenalian manner, was the effect of reading in foreign languages, especially Italian; but in neither mood does he depend upon finished detail. And so, his broad general effects may be expressed in other tongues, and, at the same time, the faults of his hasty composition eliminated.

Upon English satire his influence has not been greatly felt. He has no imitators who approach him. Possibly the stringency of the laws relating to libel have deterred some who may have aspired to fulfil a similar mission. Moreover, the consistent refusal of the church authorities, both at his death and at his centenary, to accord him a place in "the temple where the dead are honour'd by the nations", may, perhaps, have turned ambitious genius from the attempt to preach what Elze calls Byron's "Epicurean Nihilism".

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